

NEVADA APPEAL

Fire Safe Council encouraging more local chapters to form

Cory McConnell
Appeal Staff Writer, cmcconnell@nevadaappeal.com
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Charged with helping form at least two neighborhood chapters of the Nevada Fire Safe Council, University of Nevada, Reno officials funded by a Carson City grant have formed four, and they're looking for more.

"There are lots of areas throughout the city that could benefit (from forming a chapter)," said Cooperative Extension Waterfall fire Project Assistant Lesley Bensinger.

So far, residents in Lakeview, Kings Canyon, Timberline and Mexican Dam and Piñon Hills have established, or are in the process of establishing, Fire Safe Council chapters.

Lakeview, Kings Canyon and Timberline were all singed by last summer's Waterfall fire, but that doesn't mean they're not in danger of burning again, Bensinger said. A wet winter and spring have led to a flourish of vegetation on the hillsides that promises to become dry and combustible as the heat of summer stretches on.

Other areas have years of fuel build-up that need to be removed, and forming a fire safe chapter in all such areas of Carson City could help stave off potential disasters, Bensinger said.

"Any Carson City resident can become a Fire Safe Council member, and Cooperative Extension can help facilitate them creating a chapter," Bensinger said.

"If (a neighborhood) has one person who is willing to be the spark plug, we can work with (him or her)."

It's up to each local chapter to define a list of 2-year goals when starting a chapter. The goals generally fall into the categories of education, fuels reduction and evacuation plans.

Once the goals are defined, the state council, which formed in 1999, lends information, expertise and money to accomplish them. The Nevada Fire Safe Council works with the chapters, various land-management agencies and the Carson City Fire Department to

coordinate fire-safe projects between neighborhoods and neighboring public lands. It also applies for grants on behalf of the groups for projects ranging from fuel reduction to safe landscaping, or "fire-scaping," and administers the funds.

To form a Nevada Fire Safe Council chapter, contact Bensinger or Meri McEneny at Cooperative Extension's Carson City office, 887-2252.

n Contact reporter Cory McConnell at cmcconnell@nevadaappeal.com or 881-1217.

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Learn about reducing threat of wildfire

Staff report

Free information for homeowners about reducing the threat of wildfire will be offered by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension at Fire Safety and Prevention Day from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday at the Carson Valley Home Depot, 920 Jacks Valley Road.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's "Living With Fire" program has produced several educational materials, including "Living With Fire": videos that homeowners can check out and view at home; the "Living With Fire Homeowners Guide," a list of recommended plant choices for defensible space; an evacuation checklist and a brand-new Web site at www.livingwithfire.info.

Ed Smith, natural resource specialist with University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, has worked with many local, state and federal firefighters and agencies to develop and distribute information to help homeowners live more safely with the threat of wildfire.

JoAnne Skelly, Carson City / Storey County Extension educator, has worked with Smith and offers free defensible-space evaluations to homeowners in Carson City. In addition, Skelly is helping with Carson City's Waterfall fire rehabilitation efforts.

Some other groups participating in the Fire Safety and Prevention Day include Fernley Search & Rescue, United Blood Services, Care Flight, Douglas County Police Department, East Fork Fire Department, Nevada Fire Safe Council and the Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators.

For information, call Sonya Sistare, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, 784-4848.

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