



A Joint Message from Novato Fire District Fire Chief, Bill Tyler and North Marin Water District General Manager, Tony Williams

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We are currently witnessing urban conflagrations in Southern California that have been described as unfightable fires. Novato Fire answered the call and deployed personnel and equipment, including a water tender, down to SoCal to help. Human-caused fires, under red flag conditions, rapidly expanding due to extremely high winds, low humidities, and dry receptive vegetation sending brands and embers showering into neighborhoods, on homes and businesses. These homes ignite by embers landing in vegetation immediately adjacent to the structure bringing direct flame contact, or embers penetrating features of combustible construction, entering homes through vulnerable porous vents, gathering in combustible eaves, openings in roof coverings, sparking debris in gutters, starting on combustible decks and patio furniture—and so on. There are many, many vulnerabilities in our current built environment. Once homes begin to ignite under these conditions there is a domino effect of home-to-home ignitions. The radiant heat flux of a structure fully engulfed in flames threatens other homes that are in close proximity, casting even more ember showers being lifted into convective smoke columns and landing long distances away, starting new fires. **Can the same thing happen here in Novato? Yes, unfortunately, it can.**

What are we as a community to do? There are several important steps that each and every one of us can take to protect our properties and become more resilient home by home, neighborhood by neighborhood, and in public and private open space areas. For homeowners, start where you stand. First and foremost sign up for a FREE in-person home evaluation from one of our NFPD wildfire mitigation specialists. Once the in-person assessment is completed, you will be given a written prescription or road map on things you can immediately do and provide you with access to local matching grants for thousands of dollars to incentivize you to modify your existing fire-prone landscapes and replace existing combustible construction with ignition resistant construction features. Insurance companies are now recognizing new and existing homes that are being built or remodeled to an IBHS “Wildfire Prepared Home” and “Wildfire Prepared Home Plus” standards. Achieving these designations makes it very likely that one will receive insurance coverage from existing admitted insurers. Some insurance companies may even provide discounted rates on existing or new policies. We can also come together as a neighborhood and form a group and apply to become a National Fire Protection Association, designated Firewise Neighborhood. NFPD staff will come to your neighborhood

and help you get started. We will help you do an informed neighborhood wildfire assessment. We will help you come up with a plan to address common areas of concern. Get you signed up for chipper days where you can organize to help your neighbors prepare their own homes which will in turn make the neighborhood more resilient to wildfire. This coming together and becoming Firewise has already occurred in over 14 Novato neighborhoods already, please join them. Also important to know, many vegetation reduction projects have been completed or are in progress in private and public open space areas or have been completed in and around Novato. We are in phase one of implementing the Greater Novato Shaded Fuel Break (GNSFB) This is an area around the entire district from 100ft to 300ft where dead and downed trees have been removed, existing trees limbed up, invasive plants removed, French broom pulled and seasonal grasses cut. We will also be doing additional burn piles of cleared vegetation and look to plan and execute prescribed burns in the future. Dozens of miles of evacuation clearing have been accomplished making routes out of impacted areas more protected if you are in your vehicle on your way out. Lastly, the public support for the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority and its funding mechanism, Measure C, needs to be supported and renewed when the time comes. We are 5 years into a 10-year commitment on behalf of the public which provides \$20 million dollars a year to all Marin communities to focus on improving evacuation notification and warning systems, fire prevention education, mitigation grant funding reinvested back into the community, substantial vegetation fuel reduction projects, home and business evaluations, and more. Many times as firefighters we are told, "Thank You" for what we do, but I want to say Thank you! We love what we do, and we know you will be there to support us when we need you. We need everyone to take action now and, in the future, in conjunction with our North Marin Water District partners supplying water to fight these "unfightable fires."

Novato Fire Safety and Water

Given the horrific conditions in Southern California we wanted to remind our customers what role North Marin Water District (District) plays in fire planning, suppression, prevention, and safety. Each day, the District ensures that **25 million gallons of water or more** is stored in thirty different water storage tanks located throughout the distribution system, ranging in capacity from 5,000 gallons to 5 million gallons. With careful planning, the stored volume could be increased to over 35 million gallons. These storage tanks are connected to the District's water distribution system which also includes over 2,900 fire hydrants strategically spaced throughout the community, mostly near homes, schools, and commercial development. The District installs additional fire hydrants, in coordination with the Novato Fire Protection District (Novato Fire), whenever new water pipelines are installed or replaced; and replaces hydrants if damaged (usually by a vehicle). The Fire District handles blue marker street identification, hydrant clearance, and painting the hydrants to protect them from the elements and to extend their life. The District relies on the hydrants for routine testing/flushing of pipelines as well as for temporary connections for special needs, and obviously the Fire District relies on the hydrants for fighting fires and protecting the community.

In order to fill the 30 water storage tanks, the District relies on 25 pump stations. The pump stations pump the water uphill to the tanks which are situated at higher elevations, taking

advantage of gravity to provide pressure to the distribution system from the full tanks. In coordination with Novato Fire, the District has established specific storage and flow rates in the distribution system for firefighting purposes which dictates the design and operation of the storage tanks and pump stations. The pump stations require electricity for two main functions: communications for control, and power to run the pumps. Backup power is provided to all communication systems via batteries and the pumps are capable of running off auxiliary power, usually in the form of a portable generator. The District owns nine large portable generators and 10 smaller portable generators for this purpose. In addition, the District has a strategic deployment plan developed from our experience with prior PG&E Power Safety Shutoffs but it also provides flexibility to modify for other events. The District also has a stationary large battery storage capability at one of the largest pump stations and a stationary generator at the Stafford Treatment Plant.

The District has an extensive distribution system to ensure we always have available water for human consumption and firefighting purposes. In an effort to continually improve and update this system, the District is currently embarking on three projects that will help make our distribution system more effective and robust for reliability and fire protection in the coming years. These projects include the Lynwood Pump Station Upgrade Project, the Crest Pump Station Project, and the San Mateo Tank 24-inch transmission water main project.

Learn More:

www.novatofire.org

www.firesafemarin.org

www.marinwildfire.org

[Wildfire Prepared Home, a Program of IBHS - Resources](#)

www.nmwd.com



Bill Tyler
Fire Chief
Novato Fire District



Tony Williams, P.E.
General Manager
North Marin Water District