



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 8/11/2020

Agenda Placement: 10A

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Kerry Whitney for Minh Tran - County Executive Officer
County Executive Office
REPORT BY: Helene Franchi, Deputy County Executive Officer - 253-4820
SUBJECT: Fire Preparedness

RECOMMENDATION

Risk/Emergency Services Manager, Sheriff and County Fire Chief will provide an update on activities within the County pertaining to emergency preparedness for the 2020 wildfire season.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wildfire season this year carries an extra layer of danger as Napa County continues to respond to the threat of fires and public safety power shut-offs, as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Napa County Office of Emergency Services together with the Sheriff's Office and County Fire will provide updates on activities pertaining to emergency preparedness for the 2020 wildfire season.

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

No Action Required

FISCAL & STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No
County Strategic Plan pillar addressed: Healthy, Safe, and Welcoming Place to Live, Work, and Visit
Livable Economy for All
Effective and Open Government

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Keeping Napa County residents safe and prepared in the event of a wildfire is of critical importance. Seventy-five percent of Napa County's 500,000 acres has a high fire hazard and more than 250,000 of the County has burned over the last sixty years. A series of deadly wildfires in recent years have spurred calls for reducing wildfire risk. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic also presents unique challenges to firefighting, evacuation, and mass care efforts. In response, Napa County has made a number of changes to prepare and protect the County from devastating wildfire, alongside the ongoing threat of COVID-19.

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) continues to coordinate a number of multi-agency activities across the County to enhance emergency management capabilities. OES will provide updates on a planned public test of the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) system and recent changes to the NIXLE emergency notification system. OES has recently completed an update of the Napa County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and 17 associated emergency annexes, including an emergency operations center plan annex, evacuation annex, extreme temperature annex, mass care and shelter annex, pandemic annex, PSPS annex, and wildfire response annex. OES has also submitted the County's multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan to FEMA for final review and approval. The mitigation plan analyzes the County's hazards and identifies actions for risk reduction. Eight other jurisdictions and agencies participated in the County's plan. Those agencies are Cities of American Canyon, St. Helena, Calistoga, Town of Yountville, Napa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Napa County Office of Education, Napa Valley College and Howell Mountain Mutual Water District. The OES staff recently expanded, with the addition of two new emergency services officers. Chris Schow comes from the US Forest Service as Deputy Director of Fire and Aviation for California and holds a B.S. in Forestry from University of Montana. Leah Greenbaum comes to the County from Cal OES where she served as Chief of Recovery Planning. She previously consulted on disaster recovery and planning and holds a Masters in Public Administration from University of Washington.

The Napa County Fire Department (County Fire) will provide an update on recent fire preparedness and mitigation activities. This year County Fire will implement a Red Flag Program, in which the department will raise a red flag at each fire station when weather conditions result in a red flag warning. A red flag warning is issued by the National Weather Service when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. The program is designed to increase community awareness of red flag conditions. County Fire will also share information about their free chipping service, which is available to all county residents who live in designated fire hazard zones. Napa County continues to benefit from the expansion of the "Alert Wildfire" network of near-infrared, hill-top cameras used to detect and monitor fires. County Fire will provide information about how the emergency command center, and residents alike, can monitor conditions in real-time at AlertWildfire.org

Other countywide fire mitigation efforts include an updated Fire Hazard Abatement ordinance, which the Board adopted on July 23, 2019. The updated ordinance created a year-round defensible space requirement for property owners to clear combustible vegetation and rubbish within a 100-foot radius of structures. The ordinance also stepped up enforcement mechanisms, giving property owners 14 days to comply with an abatement notice, as opposed to 21 days. Last year, the County also added a code compliance officer to assist with inspections and enforcement of the County's defensible space law. This year the Fire Marshall's office has conducted over 700 fire hazard abatement inspections. The Chipping program has completed over 600 requests and chipped over 113,000 cubic yards of flammable brush at no cost to landowners. The Napa Communities Firewise Foundation

(NCFF) continues its long standing relationship with County Fire and has completed hazardous fuel reduction projects in Berryessa Highlands, Silverado Country Club, Atlas Peak, Berryessa Estates, Angwin, Mt Veeder/Dry Creek, and Soda Canyon.

Napa County Sheriff has implemented a European "hi-lo" warning siren to alert the public of imminent danger and facilitate evacuations. The unfamiliar tone, generated by sirens affixed to patrol cars, signals the public to seek media news for situational awareness. A number of other counties across California have followed the Napa County Sheriff's Office in implementing hi-lo sirens. Sonoma County successfully used hi-lo sirens in 2019 to facilitate evacuation orders during the Kincade Fire. In June, the State Senate unanimously approved a bill from State Senator Bill Dodd to allow all public safety agencies to use the warning sirens for evacuation.

The Sheriff's Office is also providing free evacuation tags to all residents, to place in highly visible place, such as a door, mailbox, or fence, as they evacuate their residences during an emergency. These tags will help first responders swiftly identify which homes have been evacuated so they can focus their attention on those who still need help and facilitate more effective evacuations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Helene Franchi