

INTRODUCING

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

# COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

»»» EXECUTIVE SUMMARY «««



BUILDING COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RESILIENCE AND FIRE-ADAPTED COMMUNITIES, REDUCING THE THREAT FROM WILDFIRES

# INTRODUCTION

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a strategic document that describes the environment, describes risks, and suggests actions and initiatives to lower wildfire risks and safeguard communities. A CWPP is essential for supporting the safety of lives, property, and natural resources in vulnerable Los Angeles communities interacting with wildland brush.

# Why Another Plan?

The City of Los Angeles has a lot of information concerning the mitigation-preparation-response and recovery of potential wildfires. They exist in various forms and formats and are housed internally in many different departments within the city response family. The composition of this **Community** Wildfire Protection plan is the culmination of a comprehensive analysis and collection of all relatable information from multiple sources, both internal and external, and assimilating it all into ONE document. Furthermore, much of the original composition has updated the plan to be consistent with the contemporary and evolving wildland threat. Ultimately, this plan will provide a comprehensive strategy and detailed path for government officials, elected officials, business owners, and citizens related to the mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery from wildfires in the City of Los Angeles.

# The Need for a CWPP in Los Angeles is Significant

The City of Los Angeles is at extreme risk from wildfire, influenced by various factors and reflected in several key metrics:

- **Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ):** CAL FIRE (the State's Firefighting organization) categorizes regions in the state by wildfire hazard levels: Moderate, High, or Very High. In Los Angeles City, many areas fall under High or Very High Fire Hazard Zones (FHSZ). These designations consider fuel load, topography, and fire weather conditions.
- **Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Expansion:** The expansion of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), where urban development intersects with untouched wildland, has significantly heightened wildfire risks. During the past 15 years, the WUI has continued to expand in the city, especially in areas of significant growth in the northern and eastern regions bordering the foothills.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** Climate change has exacerbated the threat of wildfires across California, particularly in the sprawling urban landscape of Los Angeles. Rising temperatures, extended periods of drought, and shifts in precipitation patterns have conspired to dry out vegetation, transforming it into a highly combustible fuel source for fires. Consequently, this confluence of factors has resulted in fire seasons that are not only longer but also significantly more intense, posing increased risks to natural ecosystems and human communities.
- **Population and Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Many areas in Los Angeles City that interface and intermix with the native brush are densely populated with residents and are frequented by tourists, further contributing to the wildfire threat. Since many communities are near fire-prone areas, effective evacuation plans and proactive fire prevention measures are crucial for protecting lives and properties. These strategies will reduce the possibility of wildland fires starting, reduce their spread and intensity if they occur, and better prepare the community and the fire department to respond and recover.
- **A History of Fires:** The City of Los Angeles has a history of destructive wildfires. Many have impacted high-value properties, including Griffith Park, the Hollywood Hills, and the Santa Monica Mountains. The 1961 Bel Air Fire destroyed 484 homes and changed home construction and brush clearance rules. In the past 10 years, wildfires in L.A. have increased in severity, including the Saddleridge Fire, the Skirball Fire, and the Getty Fire, to name a few. Every year increases the risk of a disastrous fire in Los Angeles.

# Los Angeles Has Many Areas of Wildland Urban Interface - and They Are At Risk



**The Santa Monica Mountains** stretch from Downtown Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean, featuring extensive chaparral, oak woodlands, and dry brush that act as natural fire fuel. Due to prolonged drought and the impacts of climate change, this vegetation has become more susceptible to ignition. Strong winds, notably the Santa Ana winds, can swiftly spread flames, posing threats to nearby communities like Pacific Palisades, Malibu, and Woodland Hills. The growth of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) over the years has heightened residential neighborhoods' vulnerability to wildfires. The area's rough terrain complicates firefighting and evacuation efforts, increasing the overall risk.

**Griffith Park**, a vast urban wilderness in Los Angeles, poses a significant wildfire risk. Renowned for its landmarks like the Griffith Observatory and the Hollywood Sign, the park features dry grasslands, shrubs, and wooded regions that easily ignite during fire season. Its closeness to dense neighborhoods such as Los Feliz and Hollywood Hills raises alarms about the possibility of wildfires endangering lives and property. The park's popularity for hiking and recreational activities also increases the risk, as human presence can unintentionally trigger wildfires. The 2007 wildfire devastated over 800 acres of Griffith Park and underscored the area's susceptibility to swift and destructive fires. With climate change worsening and fire seasons extending, reducing wildfire risks in these vital areas remains a critical objective for city planners and emergency services.

# Critical Aspects of a CWPP in the city of Los Angeles

- **Risk Assessment:** A CWPP rigorously evaluates wildfire risks in Los Angeles neighborhoods, precisely identifying high-risk areas based on vegetation, previous fire incidents, climate, and proximity to developments.
- **Fuel Reduction:** One key strategy for preventing wildfires is to reduce the vegetation and other potential fuels that can contribute to spreading fires. This can be achieved by creating defensible spaces around properties and clearing vegetation and other flammable materials to create a buffer zone. Additionally, conducting controlled burns can help reduce the accumulation of combustible materials and manage the vegetation in a controlled manner. Overall, proactive management of vegetation and fuels is essential for minimizing the risk and impact of wildfires.
- **Public and Firefighter Safety:** The plan focuses on safeguarding residents and firefighters by enhancing evacuation routes, improving emergency communications, and designating safe refuge areas.
- **Community Involvement:** A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) aims to foster active engagement from residents, local governments, and organizations. This collaboration ensures that strategies are tailored to meet the specific needs and vulnerabilities of neighborhoods in Los Angeles, thereby enhancing the community's preparedness and resilience in the face of potential wildfire threats.
- **Building and Fire Codes:** The plan is focused on promoting fire-resistant practices in new and existing developments by aligning with local building and fire codes. This involves using fire-resistant materials, strategic building spacing, and strict adherence to safety regulations.
- **Emergency Response and Recovery:** CWPPs frequently lay out detailed protocols for emergency response and post-fire recovery to guarantee swift and effective action and ensure the timely recovery of the Los Angeles area in the event of wildfires.
- **Grant and Funding:** A CWPP enables communities to qualify for federal, state, and private foundation grants to fund wildfire mitigation and preparedness projects, which are crucial for ongoing prevention efforts in Los Angeles.





# Developing the CWPP for the city of Los Angeles

**The Safe Community Project (SCP)**, known in L.A. as **MySafe:LA**, is the primary author of the CWPP for Los Angeles, functioning as the Regional Fire Safe Council. This vital community document has been crafted with contributions and input from diverse experts, including the Los Angeles City Fire Department, CAL FIRE, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and various community organizations. Together, they form the planning and evaluation team for the CWPP. Many of these members have previously worked on other CWPP documents in California, providing valuable insights to enhance this initiative.

**The Los Angeles Wildfire Resilience Alliance** is a collaboration between the Los Angeles City Fire Department and MySafe:LA, which has been diligently working to improve wildfire resilience since 2021. This public-private partnership is working to reduce the threat of wildfires and increase homeowner readiness. This includes developing the L.A. CWPP and creating NFPA Firewise USA sites and Fire Safe Councils.

**Participation from the public** is an essential component of any CWPP. MySafe:LA provides an easy-to-access process for the public to review the plan online and offer comments and suggestions.

**The CWPP consists of two main elements:** First, a printed document encompassing all facets of the Los Angeles environment, including census data, climate effects, wildfire risks, and strategies for response and recovery, which will be completed by early 2025. Second, an interactive online version of the plan will be available. This version will emphasize each at-risk region in the city and allow residents to enter their home addresses to assess the specific risks to their property. The online component is expected to launch in the summer of 2025.



# Learn More

To learn more about the Los Angeles CWPP, visit the wildfire website below or scan the QR code. Additional information is available as follows:

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