

NEVADA APPEAL

Group looks to state to fund fire safety program

Senate Finance Committee considers
funding the Fire Safe Council

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With federal agencies looking to shore up budgets in the midst of a mushrooming national deficit, the Nevada Fire Safe Council is looking to the state for help staying afloat.

"It's not a sure thing we'd go out of business. We still might have support from the federal government, but their budgets are under considerable pressure," said NSFC Executive Coordinator Elwood Miller.

Nevada's Senate Finance Committee on Monday will consider a more than \$2.5 million appropriation that would fund the council for the next two years and replace what federal money council officials fear may be lost.

The council, which formed shortly before 1.6 million acres of Nevada rangeland burned during the 1999 wildfire season, organizes community fire safety groups, helps fund fire prevention projects and spreads information about wildfire.

Since becoming fully operational three years ago, the council has operated almost exclusively off federal funds, which average about \$1.2 million a year.

The appropriation being considered by state legislators would allot the council more than a half million dollars for operational costs and \$2 million to award grants for fire-prevention projects.

"That would keep us fully operational at a 100 percent over the next two years," Miller said.

There are 26 community council chapters scattered throughout Nevada, eight in the

Tahoe Basin and nine along the eastern Sierra Nevada outside of Lake Tahoe. In Carson City, neighbors in the Clear Creek and Lakeview areas have formed chapters and four other neighborhoods are considering it.

Miller said a statewide fire danger assessment nearing completion has identified several Nevada communities in danger - 19 are in extreme danger, he said, and many of those are in the Tahoe Basin.

Even after last year's Waterfall fire, which scorched nearly 8,800 acres in Carson City and destroyed 18 homes, Miller said, "there are many communities that are just waiting for it (fire) to happen."

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