



Published May 17th, 2017

Cal Fire Ready for Wildfire app now available

Nick Marnell

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection released an app to help the public stay a step ahead of a potentially devastating fire season and offers those who download the app a chance to win a \$10,000 grand prize.

The Cal Fire Ready for Wildfire app includes checklists for taking charge of defensible space, assembling an emergency supply kit and creating an evacuation and family communication plan. One of its most popular features is notification of wildfire locations.

"You can set up a push notification for your home area or for areas where your loved ones live. Or, the location of a Tahoe cabin," said Mike Marcucci, Cal Fire battalion chief for Contra Costa County. "Use it for travel. If the Grapevine is closed because of a fire, it will tell you."

Cal Fire maintains jurisdiction over State Responsibility Areas throughout California. Anything outside a city limit falls under a Cal Fire SRA. In addition, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District include mutual threat zones, where a fire will prompt automatic notification to Cal Fire.

"Areas like Wilder, Happy Valley, Sleepy Hollow," Marcucci said. "If there's a fire in those spots, we send a full-on response." The agency responds to Contra Costa County calls out of the Sunshine Station in Clayton. "Fires don't observe jurisdictional boundaries," Marcucci said. "I stay up at night worrying about Lamorinda because there hasn't been a major fire there in years."

He's not the only one.

ConFire Chief Jeff Carman has repeatedly warned of the potential for a catastrophic fire in the Lafayette area, especially this year after a record-breaking rainy season that caused significant growth in annual grasses - fuel for incinerating wildfires.

"With the potentially challenging wildfire season ahead, you can never have too many tools to help you prepare," said MOFD Chief Stephen Healy, who praised the Cal Fire app for its timely alerts and accurate information.

The Ready for Wildfire app is available on Google Play and the Apple App Store. Those who download the app by May 21 will be eligible to win a \$10,000 grand prize that includes a \$7,500 home improvement gift certificate and \$2,500 cash. The Cal Fire website lists details and rules.

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