

For Immediate Release

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COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS NEED A MODERN UPDATE—RESEARCH AIMS TO CLOSE THE GAP.

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and Washington State University Risk-Informed Decision-Making Lab Partner to Improve the CWPP Process and Effectiveness.

March 24, 2025, Saratoga, CA: More than 3,000 communities rely on Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), yet many are based on static wildfire risk estimates, lagging behind the dynamic shifts of climate and urban development. Furthermore, despite the fact that 90% of wildfires are human-caused and residents' voluntary mitigation actions are vital in reducing property-level wildfire risk, current strategies often overlook citizen engagement, leaving key risk reduction efforts underutilized.

CWPPs are collaboratively developed by local, state, federal and tribal partners. CWPPs focus on reducing wildfire risk to people, homes, businesses, watersheds, cultural resources, infrastructure, natural ecosystems, and other values or resources within a defined planning area. The California CWPP Toolkit provides important guidance and resources for communities to develop and implement these plans across the State.

Through the National Science Foundation project, "CAREER: Understanding the Role of Citizen Engagement and Multidirectional Information Exchange in Community Resilience to Wildfires", the Washington State University research team led by Dr. Ji Yun Lee (Associate Professor in the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering) and Ms. Nasim Rashidi (PhD candidate) seeks to improve CWPPs by integrating real-time risk data, property-level mitigation, and stronger citizen engagement. Our approach engages citizens to collect property-level mitigation action data and merges the details with strategic fuel treatment efforts from local government. The result is a dynamic dataset

that reflects human actions with regard to wildfire mitigation efforts and provides the basis for a more accurate risk assessment. Ultimately, this project will create a dynamic, interactive, next-generation CWPP platform that employs an ongoing, multidirectional information exchange between citizens and local governments and also between the citizens themselves. As part of this effort, we are engaging fire officials, emergency managers, land-use planners, and policymakers to identify current challenges and potential opportunities to develop next-generation, interactive community wildfire protection plans.

“Having recently led the completion of a multi-year update of the [Santa Clara County Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#), The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council engaged a broad spectrum of countywide stakeholders throughout the process,” stated Seth Schalet, CEO of the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. “Each had a point of view on what to incorporate within the CWPP. Listening and respecting their perspectives, while at the same time, incorporating CWPP best practices, requires the art of compromise. We made the decision early on to utilize visual story maps, a project tracker where new hazardous fuels reduction projects are added upon completion, giving the public an ability to engage in the process. Hazards and risks change over time, so creating a CWPP product that is adaptive and easily updatable was among our primary considerations. CAL FIRE recently completed their [California CWPP Toolkit](#), and this is an excellent resource to facilitate the CWPP process I want to highlight. We value being invited to collaborate with Washington State University and look forward to engaging in this critical research to enhance the development, adoption, and engagement around CWPPs,” concluded Schalet.

Interested in contributing? We invite CWPP professionals to join us for short interviews to help shape the future of wildfire resilience. As a token of appreciation, participants will receive a \$40 Amazon eGift Card.

About Washington State University Risk-Informed Decision-Making Lab:

The WSU Risk-Informed Decision-Making Lab is dedicated to studying the relationship between natural hazards, the built environment, and people. The research team focuses on improving the resilience of people, infrastructure systems, and communities by analyzing risks and uncertainties, aimed at helping decision-makers better understand potential risks and make informed decisions. With expertise in probabilistic analysis, statistical modeling, structural engineering, stochastic simulation, and decision theory, the research group specializes in (a) stochastic modeling and simulation of natural hazards, including wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes, (b) risk analysis and assessment of buildings, bridges, water supply networks, supply chain systems, transportation networks, electric power grid, and residential communities, (c) human decision-making processes, (d) AI-driven data analytics, and (e) actuarial science. For more information, visit www.labs.wsu.edu/jiunlee/

About Santa Clara County FireSafe Council:

As a 501 (c)3 nonprofit with a 20-year history, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council’s core mission is to mobilize the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities, and environment from wildfires. As a trusted partner across the government, fire service, corporate and WUI residential communities, SCCFSC has led some of the most complex hazardous fuel reduction projects in the region. With a board and advisory council that has a deep expertise across the wildfire ecosystem including wildfire and environmental research, academia, emergency management, regional planning, technology products and wildland firefighting leadership, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council is uniquely positioned to lead cross-sector collaborations, government-private partnerships in Silicon Valley, Santa Clara County and beyond. For more information, visit www.sccfiresafe.org

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