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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **MAY IS LAKE TAHOE WILDFIRE AWARENESS MONTH Becoming a Fire Adapted Community**

**Lake Tahoe, CA/NV** – With record drought conditions in the West, preparing your home for wildfire is more important than ever. May has been designated “Wildfire Awareness Month” in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This year’s theme is “Prepare Your Home For Wildfire” with a focus on creating and sustaining Fire Adapted Communities.

A Fire Adapted Community (FAC) is a community located in a fire-prone area that requires little assistance from firefighters during a wildfire. Residents of these communities accept responsibility for living in a high fire-hazard area. They possess the knowledge and skills to:

- Prepare their homes and property to survive wildfire.
- Evacuate early, safely and effectively.
- Survive, if trapped by wildfire.

As part of this year’s theme, the Tahoe Basin Fire Chiefs are encouraging residents to work with their local Fire Districts and host neighborhood block parties during May and throughout the summer. These parties create an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other, meet their Fire District and agency representatives and learn what it means to become a Fire Adapted Community.

“We have to shift our way of thinking from being reactionary about protecting our homes once a wildfire starts, and instead, start proactively preparing our homes to survive a wildfire before one begins,” said Chief Harris of Lake Valley Fire Protection District. “When whole communities work together for this goal, they become fire-adapted.”

Things you can do to become more fire adapted include:

- Talk to your local fire department about how to prepare for a wildfire, situational awareness before a fire, when to evacuate, and what you and your community should expect during a response.
- Contact your local fire department to conduct a risk assessment on your property.
- Create a plan to address issues in your property’s Defensible Space Zone, including:
  - maintaining a noncombustible area around the perimeter of your home;
  - managing vegetation along fences;
  - clearing debris from decks and patios, eaves, and porches;
  - selecting proper landscaping and plants;

*imagine. plan. achieve.*

- knowing the local ecology and fire history;
- moving radiant heat sources away from the home (i.e., wood piles, fuel tanks, sheds);
- thinning trees and ladder fuels around the home
- Develop a personal and family preparedness plan.
- Support land management agencies by learning about wildfire risk reduction efforts, such as using prescribed fire to manage local landscapes.
- Contact the local planning/zoning office to find out if your home is in a high wildfire risk area and if there are specific local or county ordinances you should be following
- If you have a homeowner association, work with them to identify regulations that incorporate proven preparedness landscaping, home design, and building material such as the recommendations from Living with Fire for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

In addition, there are several Wildfire Awareness Month events happening throughout the Tahoe Basin including:

- Kids wildfire awareness event at the Tahoe Environmental Research Center from 4 – 6 pm on Monday, May 12;
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan meeting at the City of SLT Airport from 5 – 7 pm on May 22;
- A City of South Lake Tahoe Council presentation on Community Wildfire Protection Plans at 9 am on May 20;
- TRPA Governing Board presentation on Catastrophic Wildfire: Update and Overview.

For a complete list of events please visit [www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe/](http://www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe/).

“In the Tahoe Basin, the question is not if, but when another wildfire will occur,” said Mark Regan, President of the Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Association. “We would like to take this month to seriously encourage people to prepare themselves, their neighborhood and their homes for wildfire,” he said.

For more information, or to locate your local fire district, visit [www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe/](http://www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe/).

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency leads the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region, while improving local communities, and people’s interactions with our irreplaceable environment. For additional information, call Kristi Boosman at (775) 589-5230 or email her at [kboosman@trpa.org](mailto:kboosman@trpa.org).

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