



NEVADA COUNTY COALITION OF FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

The list below includes NFPA-certified and those pending assessment. An additional 29 communities are considered "in training" and working on becoming certified.

- 6B Ranch Estates
- Ananda Village
- Bear River Pines
- Bear River Ranch
- Bitney Springs
- Cascade Shores
- Dalmatian Drive Neighbors
- Darkhorse
- Deer Creek Southside
- Echo Ridge
- Foxwood-Slate Creek
- Friends of Banner Mountain
- Glenshire-Devonshire
- Glenwood-Maidu-Charlene Nghbrs
- Golden Oaks
- Greater Alta Sierra Community
- Greater Cement Hill Neighbors
- Greater Champion Neighborhood
- Greenhorn
- Grizzly
- Hyatt Blue Sage
- Jones Bar Neighborhoods
- Juniper Hills
- Kentucky Flat
- Lake of the Pines Association
- Lake Vera Round Mountain
- Lake Wildwood
- Lower Colfax
- Martis Peak
- Montezuma Ridge
- Mountain Lakes Estates
- Outer Jackass Flats
- Pine Forest
- Rattlesnake Ridge Estates
- Ridgeview Woodlands
- Salmon Mine – East Sages
- Serene Lakes
- Sherwood Forest
- Sierra Knolls Estates
- Stonebridge HOA
- Tahoe-Donner Association
- The Cedars
- The Gazebos HOA
- Toller Ridge Court
- Upper Rough & Ready
- Town of Washington
- West End Donner Lake
- Wolf Mountain
- You Bet Community



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Date: December 4, 2020

To: Caltrans District 3, Program/Project Management
From: Nevada County Coalition of Firewise Communities
Re: State Route 49 Draft Safety Assessment Report

This letter is regarding the **State Route 49: I-80 to McKnight Way Draft Safety Assessment Report**. At our December 1 online meeting, 44 representatives of Firewise Communities in Nevada County (listed at left, encompassing more than 70,000 county residents) voted to authorize this public input from the Coalition.

The draft Report is admirable as far as it goes, but its sole focus is on reducing traffic accidents. The Report completely ignores the other danger Nevada County residents face on Route 49 between McKnight Way and I-80: the risk of burning to death in our cars when the highway is jammed during a wildfire evacuation.

Caltrans is aware of the increasing number of huge, lethal wildfires that occur in this state. In Nevada County, we have more than one state route with trees that are far too close to the highway to allow for safe evacuation. And yet, looking at your website, Caltrans' idea of highway safety relative to trees seems to be limited to, "make sure trees don't fall on the highway and block traffic."

It's imperative that Caltrans update its vision of highway safety to include fuel reduction on the sides of state highways in high-risk zones. While State regulations require a 10-foot mitigation area on roadsides, at least one fire scientist suggests a **30-foot zone** is necessary to provide protection from the lethal, radiant heat of burning vegetation. (We don't even have 10 feet in some places.) The extra 20 feet of space is also needed so cars can safely pull off the road to let emergency responders pass by.

The word "evacuation" appears **only three times in the 49-page "Safety Assessment,"** all on page 34, Section 6.2 (entitled "Long Term Treatments" expected to take between 2 and 10 years to implement), under "Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation." Where it is used, it is only in regard to making evacuation *plans*.

Plans will not save us from lethal heat created by burning roadside trees and vegetation when we are sitting in our cars on a jammed Route 49 during a wildfire evacuation. Only aggressive fuel reduction, beginning now and continuing whenever weather permits, will save us. You could start by eliminating the tree tunnel overhanging Route 49 just south of McKnight Way.

We ask Caltrans to: 1) **update its definition of highway safety** to include safety from burning roadside vegetation, and 2) **revise the Safety Assessment** to include the need for 30 feet of defensible space alongside the evacuation corridor in Nevada County.

Sincerely yours,

Bob Long Susan Rogers Virginia Gompertz Jeff Peach
Officers of the Nevada County Coalition of Firewise Communities

Cc: Governor Gavin Newsom Nevada County Board of Supervisors
Toks Omishakin, Director, Caltrans Nevada County Transportation Commission
Placer County Transportation Planning Agency
State Senator Brian Dahle State Assemblymember Megan Dahle