

NEVADA APPEAL

Firefighters preparing for the worst this summer

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Terri Harber/Nevada Appeal Carson City firefighter Dan Gelbman tries to light pieces of juniper bush during a fire-prevention demonstration Monday to mark Nevada Wildland Fire Awareness Week, which ends Friday.



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They torched, poked, rearranged, and even accepted a piece of dry tree from a spectator, but try as they might, Carson City firefighters couldn't get juniper clippings to burn on Monday.

Most of the people had moved on from the demonstration by the time flames were roaring and heavy smoke billowing, illustrating how flammable junipers can be.

Firefighters know weather conditions this summer will be much hotter and drier than those on Monday, and are preparing for that.

Nevada Wildland Fire Awareness Week continues through Friday. An array of government agencies that deal with fire threats are coming together to help Nevadans prepare for the warm, dry time of year that brings increased danger.

Some fires already have flared up in Southern Nevada.

The junipers, which are drying out dangerously close to many houses around Nevada, are one concern.

"These trees burn fast when they are dry and the weather is dry," said Meri McEneny, UNR- Cooperative Extension's Waterfall fire project assistant. "And embers can travel a long way in the wind."

She was helping people dump their old junipers, for which they get new, more fire-resistant plants in return as part of a fire-awareness program through Thursday called "Junk the Juniper!"

The Waterfall fire destroyed 17 homes and injured five people in July 2004. It is only one of many devastating blazes in the region during recent years.

"The community suffered tremendously," said Carson City Supervisor Pete Livermore.

"We lost a year of our lives - and we still are recovering."

"Homeowners can make a difference," said Ed Smith, natural-resource specialist for University of Nevada Reno-Cooperative Extension.

A TV documentary that provides homeowners with tips on how to reduce the threat of wildfire, "Living With Fire ... Before, During, and After the Fire," will air at approximately 10 p.m. Monday on KOLO-Channel 8.

Much of the focus of the documentary is on people who live within the Waterfall fire burn area. Smith helped start this effort in 1997 to create consistent wildfire-reduction recommendations. Arrangements are being made to air the documentary on community-access cable television, and DVDs of the program will be available through Cooperative Extension.

Another effort highlights a Carson-area home becoming an example of a fire safe dwelling. The resident will obtain a cash payment of \$4,000 in exchange for upkeep of fire-prevention landscaping work and hosting occasional tours during the next couple of years to help other residents see how to protect their homes.

"Fire safety is not just a concern of 'rich people' who live on the edge of the city," said Gary Schiff, Carson District ranger for the U.S. Forest Service. "Embers and debris can fly through the air a half-mile or more."

Cooperative Extension is the lead agency behind the nonprofit Nevada Fire Safe Council, which was formed in 2000.

There are six fire-safety councils in Carson City alone. Involvement in the Nevada Fire Safe Council has doubled during the last year from 1,100 members and 24 chapters to 2,300 and 50 chapters, said Mike Vollmer, executive director.

For details about this week's activities, contact Cooperative Extension at 887-2252.

- Contact reporter Terri Harber at [tharber @nevadaappeal.com](mailto:tharber@nevadaappeal.com) or 882-2111, ext. 215.

Watch it and learn

What: "Living With Fire" documentary

When: Approximately 10 p.m. Monday (after sports telecast)

Where: KOLO-Channel 8

Information: University of Nevada Reno-Cooperative Extension, 887-2252 or livingwithfire.info

Wildland Fire Reduction Project

Free receptacles for flammable plants and clippings (city residents only) are available through the Carson City Fire Department. Call 887-2210.

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