

Glossary

Terms are listed in alphabetical order by lesson. The vocabulary box in the lesson plan lists terms in the order they appear in the lesson.

Lesson 1: Geography & Landscapes

Climate

The long-term average of weather, typically averaged over a period of 30 years. California has a Mediterranean climate with warm-hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters.

Ecological Transition Zone

The area where one plant community meets and changes into the next.

Elevation

The height above a given level, especially sea level. Butte County's elevation ranges from 60 to approximately 7,000 feet.

Fire Adapted Community

A human community consisting of informed and prepared citizens collaboratively planning and taking action to safely coexist with wildland fire.

Fire Hazard Severity

A mapped area that designates zones (based on factors such as fuel, slope, and fire weather) with varying degrees of fire hazard (moderate, high, and very high). They do not take into account modifications such as fuel reduction efforts.

Landscape

All the visible features of an area of countryside or land.

Landscapes of Butte County: Urban, Agriculture, Grassland, Chaparral, Woodland, Mixed Conifer. More specific landscapes featured in the Forest Health Handbook: Blue Oak Woodland, Sierran Mixed Hardwood, and Mixed Conifer Woodland.

Topography

The physical features on Earth's surface or the technique of representing elevations of land on maps. Topography includes mountains, ridges, valleys, plateaus, or water features on the land.

Weather

The short-term conditions of the atmosphere.

Lesson 2: Cultural Fire

Cultural Burn

An intended fire started and managed by Indigenous people or done with their permission and guidance.

Fire Suppression

Putting out and stopping wildfire.

Prescribed Burn

Intentionally set fire, also sometimes called a “controlled burn”, used to meet land management objectives.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

Describes Indigenous knowledge of local resources developed over thousands of years. It is a system of ecological science and technology based on long-term observation, experimentation, and outcomes.

Lesson 3: Fire Physics & Ignitions

Humidity

A quantity representing the relative amount of water vapor in the atmosphere or in a gas.

Ignition

The point at which a fire starts.

Slope

A surface of which one end or side is at a higher level than another. Assuming no wind or variation in fuel, fire travels faster up a slope than across flat ground or downhill.

The Fire Triangle: (Fuel, Heat, Oxygen)

Fuel: Anything that burns as a solid, liquid, or gas. Fuel is characterized by its moisture content, size, shape, quantity, and the arrangement on the landscape.

Heat: Responsible for the initial ignition of fire and is needed to maintain and spread it. Heat evaporates moisture in fuels and brings it to ignition temperature.

Oxygen: Supports the chemical processes that occur during fire. At least 16% is needed in a given air mass.

The Fire Behavior Triangle: (Topography, Weather, Fuel)

Topography: Includes physical land features such as mountains, plateaus, canyons, plains, and valleys. The steeper the slope, the faster fire travels.

Weather: There are three weather ingredients that can affect wildfires: temperature, wind, and moisture. Wind is the most critical factor affecting wildfire behavior.

Fuel: Fuel can include natural matter such as plants to human-made structures.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

The area where houses meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland vegetation.

Lesson 4: Community Wildfire Mitigation

Mitigation

The action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something.

Fuels Management

Reducing fuels and their availability to feed a wildfire. Excess vegetation is managed through a combination of actions including mechanical and hand thinning, chipping, prescribed fire, and grazing.

Lesson 5: Fire Resistant Structures

Crown Fire

Fires that burn across the tops of trees. Wildfires are much harder to control if they turn into crown fires.

Defensible Space

The buffer created between a building that can burn and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surrounds it. This space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and it helps protect your home from catching fire, either from direct flame contact or radiant heat. It also provides fire fighters a safer space to work in when protecting structures.

Embers

Small pieces of burning or glowing fuel.

Ember Storm

Embers that are blown into the air and can be carried over a mile from the fire front with strong winds.

Firewise Guidelines

A list of guidelines that people can use to create an ideal defensible space around their homes.

Home Hardening

Efforts to prepare a house for wildfire and an ember storm. Home hardening addresses the most vulnerable components of a house with building materials and techniques that increase resistance to heat, flames, and embers.

Home Ignition Zones

The three priority zones for defensible space around a structure.

Immediate Zone (0 to 5 feet around the house)

Intermediate Zone (5 to 30 feet)

Extended Zone (30 to 100 feet or property line)

Ladder Fuel

Fuel that can carry a fire burning in low-growing vegetation up to the taller vegetation. This can move fire up into the tree canopy and crown where it can quickly spread to surrounding trees.

The North Winds

Local, dry, seasonal winds that occur during the late summer and fall months. These strong winds travel downslope from the mountains toward the valley. The North Winds blow from the north and travel down the Sierra Nevada Mountains, heating and drying the air as it moves.

Lesson 6: Family Preparedness – Get Ready!

Family Emergency Plan

A written plan that prepares each family member to know their role and stay connected during an emergency. Consists of both the Family Communication Plan and Action Plan.

Family Communication Plan: A written document that is completed during a family meeting.

The plan includes family member contact information, an out-of-town contact, a neighborhood meeting place, a regional meeting place, school information for children.

Action Plan: Written on the back of the Family Communication Plan, this lists a task each person is responsible for, if the emergency situation permits, before leaving the house together in the event of an evacuation.

Go Bag

A Go Bag is a pre-packed bag that holds essential items for the next 72 hours. It should be light enough for one person to carry and packed in a sturdy bag that can be grabbed quickly.

Lesson 7: Wildfire Response – Get Set! Go!

Evacuation Shelter

A temporary place opened to offer safety and resources for people who have evacuated from a disaster.

Evacuation Warning

Alerts people of a potential threat to life and property. People who need additional time should consider evacuating at this time. Start your Family Communication Plan now to prepare for a changing situation.

Immediate Evacuation Order

Requires the immediate movement of people out of an affected area due extreme danger. Due to the changing nature of the emergency, this order may be the only warning that people in the area receive. Choosing to stay could put your life in danger and obstruct the work of firefighters and rescue workers.

Public Assembly Point

A temporary assembly area that provides a safe place for evacuees to assemble. People will stay here until the threat is past or evacuation routes are accessible. This is also a place for evacuees who cannot evacuate on their own and need assistance getting to a shelter. Evacuees who are capable of evacuating on their own do not need to go to Public Assembly Points unless directed by public safety officials.

Shelter-In-Place

Advises people to stay secure at their current location by remaining in place. There may not be a safe evacuation route at this time.