



Farm Bureau at work

California Farm Bureau's government affairs team is at the Capitol, advocating for farmers, ranchers and agriculture's future. Here are some key issues Farm Bureau is focused on this week.

October 20, 2023

◆ ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two recent announcements in the insurance and wildfire issue areas, respectively, show the connection between these topics, as Farm Bureau members well know. In fact, at a recent Department of Insurance press conference from Commissioner Lara specifically mentioned California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johannson by name as one of the groups representing Californian's that face challenges from this insurance / wildfire nexus. Commissioner Lara committed that the investments being made to home harden and build defensible space will trigger priority pathways for policyholders currently in the FAIR Plan, as well as earn premium discounts in the competitive market.

Insurance

The California Department of Insurance, Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), and Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA), conducted a live wildfire demonstration to show the effectiveness of research-based wildfire mitigation actions, including maintaining a noncombustible five-foot buffer around a home – Zone 0 – to help reduce its risk of ignition.

Embers, not the main fire front, are the leading cause of home ignitions during a wildfire. The live fire demonstration featured a side-by-side look at fire behavior impacts on mitigated vs. unmitigated structures.

"Firefighters can't do it alone – everyone has a part to play in making California safer from wildfires, including insurance companies," said Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara. "California is the first state in the nation to require insurance companies to incorporate our new Safer from Wildfires framework into the price of insurance – so we reduce wildfire risk and incentivize people to harden their homes. If you do the work, you should get the reward, and today's demonstration highlights the difference these actions make in reducing fire risk."

A noncombustible Zone 0, along with the roof and specific building features such as gutters and vents, are key areas of IBHS's Wildfire Prepared Home program where California homeowners can earn a designation by taking a system of science-backed actions to reduce their home's wildfire risk. The five-foot buffer around a home is also critical to California Department of Insurance's Safer from Wildfires, a ground-up approach to wildfire resilience that qualifies California homeowners for insurance discounts. "Where we see a beautiful bush or wood mulch, an ember sees fuel," said IBHS CEO Roy Wright. "Homeowners spend hours selecting countertops, flooring and paint colors, yet may be unaware that the choices for groundcover and vegetation in the first five feet out from their home can be the difference in having a house to come home to after a wildfire or having to look somewhere else for shelter."

During a wildfire, embers may collect in Zone 0, also known as the home ignition zone, and smolder, ultimately igniting and spreading to the home. Once a home ignites in a wildfire, it is almost always a total loss without firefighter intervention.

Homeowners are urged to create a non-combustible five-foot buffer around the home by removing combustible items and vegetation, replacing groundcover like wood or rubber mulch with materials such as river rocks or gravel, and replacing the first five feet of combustible fencing attached to the home. Items on top of or underneath attached porches and decks should also be non-combustible and any deck four inches or lower to the ground should be enclosed with 1/8 inch or finer metal mesh. Keeping Zone 0 free of debris build up over time is critical.

“As our Wildland Urban Interface grows in tandem with bigger, hotter, and faster-moving climate-driven wildfires, we aim to partner with stakeholders that are equally committed to innovation and prevention,” said OCFA Fire Chief Brian Fennessy. “The IBHS and CDI are such partners, and their data-driven wildfire mitigation efforts are critical to our collective mission to save lives and protect property.” To view images and videos from the events, visit [here](#).

About the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS)

The IBHS mission is to conduct objective, scientific research to identify and promote effective actions that strengthen homes, businesses and communities against natural disasters and other causes of loss. Learn more about at ibhs.org.

About Safer from Wildfires

Every action under Safer from Wildfires qualifies consumers for an insurance discount, including installing a Class A fire-rated roof, creating a 5-foot ember-resistant zone around the structure and noncombustible 6 inches at the bottom of walls, adding ember- and fire-resistant vents, double pane windows or added shutters, and more. More information is available at insurance.ca.gov.

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Wildfire

GRANT FUNDING TO CREATE WILDFIRE PREPARED COMMUNITIES

A new pilot program leverages federal and state funds to support defensible space and ignition resistant retrofits in six vulnerable California counties Sacramento – Homeowners in six California counties will soon begin receiving home retrofits with ignition resistant materials to California’s most vulnerable populations as part of the California Wildfire Mitigation Program.

The pilot home hardening initiative provides funding for defensible space and ignition resistant retrofits to harden approximately 2,500 homes in six counties over the next three years. The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) established a joint powers authority to develop this pilot program. Home hardening has never been done at a community scale like this before; typically, home hardening has been done by individual homeowners, not entire communities. The intent of this pilot program is to create a template from which communities can learn how to scale up from hardening a few individual homes to hardening the entire community, creating greater resilience for everyone. “This is an important step forward,” said Acting State Fire Marshal Daniel Berlant. “The home hardening initiative pilot will help California create a model for hardened communities that others can learn from and replicate.”

The California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) was established through the passage of Assembly Bill 38 in 2019. The legislation directed CAL FIRE and Cal OES to enter into a joint powers agreement to administer a program to encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting, and fuel modification activities that create optimal defensible space. The pilot initiative will focus on socially vulnerable communities and provide financial assistance for low- and moderate-income households to complete home hardening and create defensible space. The purpose is to aid communities that have been identified as vulnerable to wildfire, including impacts by future climate risk, and have populations that have a greater risk of wildfire. Projects developed for these communities will leverage federal funds through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program with matching state dollars allocated by California’s Wildfire & Forest Resilience Budget Package.

In August, FEMA awarded the first three pilot communities in Lake, Shasta, and San Diego counties, funding to begin retrofitting following the completion of all necessary environmental reviews. The second round of pilots were recently awarded funds to begin the first phase of program development in El Dorado and Tuolumne counties. Siskiyou County was added as the 6th pilot with a defensible space only pilot using state funds. “We were selected due to the county’s high risk of severe fire, other vulnerabilities, and our early creation of the Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience,” said Tiffany Schmid, El Dorado County Chief Administrative Officer. “Over the next three years, this grant will help harden hundreds of homes in the Weber Creek drainage area south of U.S. Highway 50 through defensible space and ignition-resistant construction retrofits.” The CWMP is partnering with six pilot communities to develop and implement the program framework. The first site work is expected to begin by Fall 2023.

- Dulzura, San Diego County Project Management – San Diego County Funding - \$12,688,600 (FEMA \$9,516,450 & State \$3,172,150) Deliverables – Defensible Space and Home Hardening for 229 homes
- Kelseyville Riviera, Lake County Project Management – North Coast Opportunities, Inc. (NCO) Funding - \$22,182,530 (FEMA \$19,964,277 & State \$2,218,253) Deliverables – Defensible Space and Home Hardening for 500 homes
- Whitmore, Shasta County Project Management – Shasta Fire Safe Council Funding - \$9,302,135 (FEMA \$6,976,601 & State \$2,325,534) Deliverables – Defensible Space and Home Hardening for 144 homes
- Weber Creek/ Placerville, El Dorado County Project Management – El Dorado County Funding - \$1,337,650 (FEMA \$1,203,885 & State \$133,765) Deliverables – Defensible Space and Home Hardening
- Ponderosa Hills, Tuolumne County Project Management - Tuolumne County Funding - \$931,200 (FEMA \$838,000 & State \$93,200) Deliverables - Defensible Space and Home Hardening
- West Mount Shasta, Siskiyou County Project Management - Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District Funding - \$3,598,000 (State) Deliverables - Defensible Space and Home Hardening

To learn more about Defensible Space and Home Hardening, visit readyforwildfire.org

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Transportation

This week, California Air Resources Board held a free online training to provide an overview of the Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulation. The training covered who is affected and outlined the upcoming compliance requirements. CARB has several resources available to help answer specific questions:

- [Advanced Clean Fleets Fact Sheets](#)
- [ZEV TruckStop](#)

As many members may recall, CA Farm Bureau has participated in many meetings regarding ACF. This regulation was created to meet California’s health-based air quality standards and greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, the trucks and buses operated in the state and the fuel they use must be transformed away from petroleum. California is working to meet the Governor’s goal of one hundred percent zero-emission transportation where feasible by 2045. The ACF regulation applies to fleets performing drayage operations, those owned by State, local, and federal government agencies, and high priority fleets. High priority fleets are entities that own, operate, or direct at least one vehicle in California, and that have either \$50 million or more in gross annual revenues, or that own, operate, or have common ownership or control of a total of 50 or more vehicles (excluding light-duty package delivery vehicles). The regulation affects medium- and heavy-duty on-road vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating greater than 8,500 pounds, off-road yard tractors, and light-duty mail and package delivery vehicles.

Farm Bureau has repeatedly shared concerns with the implementation of this regulation as a majority of CA Farmers and Ranchers live in remote and rural communities that have limited access to the infrastructure required for this proposal. Furthermore, the time required to charge these vehicles in addition to the time needed to travel to these charging facilities could jeopardize food security and

availability. These limitations do not stop at rural community borders, farmers and ranchers are part of a vital supply chain that is still feeling the effects of port congestion caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The transportation of food, and various agricultural commodities, was disrupted – which ultimately led many international consumers of these products to seek new suppliers in different markets. Another transportation disruption of goods to and at the ports, could limit the distribution of ag goods which accounts for more than 22 billion dollars of California’s economy. Materials from the training can be found [here](#) along with a full recording from Wednesday’s session. *Staff: Katie Little, klittle@cfbf.com*

Water

CAFB Staff Featured at Water Summit

Farm Bureau Senior Policy Advocate Alexandra Biering will be a panelist at the Water Education Foundation's 39th annual Water Summit on October 25 in Sacramento. The day-long water conference includes several panels on regulatory and policy change, SGMA, and infrastructure change in the west. Registration is still open at <https://www.watereducation.org/foundation-event/water-summit-2023>

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