



# BURNING ISSUES

WWW.TAHOEFIRE.COM

FALL 2008

## Fire Chief's Corner:

Dear Tahoe Township homeowners,

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to you about an issue of great importance, the funding of wildland fire safety in our community. The wildland fires of 2007 & 2008, both here in the Tahoe Basin and in California, have demonstrated all too clearly the consequences of failing to adequately protect our neighborhoods from the inevitable threat of wildfire.

In 2004 the Fire District unveiled its Community Wildfire Risk/Hazard Assessment Project. This project (commonly called a Community Wildfire Protection Plan or CWPP) scientifically assessed the fire danger of the seven geographical areas of the Fire District and recommended treatment prescriptions for each area. Six of the seven areas were rated as either High or Extreme fire danger, the seventh (the Stateline corridor) was rated as Moderate. Treatment cost, broken into 15 priorities, was \$12,800,000.00 in 2004.

Since 2004 the District has made considerable progress in organizing and implementing fuels reduction in the community. Twelve Fire Safe Chapters have been formed, with significant projects undertaken in almost every neighborhood, mostly financed with grant funding. A Residential Chipping Program was begun with over 240 requests for chipping services filled. All of this, however, has not addressed the more pressing need to conduct fuels reduction activities in the forestlands surrounding the community. The true lesson of the Angora Fire is that a fire started in the forest can devastate an entire neighborhood unless it can be significantly slowed with large-scale shaded fuel breaks while still in the forest.

The reason for my letter today is to explain the District's plan to fund larger scale projects and other wildfire protection measures. The Fire District is proposing to the voters a special assessment of \$0.05 per \$100.00 of assessed value. This modest assessment generates approximately \$650,000.00 of additional revenue by increasing property taxes by \$17.50 for each \$100,000 of your property's assessed value for a maximum of 30 years.

A **"yes" vote** would permit the District to levy a property tax of up to 5 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation for a period of 30 years. The purpose of the additional levy is to provide funding for a fuels reduction and wildland firefighting program, implement fire protection projects, acquire capital improvements and improve wildland fire

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## Check Us Out On The Web

The Fire District is very pleased to announce the redesign of our website, [www.tahoefire.com](http://www.tahoefire.com). This was an ambitious undertaking by Firefighter/Paramedics Brandon Brady and Chris Peterson. The new site allows us to communicate with our residents and property owners in a more timely manner and allow access to our services from anywhere that you happen to be.

Communications on current issues and easy access to our services are available on the front page. From here you can read messages from the Fire Chief and submit online requests for two of our most popular services, Curbside Chipping and Defensible Space Evaluations.

From the menu on the left hand side of the page you can access other information such as employment applications and requirements for Pre-TRPA plans review, complete with a sample plan. There is also a link to the latest Newsletter and links to agendas and minutes from Board of Trustees Meetings. Action pictures and a Fire District activities calendar are also available.

Please check us out the next time you are "surfing the net".

### • *There's Still Time To Clean Up!*



Curbside chipping services will continue throughout the fall and into the first week of November

Pick up a Chipping Request Form at the Round Hill Fire Station or sign up online at [www.tahoefire.com](http://www.tahoefire.com).

## Fuels Reduction Program Update

Summer has been incredibly productive for the Tahoe Douglas Fire District Fuels Reduction Program. Here is a list of accomplishments so far:

**Defensible Space Evaluations:** So far this year the District's Defensible Space Inspectors have completed over 375 Evaluations on resident's properties from Glenbrook to the top of Kingsbury Grade. Properties both large and small have been evaluated for their ability to survive a wildland fire. There is still plenty of time to receive this free service before the snow flies.

**Tree Removal Permits:** The Fire District issues tree removal permits under a Memorandum of Understanding with the TRPA. Through this cooperative effort, over 250 permits have been issued for trees that constitute a fire hazard to a structure. Permits must be issued to the property owner or to a designated representative through a letter of authorization.

**For more information on either Defensible Space Evaluations or Tree Removal Permits call the Defensible Space Office at (775) 588-3591 ext 227.**

**Zephyr Fire Crew:** The Zephyr Fire Crew has been working non-stop this season on a number of projects to reduce the wildland fire danger in the Fire District.

TAHOE DOUGLAS FIRE DISTRICT



- **Community Chipping:** So far this year the Crew has performed chipping services for many of our residents and chipped approximately 34,000 pounds of slash and brush.
- **Stateline 1 Project:** Work on this Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) grant-funded project is ongoing. So far 33 acres of forest have been treated between Kingsbury Grade and Upper Lake Parkway. An additional 73 acres were treated by a cut-to-length contractor.
- **Stateline 3 Project:** In this project the Crew treated 15 acres of property behind Kingsbury Middle School. Another 65 acres were treated with machinery. This project was also funded through a SNPLMA grant. An informative day of tours and presentations was provided for the public at the conclusion.
- **Round Hill USFS Urban Lots:** The Crew worked under contract with the United States Forest Service to clear 23 lots totaling 32 acres in the Round Hill subdivision of excessive brush and trees. This project is a great benefit not only to the Forest Service, but to residents of Round Hill whose houses were threatened by the increased danger presented by overgrown vacant lots.



- **Other Projects:** A total of 25 acres of other fuels reduction projects have also been completed.
- **Fires:** The Zephyr Fire Crew was responded to both the Soldier Fire, a ten day assignment in El Dorado County, and the Burnside Fire in Alpine County. This is in addition to some smaller fires within the fire district.
- **Training:** The Nevada Division of Forestry has periodically assigned a helicopter to initial attack in the Tahoe Basin. The Crew has been engaged in ongoing training with the helicopter crew in anticipation of working together in the event of a fire.

protection services in the District. Passage of the question would increase the cost for the owner of a new \$100,000 home with a taxable value of \$100,000 by approximately \$17.50 per year. Taxable value may not be the same as market value. Tax rates are levied against assessed value, which is 35% of the taxable value.

A “no” vote would prevent the levy of such additional tax at this time.

**Argument Advocating the Fire Protection Question:** Fire protection services are of critical importance to the residents of the Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District. Current funding levels are inadequate to provide the increased level of services necessary to reduce the impact of wildland fires. The new tax is the only means available to provide the District with the funding needed to improve wildland fire protection services to those living and working within the District. Services provided by the passage of this question would include:

- . Implementing projects and programs identified in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- . Providing additional personnel, including fuel reduction and fire hand crews.
- . Providing curbside chipping.
- . Implementing fuel break projects around communities.
- . Continuing the Defensible Space Evaluation Program.
- . Acquiring capital improvements for fire protection services, including the purchase of fire equipment and vehicles and the upkeep of a fuels reduction and fire crew work center.
- . Obtaining available grants that require matching funds from the District.
- . Preventing fires from occurring and combating fires that cannot be prevented.

**Argument Opposing the Fire Protection Question:** Passage of the Question will allow the District to increase property taxes by up to 5 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation for a period of up to 30 years. Further, the new tax would not be subject to the property tax caps established by the 2005 Nevada Legislature. Taxes are already too high. In these difficult economic times, no new services should be implemented. The present levy provides adequate funding to staff personnel, implement fire protection projects and acquire capital improvements for fire protection.

**Rebuttal to Argument Opposing the Fire Protection Question:** Although current funding levels are sufficient to provide basic fire protection services, they are inadequate to fund a comprehensive wildfire risk mitigation plan. Recent catastrophic wildfires in our area are evidence that additional fire prevention measures are necessary. Fuels reduction projects and other preventative measures can effectively reduce fire risk in the District; but, implementation of these measures requires additional funding. Even with an aggressive fuels management program, fires will still occur. These funds will increase initial fire attack capability within the District. A tax increase of 5 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation is minimal compared to the potential property damage, business losses, and loss of life from a single catastrophic wildland fire.

**Rebuttal to Argument Advocating the Fire Protection Question:** Current funding levels are adequate to meet the fire protection needs of the District and increased funding does not necessarily ensure increased fire protection. The District can improve its fire protection service without an additional tax by prioritizing and reallocating the use of its current funding.

**Actual Home in Round Hill**

Douglas County Taxable Total ----- \$351,787  
**Assessed Value** ----- \$123,125  
 .05 x \$123,125/100 = Tax increase of **\$61.56 Annually**

**Actual Home in Skyland**

Douglas County Taxable Total ----- \$544,400  
**Assessed Value** ----- \$190,540  
 .05 x \$190,540/100 = Tax increase of **\$95.00 Annually**

**Actual Home in Kingsbury**

Douglas County Taxable Total ----- \$488,117  
**Assessed Value** ----- \$170,841  
 .05 x \$170,841/100 = Tax increase of **\$85.42 Annually**

**Actual Home in Glenbrook**

Douglas County Taxable Total ----- \$965,374  
**Assessed Value** ----- \$337,879  
 .05 x \$337,879/100 = Tax increase of **\$169.00 Annually**

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TAHOE DOUGLAS FIRE PROTECTION  
DISTRICT  
P.O. Box 919  
Zephyr Cove, NV 89448  
Phone: 775-588-3591

## **Winter Home Safety Tips**

With fall already upon us, it's a sure bet that winter won't be far behind. Winter brings with it its own array of safety problems. From carbon monoxide poisoning to increased fire hazards in the home, we all need to take a minute to review some winter safety tips from the Home Safety Council. These tips and more can be found at [www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org).

### **Carbon Monoxide**

- Install at least one CO alarm on every level of your home. Replace the battery when we turn back the clocks.
- Keep all fuel burning appliances properly adjusted and serviced by a trained professional.
- Don't use a cooking stove to heat your home.
- Never use a gas or charcoal grill inside your home or garage.

### **Woodstove and Fireplace Safety**

- Burn only dry, seasoned firewood. Never burn trash, cardboard boxes, gift wrap, or Christmas trees.
- Have your chimney inspected annually for cracks, blockages, leaks, and creosote buildup.
- Keep all flammable objects; wallpaper, curtains, bedding, clothing, pets, and holiday decorations at least 36 inches away from fireplaces and wood stoves.
- Open flues before lighting fireplaces and wood stoves.

### **Using Space Heaters Safely**

- Use only heaters listed by an independent testing laboratory such as UL, FM, ETL, CSA etc.
- Turn off space heaters before leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Supervise children and pets when space heaters are being used.
- Don't use space heaters to dry clothing and other flammable items.
- Keep all flammable objects at least 36 inches from space heaters.

### **Be Prepared For Power Outages.**

- Stock up on batteries, flashlights, portable radios, manual can openers, bottled water, and blankets.
- Use battery lights instead of candles or fuel burning lanterns to avoid fire danger and carbon monoxide poisoning.