
Carson City stepping up wildfire prevention work

BY [DAVE FRANK](#)

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Crews are working to protect homes from wildfires by thinning vegetation around neighborhoods on the west side of Carson City.

The city fire and open space departments have thinned about an acre and a half of willows in the Lakeview neighborhood. They will move on to hundreds of acres of public and private land over the next two years in areas including Eagle Creek, Kings Canyon, C Hill and Voltaire Canyon.

The city will use a \$437,000 federal grant to remove sagebrush, cheatgrass and other plants through re-planting, chemical treatments and machine work.

The departments are careful with the work, however, because they want to control erosion, preserve animal habitats and avoid spreading harmful weeds, said Ann Bollinger, city open space coordinator.

Sheep grazing has been used over the past few years to cut down on dangerous plants, but a major project hasn't been done in about four years.

This kind of project is done every three to five years, said Fire Chief Stacey Giomi. It is part of a wildfire prevention program the city has been working on since 2002.

"It's not as simple as throwing money at it," Giomi said. "It's throwing coordination at it."

The city had to rely on people using trailers and dumpsters provided by the city to remove the plants before it got the grant for the current program.

The fire department has collected more than 475 tons of hazardous plants through this program since it started in 2006.

Larry McPhail, who helps manage wildfires for the fire department, will work with owners of 2,600 houses in the city's high-risk wildfire areas to make their neighborhoods safer.

City code requires residents to take steps to keep their houses safe from wildfires, but McPhail said what he wants to educate people rather than immediately writing them tickets.

He said he has had to give out three warnings this year so far.

Anything the city can do to reduce the risk of wildfires is appreciated, said Marie Bresch of the Lakeview chapter of the non-profit Nevada Fire Safe Council, which organizes volunteers to reduce the risk of wildfires.

She said people at Lakeview were already clearing flammable juniper from their yards and using grant money from the Fire Safe Council to clean up their neighborhood, but the more people that can cooperate to cut down on wildfires, the better.

For more information about wildfire protection, call the fire department's prevention division at 887-2210, ext. 1001.

- Contact reporter Dave Frank at dfrank@nevadaappeal.com or 881-1212.

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