

## Waterfall Fire fans growth of state safety council

Tim Anderson  
RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL  
7/22/2005 01:06 am

Last year's Waterfall Fire in Carson City was a wake-up call to neighborhoods adjacent to wildland areas, officials for the Nevada Fire Safe Council said this week.

Since the July 2004 fire that scorched 8,723 acres and destroyed 17 homes, a dozen new chapters have been formed — four in Carson City.

Thirty-one chapters throughout the state are promoting measures to enhance safety, said consultant Elwood Miller, the council's former executive director.

Among the new chapters is one formed for a development in Douglas County where construction hasn't even started.

"The Waterfall Fire was definitely a catalyst. There's nothing that shakes complacency like a disaster," Miller said.

He said neighborhoods and communities can be much more effective when they join together on projects such as clearing brush and weeds near their homes.

The state council provides technical support and is in position to seek federal grants, Miller said.

Meri McEneny, hired by University of Nevada Cooperative Extension to assist Carson City neighborhoods in forming chapters and creating safer environments, said many residents of "wildland urban interface" areas have taken an aggressive approach since the Waterfall Fire.

"As a result, a lot of things are happening to make neighborhoods safer," McEneny said.

New chapters have sprouted in Timberline, Lakeview, Kings Canyon and Mexican Dam/Pinon Hills, with residents becoming actively involved in projects like wood chipping and cheatgrass control. A chapter was established in the Clear Creek area a few years ago.

Miller said the chapter covering the planned 55-unit, 275-acre Eagle Ridge project north of Genoa is the first of its kind since the state council was organized in 1999. He credited developer Greg Painter for his foresight.

Painter said he began talking to council officials just before the Carson City fire. One of the first things he did after gaining approval for his project was to build a firebreak.

Painter said builders will be encouraged to create defensible space around the homes and use fire-safe design methods.

"Those who build a home here will be part of the council through a homeowners' association," Painter said. "We'll never be able to make this area fire-proof, but we can make it safe as possible," Painter said.

He said he believes this will be a strong selling point for the project and urged other developers to become more



**Candice Towell/Candice Towell**  
Developer Greg Painter kneels Thursday on land where he is using fire-safe design methods in plans for a 275-acre Eagle Ridge project north of Genoa.

actively involved in educating homeowners about fire safety.

Copyright © 2005 The Reno Gazette-Journal