

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Office of the State Fire Marshal



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CAL FIRE ESTABLISHES NEW TRAINING PROGRAM TO INCREASE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND HOME HARDENING EFFORTS

Expansion of assessment and education program will help increase wildfire resilience in the State Responsibility Area

Sacramento, CA – CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has established a statewide program to allow qualified entities to support the Department in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and education efforts. Qualified entities are local, or state government agencies, academic staff, or other approved organizations who have undergone the new OSFM Defensible Space Assessment Program training detailed below.

These qualified entities, with the authorization of the Director of CAL FIRE, are eligible to undergo training to conduct defensible space and home hardening assessments within the State Responsibility Area. This includes educating property owners about wildfire safety improvements that may be undertaken to harden a structure and make it more resistant to wildfire and assessing whether wildfire safety improvements have been completed on or around a structure.

“This program will be a force multiplier in our efforts to assist homeowners statewide in achieving compliance with defensible space and home hardening,” stated Chief Daniel Berlant, Acting State Fire Marshal. “Defensible space, coupled with home hardening, is essential to improve your home’s chance of surviving a wildfire. Expanding our state’s efforts through the use of this program will result in a more wildfire resilient California.”

Qualified entities that have community momentum built around defensible space are being targeted for inclusion in the initial stages of this program. A pilot program has been established using trained personnel from the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council with the first Defensible Space and Home Hardening Assessor course being taught in April 2023.

“El Dorado County’s Fire Safe Councils are very appreciative of the assistance and direction CAL Fire has given to them”, stated Hugh Council, Vice Chair of the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council. “The Fire Safe Councils look forward to continuing to assist their communities with defensible space and home hardening assessments to ensure necessary steps are taken to make their county fire safe.”

The California Conservation Corps (CCC) will host a training for its Corpsmembers and staff in the Fall of 2023. The CCC will start assessments on state facilities located in Very High Fire

Hazard Severity Zones working down to Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones. After the assessment, CCC will be conducting vegetation reduction projects around each of the state facilities, bringing them into compliance with the defensible space standards.

“The CCC looks forward to helping our communities become more fire-resilient,” stated CCC Director Bruce Saito. “Our Corpsmembers will learn skills that can lead to meaningful careers in fire prevention. And, most importantly, they’ll have the personal knowledge of how to keep their own homes and neighborhoods safer from wildfire.”

OSFM’s training program will provide consistent training for qualified entity assessors, who will provide nonregulatory assistance to homeowners to reduce fire risk and achieve compliance with defensible space requirements. The training will also ensure that all defensible space and home hardening assessment and education programs undertaken by the department and by qualified entities are conducted to the same standard and use coordinated messaging, including messages at www.readyforwildfire.org. Upon an individual’s successful completion of the training program, the department shall issue a certification of completion to the individual.

If you are a member of a local government or qualified entity, as defined in PRC 4291.5, you may request the Model Defensible Space Program and Inspection Platform or the Qualified Entities Assessment Platform using this form:

<https://forms.office.com/g/FwpYJrM20d>

This program will create more face-to-face interaction and educational opportunities between homeowners and individuals who are trained in defensible space and home hardening; ultimately creating a more wildfire resilient California by increasing public knowledge of scientifically proven home hardening and defensible space best practices.

To learn more about the Defensible Space program, visit:

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace/>.

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