

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



# 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.



# INTRODUCTION

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



# The Need for a CWPP in Los Angeles is Urgently Needed

Los Angeles has a lengthy history of significant wildfires. January 2025 proved to be one of the worst months for wildfires in the city's history, so an effective plan is urgently needed. The CWPP for Los Angeles will address the following topics:

- **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 (VHFSZ)**. 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 population growth in canyons and 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 and dangerous to life and property.
- **Population and Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Many areas in Los Angeles that interface and intermix with the native brush are densely populated and may be 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 may 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 January 2025, a historic series of wildfires swept through the city, driven by extreme winds and destroying thousands of homes. Each year, the danger of another catastrophic fire in Los Angeles increases.





# Developing the CWPP for the city of Los Angeles

**The Safe Community Project (SCP)**, known in Los Angeles as **MySafe:LA**, is the principal developer of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This FEMA grant-funded initiative is a community-driven effort rather than exclusively managed by the city or the fire department. Nonetheless, the CWPP has been formulated with input from various partners, including the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD), the Police Department, CAL FIRE, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), local elected officials, and numerous community organizations.

**The Los Angeles Wildfire Resilience Alliance** is a collaboration between the **LAFD** 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 creating NFPA Firewise USA sites and Fire Safe Councils. These entities will be essential for future prevention and aid community members with support related to rebuilding following significant wildfires. This critical foundation will also drive the CWPP and community resilience.

**Public input** plays a vital role in the CWPP planning process, especially from those impacted by the devastating fires that ravaged thousands of homes in L.A. This diverse blend of expertise and personal experiences will establish a solid foundation for developing and publishing an effective plan.



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



**The Santa Monica Mountains** extend from Downtown Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean. They are characterized by vast chaparral, oak woodlands, and dry brush, which are natural fire fuel. Due to ongoing drought and climate change, this vegetation is increasingly vulnerable to ignition. Strong winds, mainly the Santa Ana winds, can rapidly spread fires. Significant incidents include the *Palisades*, *Hurst*, *Sunset*, *Kenneth*, *Saddleridge*, and *Getty* fires. The region's rugged terrain and outdated road and water infrastructure complicate firefighting and evacuation, heightening 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. It also highlights aging infrastructure, including but not limited to the street system, power grid, water delivery, mobile communications, and the need for new, advanced technology.
- **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. Overall, proactive management of vegetation and fuels is essential for minimizing the risk and impact of wildfires.
- **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 a significant incident.
- **Public and Firefighter Safety:** The plan focuses on safeguarding residents and firefighters by enhancing evacuation routes, improving emergency communications, and designing safe refuge areas for the public.
- **Community Involvement:** A CWPP aims to foster active engagement from residents, local governments, and independent organizations. This collaboration ensures that strategies are tailored to meet the specific needs and vulnerabilities of Los Angeles neighborhoods, enhancing the community's preparedness and resilience for future 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.
- **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.





# The Los Angeles 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

**MySafe:LA** operates under the **Safe Community Project**, which is an *independent* non-profit organization that serves the public good. It functions separately from the Los Angeles City Fire Department, and the results of its efforts are independently managed.

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EIN: 27-0967511  
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