

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT WILDFIRES AND HOW TO PREPARE



An overview of Meadow Lakes in November 2025 showing the aftermath of the Creek Fire that burned in 2020. Burn scars are still visible in the area with burnt trees and dry grass scattered over the area. Photo by Marco Pena.

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One year after the Palisades fires devastated the coastal community, the burn scars remain visible to the people who are continuing to rebuild and regain a sense of normalcy.

The fire that started on Jan. 7, 2025, destroyed over 6,000 buildings and claimed the lives of 12 people until it was contained on Jan. 31, 2025.

During the 24 day period, evacuations forced residents to relocate and find shelter as the fire burned their homes and memories into ashes.

The Palisades fire is just one of many fires in recent years that have devastated communities all over California.

While the Palisades fire did not affect people in the Central Valley directly, the emotional impact was felt nationally. Many celebrities in the Los Angeles area offered support and condolences to the Palisades community.

For residents in the Central Valley, wildfires aren't a major concern. But in the summer months, wildfires can be seen burning in the Sierra Nevada mountains, which are about an hour away from Fresno. Forest fires often bring smoke and ashes towards the valley, worsening the air quality.

Fresno City College conservation biology professor Amie Mazzoni Frazer pointed out that all the material that is in peoples houses goes into the air when a fire burns, contributing to poor air quality in the Central Valley.

"In the summer, if we have a forest fire, and that air gets trapped in the valley, and so there'll be days on end where it's just too smoky to exercise or even go out if you're sensitive," Frazer said.

Forest fires are generally an important part of keeping the ecosystem healthy, but Frazer said that the fires are becoming more intense due to global warming.

"The forests have gotten so dense that when they burn, they burn so hot that its not natural. They would typically burn the understory and restore those nutrients to the soil, but now they burn everything that they're also impacting the soil, and when you have that bare soil, you see a lot of erosion," Frazer said.

With the increase of fires, Safe Soss founder Nicholai Allen created a three step home wildfire defense system to help protect homes during a wildfire.

Allen created different products that are part of the three step process in the wildfire defense system such as a carbon filter that prevents embers from entering homes through air vents.

One product that is used is ember tape which prevents embers entering homes through garage door gaps, exterior door thresholds and even pet doors. Lastly, a fire retardant can be sprayed from a garden hose which reduces the ignition risk to wooden doors, fences and window frames around the house and can be sprayed to nearby vegetation around your home.

Cal Fire Firefighter Alberto Solorio II said that both the wind and topography are big factors that create the perfect conditions for fires to start and spread quickly.

Fire tends to rise and often goes through the path of least resistance. If you see wind pushing against it, it's called a backing fire and can halt the fire or go in a different direction. If the fire goes with the wind it can be devastating and move very quickly.

"The wind is probably the most detrimental thing because I've been in a little bit of terrain and woke up in the middle of the night thinking there's no way a fire will start, and due to the wind and the right conditions, there was a fire," Solorio said.

When the Palisades fire started, it spread within minutes due to the Santa Ana winds, which are high winds that range from 40-100 miles per hour and blow through the mountains in Southern California. The winds originate due to cool high pressure air masses that blow air from the desert all the way to the coast and into the Pacific Ocean, which are often a main factor in why fires spread quickly in Southern California.

While most people think that direct flames from wildfires are the main cause of homes being damaged, Allen pointed out that embers are actually the main reason homes get burned and damaged in wildfires.

"The majority of home loss in wildfires is due to windborne embers and not the direct fire front. The reason is because embers can travel miles ahead of the firefront, looking for vents and gaps to try and get into your house or build up and then catch fire," Allen said.

Allen's main goal is to prevent homes being burned. He also wants to inform people of steps they should take to protect their homes and the main causes of homes being damaged and destroyed in wildfires.

"My whole belief is that science and technology exists and that we shouldn't be losing life or property due to fire," Allen said.

Allen wants to help homeowners understand simple concepts such as making sure there are no trees that are close to your home and to trim them regularly to prevent one tree or another one from catching on fire.

To prevent wildfires from happening, Frazer pointed out that when going camping or making a fire, students can make sure that the fire is totally out by putting water and dirt on top of the ashes where there still might be embers.

She also recommended making sure chains or anything that can spark while driving are secured, listen to evacuations, and letting authorities know if you see any smoke and to always have a plan in mind of how to evacuate in case of an emergency.

Frazer also stated that global warming and climate change are the main reasons fires are becoming more intense, which is killing all the organisms that help reduce carbon dioxide to help with climate change.

"We can vote for politicians who make laws, rules, regulations, legislation, that would help us reduce CO2 emissions. We can also vote to have larger rules and restrictions, put on companies and governments to try to reduce their climate emissions," Frazer said.

Frazer believes that students should care as the forests are an important part of our ecosystem as providers of wood that we use for buildings and everyday items. Forests also keep the air clean and cycle nutrients in their environment.

"Our own well-being is so tied to nature that there's studies that show if you go outside and you breathe in the natural air in a forest, it's good for your health. It's good for your well-being. So having these intact forests, if we recreate them, is just good for us," Frazer said.

Events Calendar

Feb. 26 Transfer Thursday 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. (West Fresno Campus)

Feb. 26 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

Feb. 26 ICC Meeting 12 - 1 p.m. (Senate Chambers)

Feb. 26 Black History Month Closing Ceremony 12 - 1 p.m. (OAB Auditorium)

Feb. 26 AGTEC Career Fair 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. (West Fresno Campus, Multipurpose Room A-127)

Feb. 26 Diana Gabriel Exhibition Opening 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 2 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 2 International Student Program 3rd Annual Holi Celebration 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm (Veterans Square)

March 3 Fresno Pacific University Student Outreach 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. (Transfer Center)

March 3 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 3 ASG Meeting 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. (Senate Chambers)

March 4 Fresno State University In Person Appointments 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Transfer Center)

March 4 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 4 Wellness Wednesday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. (College Mall)

March 5 Transfer Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. (University Mall)

March 5 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 5 ICC Meeting 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. (Senate Chambers)

March 6 Oscar-Nominated Short Films 5:30 p.m. - 10 p.m. (OAB Auditorium)

March 6 The Comeuppance 7:30 pm (Theatre)

March 7 Oscar-Nominated Short Films 1 p.m. - 9 p.m. (OAB Auditorium)

March 7 The Comeuppance 7:30 p.m. (Theatre)

March 8 The Comeuppance 2 p.m. (Theatre)

March 9 Diana Gabriel Exhibition 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Art Space Gallery)

March 10 Fresno State University In Person Appointments 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (Transfer Center)

Compiled by Jimmy Johnson