

# ANNEX L: PLACER HILLS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

## L.1 District Profile

Figure L.1 shows the area covered by the Placer Hills Fire Protection District (FPD).

## Figure L.1. Placer Hills Fire Protection District

## **NEED Figure**

The Placer Hills Fire Protection District (Placer Hills FPD) services a 34 square mile area that houses approximately 3,500 full time residents and a day population of about 12,000 people. The District services the communities of Applegate, Clipper Gap, Eden Valley, Meadow Vista, and Weimar.

In 1949, community members of the Meadow Vista came together through the Grange to create the Meadow Vista Fire Department. In 1988, the Meadow Vista Fire Protection District, Company No.31 and the Ponderosa Fire Brigade annexed to become the Placer Hills Fire Protection District.

Placer County established Company No. 31 in 1979 at the Weimar Institute to assist in the County contract with the California Department of Forestry. In 1980, members of the Applegate and Weimar communities came together to develop Engine Company No. 31. The community built the Fire Station in Applegate in 1983 and the County provided an engine and a water-tender. John Velican provided an engine for the Ponderosa Fire Brigade.

With start-up monies budgeted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors, Placer Hills Fire Protection District built a new station at Weimar Crossroads and purchased a new mini-pumper quick attack in 1990. Also in the same year, the Fire Board hired a part-time Fire Marshal to establish a fire prevention program throughout the District. The Placer County Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance 4225-B, County Code Chapter 7.50 creating the legal authority for fire districts to collect fees in order to mitigate the impacts of new development. The Placer Hills Fire Protection District started collecting the Fire Facilities Fees in late 1990 and has been able to purchase/lease state of the art firefighting engines and equipment.

To further enhance the fire protection of this District, the Fire Board passed a Fire Suppression Benefit Assessment in 1991, which provided daytime staffing during weekdays. Placer Hills Fire Protection District started providing non-transporting Advanced Life Support Services in October 1997. In September 2001 the District staffed one engine with a crew of two, 24 hours per day and an additional engine with 2 during work hours and fire season weekends. The community approved another Benefit Assessment of \$49 in June 2004. This enabled the District to staff an engine at both the Meadow Vista and Weimar fire stations 24/7. The Fire District runs approximately 1000 calls every year.

## L.2 Hazard Identification and Summary

The Placer Hills FPD's planning team identified the hazards that affect the District and summarized their frequency of occurrence, spatial extent, potential magnitude, and significance specific to the District (see Table L.1).

Table L.1. Placer Hills FPD—Hazard Summaries

Hazard	Probability of Occurrence	Spatial Extent	Potential Magnitude	Significance
Agricultural Hazards	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Avalanche	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Dam Failure	Occasional	Limited	Limited	Low
Drought	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Earthquake	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Flood (100-year)	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Flood (Stormwater)	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Human Health Hazards:				
West Nile Virus	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Landslide	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Severe Weather:				
Extreme Cold/Freeze	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Extreme Heat	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Fog	Occasional	Limited	Negligible	Low
Heavy Rain/ Thunderstorm/Hail/ Lightning/Wind	Likely	Significant	Limited	Medium
Snow (was Winter Storm)	Likely	Extensive	Critical	Medium
Tornado	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Soil Hazards:				
Erosion	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Expansive Soils	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Volcano	Unlikely	Limited	Negligible	Low
Wildfire	Highly Likely	Extensive	Catastrophic	High

#### **Guidelines for Hazard Rankings** Frequency of Occurrence:

Highly Likely—Near 100 percent probability in next year

Likely—Between 10 and 100 percent probability in next year or at least

one chance in ten years

Occasional—Between 1 and 10 percent probability in next year or at least one chance in next 100 years

Unlikely—Less than 1 percent probability in next 100 years

Limited—Less than 10 percent of planning area Significant—10-50 percent of planning area Extensive—50-100 percent of planning area Source: Placer Hills Fire Protection District

#### **Potential Magnitude:**

Catastrophic-More than 50 percent of area affected Critical—25 to 50 percent Limited—10 to 25 percent Negligible—Less than 10 percent

#### Significance (subjective):

Low, Medium, High

Impacts of past events and vulnerability to specific hazards are discussed below (see Section 4.1 Hazard Identification for more detailed information about these hazards and their impacts on Placer County).

## L.3 Vulnerability Assessment

The intent of this section is to assess the District's vulnerability separate from that of the planning area as a whole, which has already been assessed in Section 4.3 Vulnerability Assessment in the main plan. For more information about how hazards affect the County as a whole, see Chapter 4 Risk Assessment in the main plan.

#### L.3.1 Assets at Risk

This section considers the District's assets at risk. Table L.2 lists District assets identified by representatives from the Placer Hills FPD as important to protect in the event of a disaster.

Table L.2. Placer Hills FPD—Critical Facilities and Other District Assets

Name of Asset	Type	Replacement Value	Hazard Specific Info
3 Fire Stations			
4 Schools			
Weimar Institute			
Meadow Vista Commercial Area			

Source: Placer Hills Fire Protection District

#### **Natural Resources**

Several state or federally listed species may be found within the District boundary. These are identified, along with other species of concern found in the District, in Table L.3.

Table L.3. Species of Concern in the Placer Hills Fire Protection District

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	State Status

Source: Placer Hills Fire Protection District

## Please provide data specific to the District

#### **Growth and Development Trends**

Population growth within the Placer Hills FPD continues but is not uniform throughout. The areas within and closest to the developed communities, are growing fastest and have higher housing densities.

**NEED INPUT** on Development trends within the District

## L.3.2 Estimating Potential Losses

#### NEED MORE SPECIFICS ON IMPACTS FROM THESE HAZARDS

Severe Weather: Heavy Rains/Thunderstorms/Wind/Hail/Lightning

Heavy rain, thunderstorm activity, and hail usually occur on an annual basis in the Placer Hills FPD service area. Impacts to the area usually include mild flooding. However, the District did not identify any past events resulting in significant damage.

**Severe Weather: Snow** 

Extreme winter weather events are a significant concern to the District. Snow and winter weather conditions can result in utility outages and the closure of major transportation routes. According to the Placer Hills FPD planning team, winter storms occurring in 1990 caused moderate property damage and closed businesses, schools, and roads creating significant impacts to the area.

Please provide information on Past Occurrences, and impacts and District assets at risk to these identified hazards.

#### Wildfire

Several of the communities within the District boundaries are listed on the National Fire Plan's "Communities at Risk" list as set forth in Section 4.1 of the main plan. These include the communities of: Applegate, Meadow Vista and Weimer.

Over one hundred years of aggressive fire suppression under the national fire suppression policy has rendered wildlands severely overgrown. Much of the private land in the District's area is in the wildland urban interface with increasing residential development.

According to the Placer Hills FPD, the following areas of the District were prioritized for projects because of their population, values at risk, and fuel availability: Insert community names

As more people move into the area and impacts from recreational demands increase, there will be more human-caused wildfire starts each year. And, the increased number of widely scattered homes within the District adds greatly to the danger, complexity, and cost of fighting these fires.

Currently, many of the communities in the District are limited to one route access and egress in the event of a major wildfire. Historically, these routes are closed during major events, stranding many people, including visitors, away from their families and homes. So far there has been no loss of life attributed to the limited evacuation routes, but it is likely only a matter of time before people are cut off and trapped by a major fire event.

Forest overgrowth due to the efficiency of modern firefighting techniques, and to society's current election to limit forest thinning and harvesting, is a serious problem. If wildfire does not impact the forest first, native insects will eventually kill millions of trees. Explosions in insect populations usually start during a drought, when the lack of water combined with too many trees per acre render the trees to weak to fight off the insect attacks. Without a change in management practices on public lands, there is little hope of avoiding a kill off of trees similar to the kill off experienced by other national forests.

The most notable, recent wildfire to impact the District is the Ponderosa Fire, 2001, This fire occurred in 2001 and burned 2,462 acres of forestland. This event closed Interstate 80 for a period of time.

This is only one example of a wildfire event in eastern Placer County. Similar events are expected to occur in the future.

#### **Other Hazards**

While of lower planning significance to the District relative to other hazards, the following information about avalanche and hazardous materials release should still be noted:

#### **Dam Failure**

A dam failure can range from a small uncontrolled release to a catastrophic failure, caused by prolonged rainfall and flooding. The primary danger associated with dam failure is the high velocity flooding of those properties downstream of the dam. Dam failure flooding varies by area depending on which dam fails and the nature and extent of the dam failure and associated flooding. Vulnerability to dam failures is generally confined to the areas subject to inundation downstream of the facility. No dam failures impacting the District have occurred; however, during the storms of 2007, the Blackberry dam overflowed causing damages downstream.

## L.4 Capability Assessment

Capabilities are the programs and policies currently in use to reduce hazard impacts or that could be used to implement hazard mitigation activities. This capabilities assessment is divided into five sections: regulatory mitigation capabilities, administrative and technical mitigation capabilities, fiscal mitigation capabilities, mitigation outreach and partnerships, and other mitigation efforts.

## L.4.1 Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities

Table L.4 lists regulatory mitigation capabilities, including planning and land management tools, typically used by local jurisdictions to implement hazard mitigation activities and indicates those that are in place in the Placer Hills FPD.

Table L.4. Placer Hills FPD's Regulatory Mitigation Capabilities

Regulatory Tool	Yes/No	Comments
General plan	Yes	See Placer County
Zoning ordinance	Yes	See Placer County
Subdivision ordinance	Yes	Water/Sprinkler written guidelines
Site plan review requirements	Yes	
Growth management ordinance	No	
Floodplain ordinance	No	
Other special purpose ordinance (stormwater, water conservation, wildfire)	Yes	Defensible Space
Building code	Yes	See Placer County
Erosion or sediment control program	No	
Storm water management program	No	
Capital improvements plan	No	
Economic development plan	No	
Local emergency operations plan	Yes	
Other special plans	No	
Flood Insurance Study or other engineering study for streams	No	

Source: Placer Hills Fire Protection District

As indicated above, the District has several programs, plans, policies, and codes and ordinances that guide hazard mitigation. Some of these are described in more detail below.

## **New Development: Project Guidelines, 2001**

These guidelines contain fire prevention requirements for new development. Key elements include requirements for the following:

- Addresses and Access
- Water Supply

- Sprinkler Systems
- Vegetation Abatement
- Fire Alarm Systems
- Hydrants

#### **OTHERS**??

## L.4.2 Administrative/Technical Mitigation Capabilities

The Board is comprised of 5 members and is selected by registered voters within the District. The Board serves as the governing body for the District's residents. The Board of Directors approves District Rules and Regulations and, through the Fire Chief, ensures adherence to District policies.

The Placer Hills FPD provides services through three fire stations: Meadow Vista, Applegate, and Weimar.

Placer Hills FPD's dispatch services are provided by the Placer County Sheriff's Office 911 center in Auburn. The 911 center uses computer aided dispatching to ensure optimal resource monitoring and management utilizing the closest resource backed up by station cover assignments in a multi-tiered alarm structure.

## L.4.3 Fiscal Mitigation Capabilities

Table L.5 identifies financial tools or resources that the District could potentially use to help fund mitigation activities.

Table L.5. NTFPD's Fiscal Mitigation Capabilities

Financial Resources	Accessible/Eligible to Use (Yes/No)	Comments
Community Development Block Grants	No	
Capital Improvements project funding	Yes	
Authority to levy taxes for specific purposes	Yes	
Fees for water, sewer, gas, or electric services	No	
Impact fees for new development	Yes	
Incur debt through general obligation bonds	Yes	
Incur debt through special tax bonds	Yes	
Incur debt through private activities	No	
Withhold spending in hazard prone areas	No	

Source: Placer Hills Fire Protection District

## L.4.4 Mitigation Outreach and Partnerships

The Placer Hills FPD has automatic aid agreements with bordering Districts and mutual aid agreements with other fire agencies throughout the area. The District relies heavily upon this aid from neighbors.

The District also works with other agencies on wildfire-related matters. Working with professional fire experts from the U.S. Forest Service and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection helps ensure that the District's work complements state and federal work and is up to standard for controlling wildfires.

## L.4.5. Other Mitigation Efforts

The District is involved in a variety of mitigation activities including, public education, fuels management projects, and other activities to reduce fuel loads and fire risk. These mitigation activities include:

- Public Education: Fire Safety
- Defensible Space
- Fuels Management

Details on some of the recent, ongoing mitigation projects are noted below.

Fuels Management Projects

**Defensible Space Projects** 

Please add additional information

## L.5 Mitigation Strategy

## L.5.1 Mitigation Goals and Objectives

The Placer Hills Fire Protection District adopts the hazard mitigation goals and objectives developed by the HMPC and described in Chapter 5 Mitigation Strategy.

## L.5.2 Mitigation Actions

The planning team for the Placer Hills FPD identified and prioritized the following mitigation actions based on the risk assessment. Background information and information on how each action will be implemented and administered, such as ideas for implementation, responsible office, partners, potential funding, estimated cost, and schedule are included.

# 1. Assess And Enhance Placer Hills Fire Protection District (PHFPD) Onsite Water Requirements For Minor Lot Splits.

**Issue/Background**: Rapid containment of wildfires and structure fires are a high priority for the PHFPD. At present, minor lot splits (four or fewer parcels), do not have sufficient requirements for onsite storage of water for fire fighting. This project would evaluate appropriate requirements and propose an ordinance for adoption by the Placer Hills Fire Protection District Board of Directors. This ordinance will be based on the NFPA 1142 Standard on Water Supplies for Suburban and Rural Fire Fighting and/or on the Urban Wildland Interface Code 2000.

**Other Alternatives**: The alternative is to continue to rely solely upon the availability of the PHFPD water tender, and mutual aid water tenders from other local government entities.

Responsible Office: Fire Chief Ian Gow, Placer Hills Fire Protection District

Priority (H, M, L): High

**Cost Estimate**: The cost to evaluate requirements and prepare the ordinance would come out of normal operating expenses. The cost to the developers of a minor lot splits would be approximately \$2,000 per storage tank. In some cases, multiple homes could share a tank.

Cost Benefit: Homes in the PHFPD area are presently valued at a median price of over \$400,000 with many homes selling for a far higher cost. The \$2,000 cost to the developer for onsite water storage represents one-half of one percent of the value of the median home price. On-site water storage is an inexpensive way to improve fire suppression capabilities for a home. It also increases the fire safety of the surrounding homes and wildlands because the faster a structure fire is contained, the less likelihood there is that it will spread. The water would also be used to protect homes from encroaching wildfire.

Potential Funding: Unknown

**Schedule**: Complete assessment and ordinance proposal by the end of calendar year 2005.

# 2. Annual Defensible Space Inspections Program For The Placer Hills Fire Protection District (PHFPD)

**Issue/Background**: Defensible space around structures is the most important factor in the ability of a home or other building to survive an encroaching wildfire. Regular inspections, based on the requirements of California Law as specified in Public Resources Code 4291, can help ensure that homeowners create and maintain adequate defensible space. The inspection process is also an opportunity to educate and motivate the homeowners to take action to improve their wildfire safety.

**Other Alternatives**: One alternative is to continue to rely on CDF to fund and perform these inspections. However, unless outside grant funding is acquired, CDF does not have the budget to carry out this function. And for the times that CDF does have grant funding, having a program

in the PHFPD will mean that those scarce funds can be used for other areas of the County which do not have their own programs.

Another alternative is using unpaid volunteers to do the inspections. However, in order to complete the inspections in a timely manner that allows residents adequate time to comply with defensible space requirements prior to the start of fire season each year would either need a large cadre of inspectors and place an onus, and cost, on the Fire District to manage them, or necessitate a huge individual time commitment that is inappropriate to expect from volunteers.

Responsible Office: Fire Chief Ian Gow, Placer Hills Fire Protection District

**Priority** (H, M, L): High

**Cost Estimate**: \$10,000 per year will fund 750 home inspections. There are approximately 3,600 homes in the Fire District. Inspections would cycle through the Fire District, so that every home would be inspected approximately every five years.

**Cost Benefit**: The homes in the PHFPD have a median value of over \$400,000, and many homes have a much higher valuation. Therefore each group of 750 inspections would protect \$300,000,000 in values at risk for a cost of \$10,000, or 0.003 percent of the resource value protected.

**Potential Fun**ding: Title III funds from the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (AKA "HR 2389 Timber Tax") payments to Placer County; Grant funding from various programs under the National Fire Plan

**Schedule**: Annually in the spring, starting in the spring of 2005.