



Wildfire Protection

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Be Fire Safe in Regional Parks

As summer gradually turns into fall, East Bay Regional Parks and other public wildlands are entering the most dangerous time of the year – the September-October peak fire season.

This is because the heat of summer has dried out the vegetation, and the rains of winter have not yet arrived. Add to this the seasonal hot, dry Diablo winds blowing from the east, and there's potential for disastrous wildfires.

It's sad but true that many wildfires originate with people, intentionally or otherwise. Fireworks are a frequent culprit.

The Park District Fire Department is prepared for fire season. The department has 16 full-time firefighters and another 34 fully trained on-call staff who are available when needed.

Additionally, District firefighters and police have mutual aid agreements with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the California Office of Emergency Services, and every fire department within Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Fire headquarters are at Station 1 in Tilden Regional Park near Berkeley. Seven other stations throughout the District are staffed as circumstances demand. All have engines and other equipment in place. During the fire season, District firefighters and park rangers are always on the alert for potential fires.

Park visitors can provide critical help in preventing wildfires by being alert and following some easy, common-sense, every-day fire-safe rules:

- 1 All smoking is prohibited in the Regional Parks. This includes pipes, cigars, and cigarettes.
- 2 Vapor devices that release gas, particles or vapors into the air (“vaping”) are also prohibited, except for any USDA-approved medication.
- 3 Gasoline-powered generators are prohibited.
- 4 Do not drive or park your vehicle on dry grass areas. The heat from a vehicle's undercarriage exhaust system can ignite a wildfire. Low-hanging chains that drag and create sparks can do the same.
- 5 When COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted, do not light an open outdoor fire on park property, except in park equipment designed for that purpose, such as barbecue stands and fire pits. On extreme fire days, no open fires or barbecues of any kind are allowed.
- 6 Be sure that all burning fuel such as wood or charcoal is completely extinguished, then dispose of it in the concrete ash receptacles designed for that purpose. Do not discard coals in regular garbage cans or refuse bins.

If you see a fire while hiking or riding in the Regional Parks, report it immediately by calling 9-1-1. If possible, tell the dispatcher the location

of the fire, its size, direction in which it is burning, and whether any structures are threatened. Of course, your own personal safety is paramount and takes precedent over detailed reporting, so leave the area immediately if the fire is near.

Fire prevention should extend to your home as well, especially if you live in a neighborhood next to open space. The CAL FIRE website, readyforwildfire.com, has lots of information on wildfire preparedness and an evacuation checklist.

The idea is to create a defensible space to slow the spread of fire and enable firefighters to make a stand. So the first 30 feet from your home should be “lean, clean and green,” devoid of dead plants, grass, weeds and overgrown brush. From 30 to 100 feet out, your property should have short-mowed grass, and spacing between grass, shrubs and trees.

In the event of fire, the three top tips are:

- Obey all evacuation orders
- Leave immediately if you feel threatened
- Avoid blocking access for fire engines and emergency personnel.

In the best circumstances, all these precautions will prove unnecessary. But the old proverb is true: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. With these measures in mind, we can all hope for a safe, enjoyable and fire-free fall, while being well prepared for any emergencies that may occur.



4 Be alert and follow fire-safe rules.



Regional Park District firefighters perform annual maintenance on weather stations.



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Wildfire Protection Legislative Update

Responsible for management of some 125,000 acres of parklands and open space, the East Bay Regional Park District is strongly committed to wildfire prevention and safety.

With the new pattern of hot, dry weather conditions resulting in longer and more intense fire seasons, additional funding is necessary to prepare for potentially catastrophic fires.

Park District staff is in constant contact with state and national representatives who are introducing bills to secure funding for this purpose. Here are some of the efforts in progress:



- **Senator Kamala Harris and Representative Jared Huffman have introduced Senate Bill 2882 and H.R. 5091 – the Wildfire Defense Act.** It would expand a grant program within the Federal Emergency Management Agency, setting aside \$1 billion each year for better infrastructure, and land use and evacuation route planning in fire-prone communities.
- **Assembly Bill 2076 (Bigelow R-O’Neals), the State Parks’ Wildfire Prevention Strategy,** would require California’s Director of Parks and Recreation to develop and implement a wildfire prevention strategy for all property under the

department’s jurisdiction that is in a high fire hazard zone. This would likely include Del Valle Regional Park, Mount Diablo State Park, and Marsh Creek State Park.

- **Assembly Bill 3074 (Friedman D-Glendale), Wildfire Ember Resistant Zones.** The bill would strengthen California’s defensible space laws, adding a requirement for a five-foot “ember-resistant zone” around homes in high fire risk areas.
- **Assembly Bill 3164 (Friedman D-Glendale), Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Risk Model.** This bill would require CAL FIRE, in consultation with an advisory group, to develop a wildfire risk model to identify areas with the highest risk to property and health. This would help communities prioritize the use of wildfire hazard mitigation funds.
- **H.R. 6546 (Neguse, D-Colorado), Wildfire and Community Health Response Act of 2020.** This bill would require the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to submit a report to Congress about their efforts to mitigate wildfire risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Senate Bill 3684 (Wyden, D-Oregon), 21st Century Conservation Corps for Our Health and Our Jobs Act.** The bill would provide billions of dollars in funding for a variety of programs addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on health, the economy, and wildland firefighting. The legislation supports funding and employment opportunities for wildfire hazard mitigation.



Regional Park District firefighters mopping up a wildland fire.

Fire Danger Rules

“Very High” Fire Danger Rules

- Once COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted, barbecues and campfires are only permitted in designated day-use picnic areas, campgrounds, or developed recreational areas.
- Gas-fueled camp stoves are permitted, but with conditions.



“Extreme” Fire Danger Rules

- No open fires, campfires, or barbecues of any type are allowed.
- ONLY gas-fueled stoves are allowed.

Park Closures

On rare occasions, Regional Parks may close under two circumstances:

- The Fire Department has limited resources to fight a fire.
- The National Weather Service declares a Red Flag Warning, signifying a likelihood of severe lightning storms or hot, dry winds from the east (“Diablo Winds”).

For up-to-date information on fire danger and rules, visit ebparks.org/firewarninginfo, or call (510) 881-1833.