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Fire summit prepares action plans

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Nearly 200 Nevadans promised today to do their part to reduce the wildfire danger to their communities. Now, they want more homeowners to join the effort.

“There’s no better time,” said Lynn Isaeff of Midas in Elko County. “It’s up to each and everyone of us to lead by example.”

Community representatives, fire, forestry, county and city officials participated in the Nevada Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Summit in Reno, the state’s first attempt at a conference to do something about the danger.

Community action plans were written for each neighborhood facing the greatest wildfire threat: Mount Rose corridor. Red Rock. Antelope Valley. Hungry Valley.

A dozen communities were ranked in the Truckee Meadows, Storey County, Lake Tahoe Basin and the Carson Forest District as extreme or high in fire danger.

Drought, rising temperatures and development closer and deeper into wildlands has escalated the threat of wildfire to its highest level, officials said.

“This issue is so serious that everyone now knows that it can not be resolved without everyone working together,” said Mike Havercamp, a summit moderator.

Forming groups

Participants huddled in small groups in classrooms at the Regional Public Safety Training Facility in Reno. Havercamp set the tone for discussion.

“Let’s say you’re invited to a huge celebration in your community in 2010 and you’re celebrating that one thing the community has done to reduce the fire threat,” he said. “In one word, what would that be?”

Participants answered questions on cooperation, action, collaboration, responsibility and protection.

“Did you hear common themes here?” Havercamp said.

“Now, what are we building partnerships about? What are we here for? We’re here to take action. How do we start? How do we start to take action locally? It’s up to you to figure it out. This is the first meeting in your community.”

It did not take long for groups to figure it out. Groups of three to 12 people were formed based on population, geography and resources:

- o Washoe and Clark counties.

- o Churchill, Elko and Lyon counties.

- o Douglas-Tahoe and Washoe-Tahoe.

- o Rural areas: Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lincoln, Nye, White Pine, Pershing, Lander, Eureka, Storey and Mineral counties.

After an hour they came to an understanding and prioritized steps for their community.

“Remember this is grass roots, a ground level approach,” said Kurt Latipow, fire services coordinator for Washoe County.

For the Mount Rose corridor, communities from Wedge Parkway to Incline Village, it’s all about team work.

“We described what we wanted to see, and for us we envision a coordination through stakeholders — homeowner organizations, county planning, the fire safe councils — create one master organization to pull all of these groups together,” said Marty Scheuerman, Reno fire division chief and liaison for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District.

“What we’re looking at is having our first meeting before 2008, before the snow flies and fire becomes a memory in a skier’s mind.”

Community representatives at the Nevada Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Summit wrote actions plans. These are capsules.

Hungry Valley

- o Begin public education campaign to inform residents of the fire danger.
- o Hold town hall meetings in the community center.
- o Create a Fire Safe Council Chapter or start a new tribal program modeled after the nonprofit group.
- o Encourage residents to begin defensible space practices around their homes by knocking door to door.
- o Community representative: David Hunkup, Hungry Valley fire chief, 785-1373.

Mount Rose Corridor

- o Increase awareness with public service announcements and marketing. Display information on billboard along Mount Rose highway.
- o Apply for grants to continue fire prevention methods such as thinning, forest management and reducing areas of brush and vegetation that can create a fire hazard.
- o Create a collaborative effort joining homeowner’s associations, Nevada Fire Safe Council chapter leaders, fire and forestry personnel, and city and county liaisons.
- o Community representatives: Marty Scheuerman, Reno fire division chief and liaison for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, 334-2300; Kurt Latipow, Washoe County’s fire services coordinator, 328-2716; and Nevada Fire Safe Council, 884-4455.

Antelope Valley

- o Apply for Nevada Fire Safe Council chapter membership.
- o Hold a community meeting before Thanksgiving Day.
- o Start a door-to-door campaign on educating homeowner’s on the high-fire risk in their area, encouraging them to begin or maintain their defensible space on their properties.
- o Community representative: Marty Scheuerman, Reno fire division chief and liaison for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, 334-2300.

Red Rock

- o Create plan to raise visibility of street signs and addresses.
- o Meet at 4 p.m. Oct. 13 at the Silver Lake Volunteer Fire Department, 11525 Red Rock Road, to dedicate community center at fire house and begin public awareness education program for residents.
- o Educate homeowners on the importance of defensible space.
- o Community representative: Dale Hildebrandt, 970-3261.

Carson City-Douglas County

- o Launch advertising campaign for fire prevention in Carson City and Douglas County.
- o Create a public awareness campaign to homeowner’s and homeowner’s associations on the fire danger, fire prevention and defensible space.
- o Encourage communities to form chapters with the Nevada Fire Safe Council.
- o Community representatives: Nevada Fire Safe Council, 884-4455; Sierra Front Project Coordinator, 267-2123; and Janice Roberts, leader for the Nevada Fire Safe Council’s Holbrook chapter, 266-1076.

Elko County

- o Create visible address and street signs.
- o Reduce thick brush from power lines.

- o Reduce brush, trees and vegetation from property that poses as a fire hazard.
- o Create a Nevada Fire Safe Council chapter
- o Community representative: Ron Sailing, 738-6470