



City of Malibu News

23825 Stuart Ranch Road • Malibu, California • 90265-4861
Phone (310) 456-2489 • Fax (310) 456-3356 • www.malibucity.org

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Contact: Matt Myerhoff, Media Information Officer

Cell: 424-395-6450

mmyerhoff@malibucity.org

With Year-Round Fire Conditions, Malibu Prepares Early for the 2021 Wildfire Season

(Malibu CA) – With unseasonably dry, hot, windy conditions and the ongoing drought creating dangerous fire conditions for much of the year, the City of Malibu is already working to be prepared and to help residents get prepared for a wildfire before the traditional peak wildfire season in late summer and fall.

“With climate change making huge fires the new normal in California, every small brush fire should be a reminder that the next big wildfire is just around the corner, not just in peak wildfire season,” said Mayor Paul Grisanti. “It is up to us all as individuals and as a community to do everything possible to harden our homes, make emergency plans, gather emergency supplies and get CERT trained.”

What the City is Doing to Prepare

The City and the Los Angeles County Fire Department are closely monitoring fire conditions, and the Fire Department is deploying additional resources in the Malibu area. The City is sending emergency and weather alerts and posting announcements on social media and the website when fire conditions are forecast or if a fire occurs that could threaten Malibu or could be a major draw on available resources. The City recently initiated a new grant program to help with the removal of hazardous trees; see more on this program below.

The City Manager and Public Safety Manager meet regularly with the Fire Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to discuss current and forecasted fire conditions, community concerns, deployment levels in response to wildfire threat factors such as hot, dry, windy weather, fuel moisture levels and Santa Ana winds. They also discuss the levels of firefighters, companies, vehicles, water dropping aircraft and other firefighting resources that are currently available in the region.

In addition, the Fire Safety Liaison is monitoring current fire conditions, including weather and Live Fuel Moisture (LFM) levels, and reports them weekly to the City Manager and Public Safety Manager. The LFM is the ratio of water content to dry matter in certain local plants. Together with heat, wind and humidity, LFM is an important factor in determining wildfire conditions. When LFM levels are very low, the vegetation is much more flammable, and can contribute to a brush fire rapidly expanding into a major wildfire and becoming a threat to lives and property. The Fire Department Forestry Division conducts sampling in the Santa Monica Mountains every two weeks and posts the results on their website at <https://fire.lacounty.gov/fire-weather-danger>, which residents can monitor.

New Free Hazard Tree Removal Program and Free Chipper and Green Waste Days

Residents with dead and dying hazard trees can sign up to have hazard trees removed for free later this summer. The program is being funded by a \$324,000 wildfire prevention grant the City recently received from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. In addition, the City will be holding Community Chipper and Green Waste Days in September to provide residents an opportunity to dispose of large amounts of fire-hazardous vegetation, including dead

vegetation from brush clearance that was required to be complete by June 1. Sign-ups, schedules and all other information will be posted at www.MalibuCity.org/FireSafety as soon as it is available.

Homeless Encampment Management

Fires that start in homeless encampments are becoming a critical concern across the region. Since most of the recent fires that have started in encampments in the Malibu area are on undeveloped private property, Public Safety staff are working to acquire Letters of Agency from the owners of these properties. A Letter of Agency enables Sheriff's Department personnel to remove people who are trespassing. Staff is also working with the property owners to have items left behind removed to reduce the likelihood of people returning. Staff is also working on upgrades to the City's nuisance code to strengthen Malibu's ability to have owners keep their undeveloped property clear of encampments.

Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Preparations

Southern California Edison (SCE) has, and will, proactively shut off power to sections of Malibu (when high temperatures, winds and low humidity create dangerous fire conditions) in order to prevent their equipment from starting a fire. The City opposes this policy and has developed plans to respond when SCE announces that it may implement a PSPS due to dangerous fire conditions. The City's PSPS plans include putting out emergency and utility alerts, providing power outage preparedness information to residents on the City's website, activating the Emergency Operations Center to monitor conditions, and implementing the City's Zero Power Plan. Learn more at www.MalibuCity.org/PSPS.

In addition, the City is currently developing an agreement with SCE to establish a Community Resource Center at the Michael Landon Center at Bluffs Park to provide support to residents during a prolonged power outage. Residents will be able to use the center to charge their phones and get updates and other support from SCE.

Zero Power Plan

The City has a Zero Power Plan to be able to communicate emergency information during widespread power outages that are caused by PSPS, high winds or other conditions. One of the major challenges posed by the 2018 Woolsey Fire was that cellphone, internet, power, and landline phone infrastructure was damaged in the fire, causing a virtual citywide communications blackout that hindered emergency communications to the public and among agencies, hindered evacuations and made the fire even more dangerous. The Zero Power Plan includes setting up Emergency Information Stations at locations across the City where printed information can be posted; deploying Changeable Message Signs; broadcasting emergency information KBUU 99.1 FM, Malibu's only local radio station; putting emergency information on the City's Traffic and Emergency hotline; outfitting City vehicles with loudspeakers and flashing lights for staff and CERT Team volunteers to use to assist with evacuations when communications are down; and more.

The City has also partnered with the CERT Team to install radio repeaters in key locations in Malibu to boost the signal of handheld radios so that the City and CERT Team members can communicate when power and communications are down.

The City purchased back-up generators for key traffic signals along Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) in Malibu that can be deployed to allow the signals to continue functioning during an emergency situation when there is an extended, widespread power outage. During an emergency, disabled traffic signals may pose an additional hazard to traveling or evacuating motorists. Caltrans, at the City's request, has improved traffic signals on PCH in Malibu by installing new backup batteries and installing highly reflective strips on the signal faces so they are more visible at night. When approaching a traffic signal that is not functioning (flashing red or dark), motorists must approach the intersection as if it is an all-way stop sign under California law.

Residents should be prepared for power outages which are common during high wind and heat conditions. All household emergency plans should include emergency lights, radios that are either battery operated, solar-powered, or hand-crank radios (which will function when the power is out) and evacuation and reunification plans. Residents should be sure to know how to open your garage doors or driveway gates manually. Learn more about the City's PSPS preparations and how you can be prepared at <https://ready.lacounty.gov/power-outage>.

What You Can Do To Be Prepared for Wildfires Right Now

The City advises residents to make sure they, their families and their communities are prepared for wildfires, and has launched its public outreach campaign for the 2021 Wildfire Season Preparedness to offer tips and resources on social media, Nextdoor, the City website and through e-notifications to help them get prepared.

Get the Malibu Survival Guide

The first step is to download the City's free Emergency Survival Guide at www.Malibucity.org/SurvivalGuide or request printed editions that you can distribute to your neighborhood or organization. To request copies, email publicsafety@malibucity.org or call 310-456-2489, ext. 368.

Check Your Emergency Plans and Supply Kits, or Get Started Making One

Residents should review their household emergency and evacuation plans and check their "go bags" and emergency supplies to ensure food, water, medication and batteries have not expired. Be sure to keep supplies for pets, including medications. Learn how to get started with City's free Emergency Survival Guide, available online at www.Malibucity.org/SurvivalGuide.

Maintain Situational Awareness

Situational awareness is critical to being prepared for and staying safe when disaster strikes. Make a habit of monitoring local news on AM and FM radio to know when dangerous fire weather conditions occur. Sign up to receive emergency, traffic and weather alerts from the City by text and email at www.MalibuCity.org/news (scroll down to "Alert Center," select Emergency, Traffic, Weather); and from Los Angeles County at <https://lacounty.gov/emergency/alert-la>. Monitor heat, wind and humidity by following the National Weather Service (NWS) Los Angeles/Oxnard on social media at <https://twitter.com/nwslosangeles> and on their website at <https://www.weather.gov/lox>.

Harden Your Home

The City's Fire Safety Liaison is available to visit your home, assess the property's wildfire risk and provide a checklist of ways that you can harden your home against millions of flying embers, which are a main cause of homes catching fire during a wind driven wildfire like the Woolsey Fire. There are often easy and inexpensive steps to create defensible space around the house such as clearing away dry, flammable material, furniture, and vegetation away from the house, covering eave vents with fine metal mesh, and performing brush clearance. To schedule an appointment, visit <https://www.malibucity.org/firesafety> or email FireSafety@malibucity.org.

Get CERT Trained

Learn how you can help your family, neighborhood and community during wildfires, earthquakes and other disasters with the City's free Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. CERT offers training in basic first aid, search and rescue, use of fire extinguisher, disaster psychology and more. During the pandemic, the City offers a hybrid remote and in-person training. For more information visit www.MalibuCity.org/CERT.

Weed Whacker Fire Safety Campaign

The City is conducting widespread outreach to homeowners, contractors, homeowner's associations, neighborhood groups, construction sites, landscapers and gardeners on how to avoid starting fires while using weed whackers. Every year, brush fires are started by the use of power tools in vegetated areas. The City created a flyer and social media messaging in English and

Spanish offering tips such as switching from metal blades to plastic blades or nylon cords. The flyer is available to download or print at <https://www.malibucity.org/DocumentCenter/View/26713/Weed-whacker---Tip-to-reduce-fire-dangers> and in Spanish at <https://www.malibucity.org/DocumentCenter/View/26722/Weed-whacker-flyer-SPA>. To request printed copies, email publicsafety@malibucity.org or call 310-456-2489, ext. 368.

Get A Dolphin Decal For Resident-Only Road Closures

In the event of a “Resident Only” road closure, the City’s Dolphin Decal can help residents get through restricted areas to their homes. The Dolphin Decal was established to help emergency personnel in identifying residents and other individuals who need to access their homes and businesses when road closures are in place during emergencies. For more information, or to request a Dolphin Decal, visit <https://www.malibucity.org/229/Dolphin-Decal-Access-Program> or call 310-456-2489.

Learn more about the City’s wildfire preparedness efforts at www.MalibuCity.org/FireSafety.

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