



News from: Office of the City Administrator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Oakland to Mark 25th Anniversary of Firestorm with Remembrance Ceremony

Oakland, CA – To mark the 25th anniversary of the 1991 Firestorm, the City of Oakland will host a Remembrance Ceremony at 5:30 p.m. on **Thursday, October 20, 2016**. The event will be held at the Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center, at Tunnel Road and Caldecott Lane, in the Oakland Hills.

The Oakland-Berkeley Hills Firestorm, also known as the Tunnel Hills Fire, remains one of the worst fire disasters in our nation's history. The fire claimed the lives of 25 people, injured 150 others and destroyed nearly 3,500 homes.

During the event, **Congresswoman Barbara Lee** will be joined at the podium by **Oakland Vice Mayor Annie Campbell Washington** and **Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates**. Remarks will also be made by survivors of the disaster and representatives from community organizations that played a role in recovery. A somber moment of remembrance will feature a roll call of the 25 people who perished in the fire.

The Gateway Emergency Preparedness Exhibit Center was recently updated with a new Fire Resistant Demonstration Garden and new educational panels highlighting practical ways residents can better prepare for wildfires, earthquakes and other emergencies. The new garden was a collaborative effort of North Hills Community Association, Oakland Firesafe Council, Oakland Landscape Committee and Oakland Wildfire Prevention Assessment District.

This is one of several commemorative events and exhibitions marking the 25th anniversary. For a complete roster of events, visit oaklandnet.com/firestorm25.

Anniversary Serves as Prevention & Preparedness Reminder

The 1991 Oakland-Berkeley Hills Firestorm dramatically changed the way we think about the wildland-urban interface and the special care necessary to keep people, wildlife and property safe. Fire prevention is always a priority. That's especially true now that California is in its fifth consecutive year of drought and dry conditions have significantly increased wildfire risk. Oakland has the most densely populated wildland-urban interface in Northern California.

Safety Improvements Since 1991

Since the 1991 Firestorm, the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) has improved its ability to prevent, respond to and mitigate the threat of fire in the Oakland Hills. The department uses fire apparatus that is specifically designed for wildland-urban interface response and has better capability to maneuver in our Oakland Hills' neighborhoods. Oakland Firefighters are outfitted with wildland protective clothing and gear, and they receive annual training in the use of wildland related tools, safety equipment, apparatus, fire behavior, strategy and tactics.

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Vegetation management is a critical component of fire prevention efforts. OFD conducts about 26,000 public and private property inspections annually in high fire-hazard areas to ensure all properties are kept in a “fire-safe” manner. In the past year, OFD made significant progress with vegetation management, reducing fuels along major roadways, large open spaces, City lots and park lands.

The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District, approved by voters in 2004, helped to fund vegetation management efforts, including wildfire prevention education and outreach, roving fire patrols on high-fire hazard days, yard waste disposal and debris removal, free curbside tree and brush chipping service and goat grazing. The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District spans an area of approximately 16.5 square miles and includes about 300 miles of interior roadways.

The City of Oakland has strengthened fire and building codes, retrofitted hydrants so non-Oakland fire crews can easily hook up to our fixtures, installed two Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) to provide supplemental weather data specific to Oakland’s wildland/urban interface and applied new technology to communications systems so that agencies from different jurisdictions can more easily communicate with each other.

The disaster served to improve preparedness statewide; the State of California Hazard Management System guidelines, which Oakland and surrounding communities follow, were based on Oakland’s experience in managing the aftermath of the Loma Prieta Earthquake and the firestorm. These guidelines became the basis of California’s Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) as well as the FEMA-implemented Incident Command System (ICS), used across the nation.

Community Preparation is Essential

Our community plays an important part in preventing fires. Everyone can do their part to protect our East Bay Hills by managing vegetation and taking extra precautions in high fire-hazard areas, whether that’s one of our Oakland Hills neighborhoods or a regional park.

Plan now before a disaster strikes. Follow these basic steps to prepare for any emergency:

Develop a plan. Your family may be separated when a disaster strikes. Plan in advance so everyone knows how to get to a safe location, how to contact each other if phones and Internet are down and where to meet following an emergency.

Build a disaster kit. Assemble items in advance. Know what you will take if you need to evacuate at a moment’s notice. If you need to shelter in place following an earthquake or other disaster, you should have enough food, water and other supplies for your family and pets to last for at least 72 hours.

Learn more at FEMA’s website, ready.gov. Below are additional preparedness resources to assist residents and business owners.

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Red Flag Day Alerts

When fire danger is high, Red Flag Fire Safety Days are implemented. The Oakland Fire Department conducts roving patrols in the hills and firefighters raise red flags at fire stations in Alameda and Contra Costa counties to warn residents of extreme fire weather. Subscribe for Red Flag Day email and text alerts at bit.ly/1OtWOqc.

CORE Training

The Oakland Fire Department provides emergency preparedness and response training for residents. Communities of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE) is a free program that teaches self-reliance skills and helps neighborhoods establish response teams. To sign up for classes, call (510) 238-6351, or email core@oaklandnet.com. See class schedules and learn more at oaklandcore.com.

CalFIRE Website

Find extensive information about wildfire prevention and emergency preparedness on CalFIRE's website, readyforwildfire.org. You can also learn about defensible space, how to create a wildfire action plan and steps to create an evacuation plan.

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