



Oak Hill Area
**FIRE SAFE
COUNCIL**

May 2022 Newsletter



FIREWISE USA
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Dear Neighbors,

Spring is here but it may be a dry summer! In this newsletter, you will learn what PG&E has planned for this year, learn about a GREAT new source for ideas about **home hardening** and find out how you and your neighbors can apply for local **mini-grants** our Fires Safe Council is offering to help residents prepare for the upcoming wildfire season!!

First Community Day a Success!



Local residents of our Oak Hill Area enjoyed a pleasant get together March 12th, with hotdogs, music, kids games, and wildfire prep information galore. Many volunteers made the day a success, as did our local supporters. A **BIG** thank you to all involved, including those who came out and joined in on the fun!

Thank you to all these volunteers, who took time out from their busy schedules, to help with set up, running all the areas, and/or take down!

Luke Anker
Linda and Loren Azevedo
Alice Cantelow
Steve Gregorich
Mark Griner

Beckie and Mark Leighton
Irene and Shannon Lile
Eliza, Kaitlin, and Lester
Lubetkin
Katie Meyer

Kim Morgan
Julie Nishinaka
Lara Stefan
Alan Thompson
Deb Turpin

Prize winners
Kelli Riser
and
Bud Dean- for
Home
Hardening/
Defensible
Space work
done since
January



Favorite
kids
game-
shooting
embers off
house with
water gun



Thank you too to those who recorded their defensible space and home hardening efforts on our display sheets. We were impressed by the work people have done! **Winners (for most done, and randomly chosen) were:**

Radio: Kelli Kiser **Caulk gun and Fire caulking:** Kim Morgan **Loppers:** Bud Dean and Shannon Lile

And a **huge** thank you to our financial supporters as well!

Bootleg Productions (music)
El Dorado County Fire Protection District (station use)
Pleasant Oak Baptist Church (parking, tables, popups)
Wilkinson Portables (porta potty discount)

El Dorado Amateur Radio Club (radio prize)
Eliza Lubetkin (graphic design)
Placerville Fruit Growers (loppers prize)
True Value Hardware, Missouri Flat (caulk gun prize)
Leightons (food) and various participants and board members (donations)

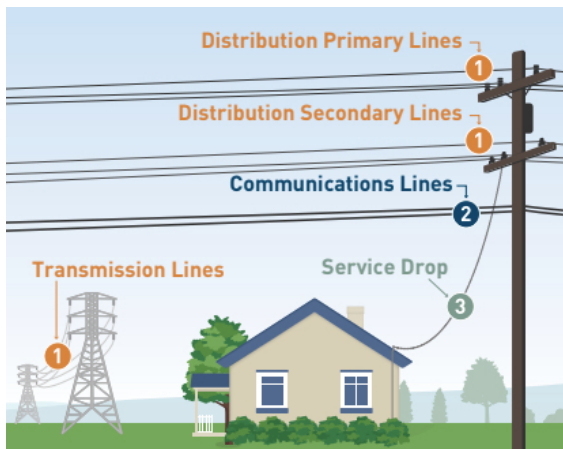


What Does PG&E Have Planned for This Year in the Oak Hill Area?

Lester Lubetkin

As we drive around our neighborhoods and see the many tree service workers and marked trees, folks have been asking what PG&E has planned for this summer. So I asked our local PG&E Public Safety Specialist. Here is what I learned:

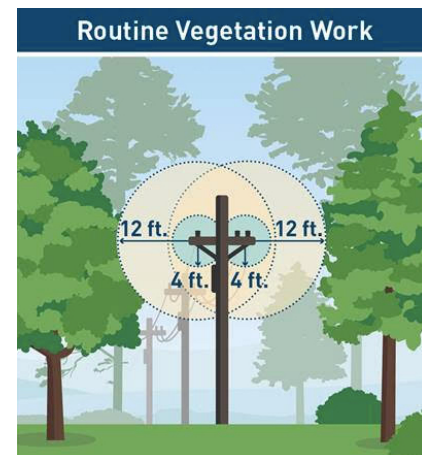
PG&E actually has several different vegetation management programs which are generally tiered off of each other. And the terminology can get a bit taxing! The



main power lines are called **transmission lines**, whereas the **distribution lines** are the ones in our neighborhoods, and then there are the **service drops**, which are the power lines leading to your home. Oh, and also the **communication lines**, such as phone, cable, etc. PG&E is responsible for clearance around the **transmission** and **distribution** lines, but not the **communication** lines or the **service drops**.

And then, they

have several different levels of vegetation maintenance. **Routine Maintenance** is the annual pruning or cutting down of dead, diseased, dying and defective trees. They are required to do this work to keep us safe and the powerlines functioning. Based on the CPUC's (Calif Public Utility Commission) Fire-Threat Hazard maps (which are different from the CalFire Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps), the amount of clearance of

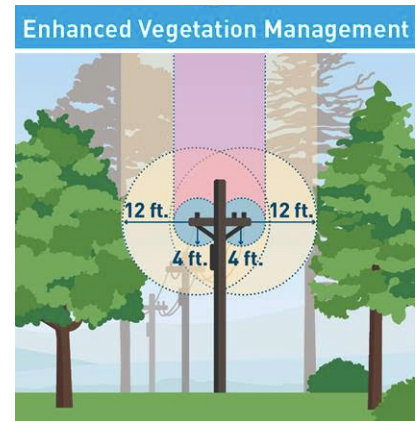


vegetation around power lines can vary from 1.5 feet in non High Fire Threat areas to a recommended 12 feet in High Fire Threat areas. The entire Oak Hill

Area Fire Safe Council area lies within a Tier 2 High Fire Threat District.



Generally, six months after the routine



maintenance, PG&E or its contractors take on responding to **Drought and Other Tree Mortality**. This is another level of power line inspections and possible removal of dead, dying and diseased trees that pose a hazard to the power lines. These trees may be one tree length or more away from the power lines.

And then there is **Enhanced Vegetation Management**. This combines routine maintenance with removal of dead, dying and diseased trees, plus clearance of vegetation overhanging the power lines.

So, while it might seem like PG&E or their contractors are coming to your neighborhood pretty frequently, these crews are often doing slightly different work to comply with various public rules and requirements. And there is also **System Hardening** and **Power Pole Clearance** going on as well.

What about all that wood that has been left behind?

I asked the public safety specialist about all of the tree trunks being left behind. From what I have seen, the PG&E crews have been doing a pretty good job of removing limbs and slash or chipping onsite, but I see a lot of tree trunks lying on the ground. Many folks ask to keep the wood for firewood or other purposes. The trees belong to the property owner, so PG&E can't just haul them away. However, for work done as a part of the **Enhanced Vegetation Management** program, the property owner can request that the trees be removed (this same

service is not available for the other types of vegetation maintenance). PG&E's "Pro" tip is to "be specific and direct" as to what EXACTLY you want done with the cut wood. For more information, complaints, or questions about PGE activities, email wildfirewoodmanagement@pge.com or call 1-877-295-4949.

Local Areas to be covered this year

PG&E is already working on **Enhanced Vegetation Management** in the area around Oak Hill Road, generally south of Squaw Hollow Creek and west of Nashville Trail. PG&E does plan to do **Enhanced Vegetation Management** work in the area of Hanks Exchange and Pleasant Valley Road west to just before Zandonella Road. Areas that don't look like they will be worked on this year include Big Oak Road and Zandonella Road, and the smaller roads taking off of those collector roads.

For more information, visit the Oak Hill Area FSC's website page describing [PG&E's 2022 Work](#). I have posted a map of PG&E's plans and other useful information.



One more thing to be aware of: PG&E has been installing Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings to automatically turn off power in powerlines if a problem is detected. If an object strikes a powerline, safety equipment will detect the change in current and shut off power within one-tenth of a second. This should help to reduce wildfire ignitions due to powerline failures. But, because of this safety improvement, PG&E is warning us that we may experience outages that are unplanned and unannounced. These would be in addition to the **Public Safety Power Shutoffs** (PSPS) we have come to be familiar with.

Looking to Learn What to do to Harden Your Home to Make it More Wildfire Resistant?



As more studies are done on recent mega fires and the structures they destroy, better and better advice for preventing destruction has been coming out. The latest (just out in March) is a collaborative effort by CAL FIRE, the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). They spent a year and a half reviewing all available research to come up with a consistent set of Home Retrofit “Hazard Mitigation Methods”- or HMM. The report is [NIST Technical Note 2205](#). It is being called the “bible” of home hardening,

Take note! Theirs is advice worth following! Especially useful is Table A, which outlines roughly 40 things we should all be working on to **retrofit our homes**, to protect them from the embers that destroy the majority of homes during big fires. These measures are doable, not extreme! Things like metal kick plates on doors, fiber cement siding for just 2 ft up from the ground, ideas to prevent deck ignition, etc. Find [Table A](#) at the end, in Appendix 1 (the document itself is 70 pages long).

Remember- Keeping **the first 5 feet** next to your home clear of anything flammable is still one of the best things you can do! That means no plants (unless very low and sparse), no wooden furniture, no baskets, etc. Just rock, concrete, or metal. Keep that first 5 feet truly clear!

And then work on your remaining defensible space: keeping plants well spaced from each other- not *cleared* out to 100 ft, just *well spaced*, with trees limbed up For more, see our [Defensible Space](#) webpage.

Most homes in our Fire Safe Council area are at least 50 ft from other structures, meaning that doing Table A retrofits and maintaining defensible space will greatly reduce your risk of wildfire destruction- in fact, those measures reduced chance of destruction by as much as 73% for the Paradise Camp Fire!

But if you are in one of our few areas where homes are closer, you also need to consider radiant heat from those structures if they catch fire. You would do well to read the entire document, in that case, and consult other tables in Appendix 1 as well.



Check Out Our Neighborhood Mini-Grants! Applications Open Now

Funds have become available through the Forest Service, El Dorado County and El Dorado County Fire Safe Council for wildfire education and mitigation. From the portion available to Oak Hill Area FSC, your Board has elected to offer five “mini-grants” of up to \$500 each to residents or neighborhoods to spend toward projects that improve wildfire resilience like removal of vegetation around homes, hiring of crews, chipper rental, or roadside clearance. We are so excited for these funds to come to our Council area and we look forward to hearing what projects are needed in your neighborhood. These funds are “reimbursable”, which means you have to have the expense first, and then we can reimburse you for up to \$500. **Here is a [link](#)** to more details and the application.

Note: Being Designated as a **Firewise USA Community** means that we are **working** to become Fire Safe, but it does NOT mean that we have reached that Goal! All of us should continue to work together to improve the wildfire resilience of our Community. And don't forget that some insurance companies offer a deduction to your fire or home insurance for living in a **Firewise USA Community**. This includes the Calif. Fair Plan.



Oak Hill Area residents Shannon and Irene Lile after a site visit by volunteers Lester Lubetkin and Alice Cantelow. They were given state of the art home hardening Table A of recommended retrofits. They were glad to show their excellent defensible space work done, and appreciated discussing further ideas for improvement. They were also able to promote the Radio Watch program to Lester and Alice!

Would You Like Some Advice on Home Hardening and Defensible Space For Your Home?

Want advice from knowledgeable area residents as to what specific features of your house and yard can be improved to make your home more resilient to wildfire? We have volunteers ready and willing to help!

If you'd like advice on both defensible space and hardening your home- advice that is just between you and volunteers - contact [Your OHAFCSC website at Contact Us](#). The visit will include helpful documents to keep for reference.

Remember: Our website has defensible space and home hardening information especially pertinent to our area
www.oakhillfiresafe.org

Going to the June 16-19 County Fair? Get answers!

- Water tanks and fittings
- Fuel reduction projects planned
- Hands on examples of home hardening materials
- County defensible space requirements

Look for the large joint booth of the El Dorado County Fire Districts, the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE, El Dorado County Office of Wildfire Resilience, Resource Conservation District, and Eldorado National Forest

This is a unique opportunity to consult many experts in one place.

Last, but not least:

**NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO SIGN UP FOR THE
FREE CHIPPING PROGRAM !**

More information is available on the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council's website.

Let's all keep working together to make our community fire safe!

Sincerely,

The Oak Hill Area Fire Safe Council Team

info@oakhillfiresafe.org