FIREWISE BEST PRACTICE

Neighborhood Patrols

WILDFIRE-READY
COALITION OF NEVADA COUNTY

Purpose

Organized neighborhood patrols reduce risky behavior and help detect early signs of wildfire. During high-risk days, patrols serve as a proactive defense system – a visible reminder that the community is watching and ready.

When to Conduct Patrols

Know What to Look For

- Illegal fireworks, bonfires or target shooting
- Suspicious or unattended smoke
- Overgrown roadside fuels or windfall debris
- Burn piles still smoldering
- Unpermitted activity during Red Flag conditions

- After lightning storms (especially dry lightning)
- During Red Flag Warning days (wind, heat, low humidity)
- Around risky holidays: July 4th, Labor Day weekend, Halloween
- Local burn pile deadlines or community events
- During utility Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS)
- Regional fire activity or heightened CAL FIRE/OES alerts

- **Surprise Visits Save Lives:** Don't follow a schedule– unpredictable checks deter unsafe habits.
- **Sleeper Fires Are Real:** After lightning, stay alert– smoldering embers can reignite days later.

Messaging Tip

"We're not the fire department – but we're the eyes and ears of our neighborhood. The faster we spot a risk, the faster we stop a fire."

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HOW-TO CHECKLIST: LAUNCHING FIREWISE PATROLS

1. **Build a Volunteer Team**
   - Recruit 3–10 residents willing to participate
   - Assign a Patrol Coordinator to manage shifts & communication
   - Create a group text, email list, or assign GMRS radio channel for coordination
2. **Define Patrol Boundaries & Routes**
   - Focus on: community roads, ridgelines, greenbelts, historically risky areas
   - Use a simple map or sketch with color-coded zones
3. **Prepare Supplies**
   - Flashlights or headlamps (for dusk or evening patrols)
   - Bright vests or hats for visibility
   - Cell phones or radios
   - Log sheet or notebook
   - Optional: gloves, N95 masks & basic PPE
4. **Set Patrol Shifts** [or Ad Hoc for storms]
   - Break coverage into random shifts over 24 hours
   - Keep patrols short (30–60 minutes)
   - Rotate volunteers to avoid fatigue
5. **Know What to Do**
   - If it's dangerous or illegal: call 911 or CAL FIRE
   - If it's suspicious: document and report
   - If it's preventable: talk to the person if safe to do so
6. **Debrief & Report**
   - Maintain a log of patrol activity (date, time, route, observation, actions taken)
   - Share major concerns with Firewise leaders or appropriate agency
   - Recognize & thank volunteers at community meetings