

EVACUATION

PROBLEM

The life-safety hazard in Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) communities has increased tremendously with population growth. In Nevada County, there is a need to significantly improve evacuation notification and routes, especially in those areas with substandard ingress/egress or confusing road patterns. Currently, evacuation implementation (whether voluntary or mandatory) consists of public safety authorities issuing evacuation orders via “Unified Command,” through these channels:

1. Law enforcement and fire agency authorities, including Cal Fire
2. Internet
3. Code Red
4. Cell phone
5. AM-FM radio
6. TV

The challenge is to (working with multiple independent fire agencies) **assess and identify current evacuation procedures, routes and systems, including what is working, and then determine how to build on and improve the active and passive systems.** Despite the excellent cooperation that exists between Nevada County's many agencies, that same independence results in the need for a lot of inter-agency communication and coordination in addressing these issues. We intend to support and facilitate that process.

A further challenge is the public education effort needed to effectively inform residents of the evacuation needs and plans that affect their specific neighborhoods. Individual Firewise Communities, through their respective coordinators, will have a major role to play in this aspect of our work.

PLAN OF ACTION (* = in conjunction with local fire agencies, CalFire and OES)

- 1) * Identify and establish evacuation improvements based on the needs of the first responders and the citizens of the various communities.
 - a) Recommend updating existing and new wild-land fire evacuation policies, procedures and system components while following current established protocols and suggesting new elements when, where, and if needed.
 - b) Research current types of warning systems, notification and signage (example ref. Gatlinburg, TN)
- 2) * Evaluate the effectiveness of different types of evacuation notification, including the viability of an audible warning system in mountainous rural areas.
 - a) Determine systems that can be instantly communicated from the Command Post to the citizens and specified evacuation routes based on the burning period and

fire behavior. (For example, in areas like Alta Sierra, plan the implementation of alerts involving an audible and visual notification system with directional evacuation route signage that is feasible for an Incident Management Team to manipulate in real time.)

- 3) Develop a template of the factors affecting evacuation and notification for individual Firewise Community coordinators to use in developing a customized plan for their particular community.
- 4) Provide and continue public education, PSA's and events for new and existing residents to understand how and when an evacuation is necessary and to eliminate confusion as to determined evacuation routes.