



Wildfire Response and Preparedness

Island County Department of Emergency Management



Wildfire

Topics

- Introduction – Recent Wildfires in Maui
- Risk (from the Island County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan)
- Response
 - Local Fire District Response
 - Island County Emergency Operations Center
- Preparedness
- Mitigation
- Recovery

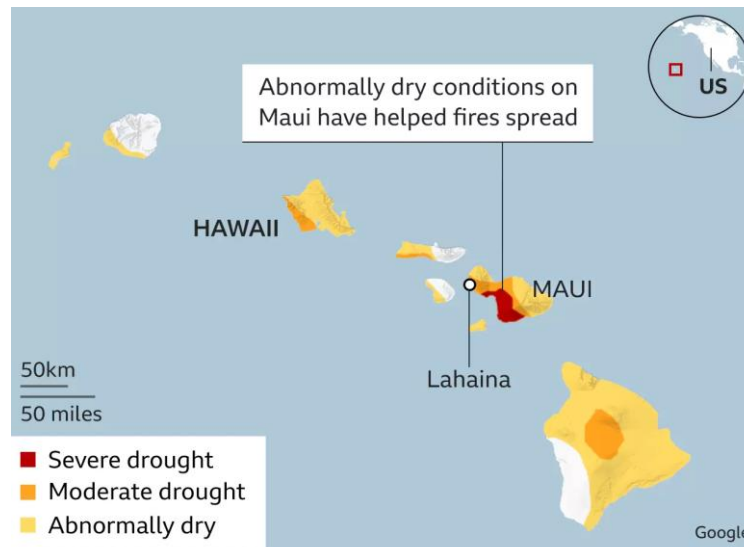


Wildfire

Maui Wildfires (US Drought Monitor)

Dry vegetation, strong winds, and low humidity set the stage for the devastating wildfires that tore through Lahaina and other areas of Hawaii.

- Typical dryness/drought exacerbated by weaker than normal trade winds that kept rain away.



Source: US Drought Monitor, data released 10 Aug 2023



Wildfire

Maui Wildfires

- Large atmospheric pattern featured a strong high pressure area to the north and a strong low pressure area (Hurricane Dora) to the south. The island's terrain can also funnel winds and create stronger gusts.
- Atmospheric patterns also created some very dry air that also promotes fire growth.
- Non-native grasses that are more flammable have proliferated the island.





Wildfire

Maui Wildfires

The wildfires in Maui burned about 10 square miles with Lahaina facing the brunt of the damage. All of these conditions made it more difficult for firefighters to combat the flames.

- Aircraft were unable to fly because of the high winds.
- Firefighters reported low water pressure in hydrants.
- AHAB sirens did not sound and residents have said that they did not receive evacuation orders.



Wildfire

Maui Wildfires (images)





Wildfire

Maui Wildfires

The recent wildfires in Maui is among the deadliest in US history.

- The official death toll is 115 people. Only 60 have been identified.
- 66 still missing
- The debris removal and toxic clean-up will about a year and cost about \$1 billion.
- The cost to rebuild was estimated to be \$5.52 billion.



Wildfire

Risk

A wildfire is any uncontrolled fire occurring on undeveloped land that requires fire suppression.

- Wildfire Season in Washington begins early July and ends late September
- Most wildfires (greatest number) are caused by human activity (smoking, campfires, arson, fireworks, equipment)
- Fires caused by lightening strikes have burned more acreage on state owned land.

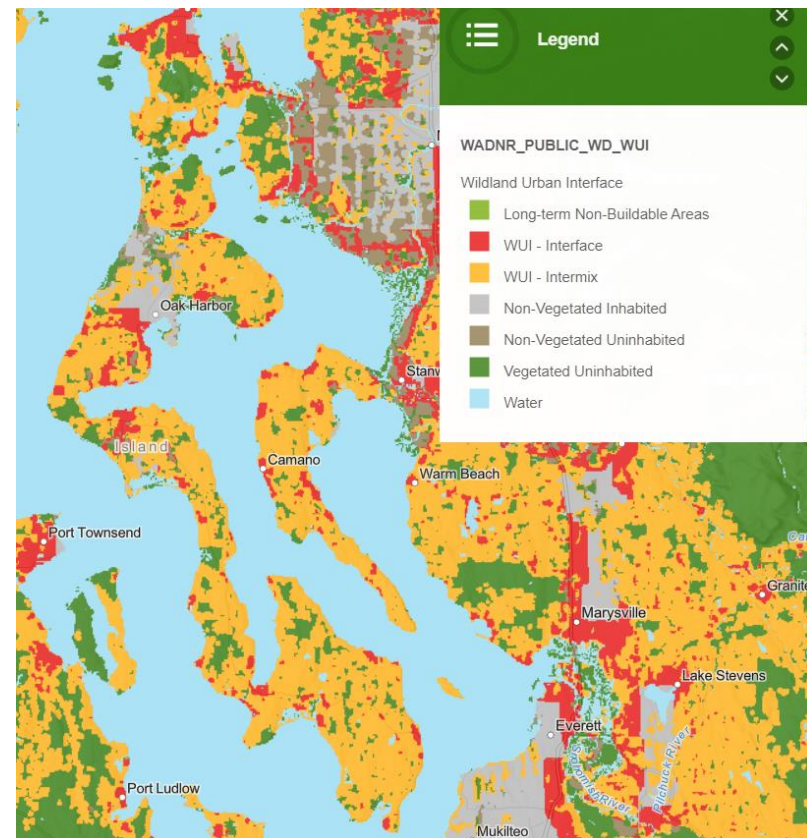


Wildfire

Risk

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is the area where development meets wildland areas.

- Island County designated as a WUI Community in the Washington State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan.
 - 86% of the areas WUI areas highly developed)
- Significant damage to life and property exists in WUI areas.



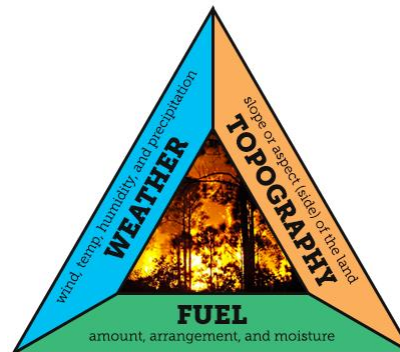


Wildfire

Risk

Many factors need to be considered when determining risk of wildfires.

- Historic Events
- Impact
- Suppression Activities
- Response Capabilities
- Topography
- Fuels (vegetation)
- Weather
- Critical Facilities/Asset Location



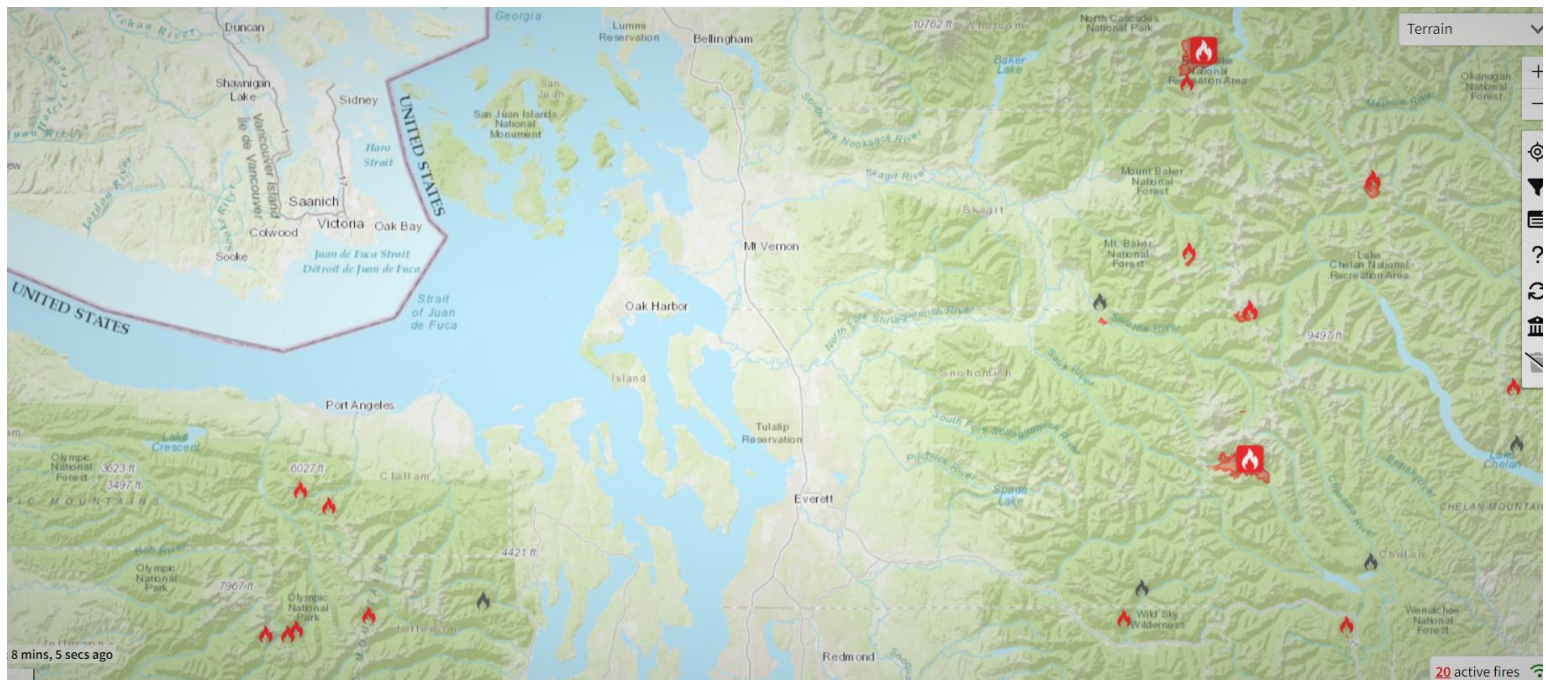
Fire Behavior Triangle



Wildfire

Risk

Current wildfire map (Fire, Weather, & Avalanche Center)





Wildfire

Risk

A big part of determining risk is examining historic wildfire events.

- Island County has never received a state or federal disaster declaration for a wildfire event.
- Historic impacts have been relatively minor with the exception of the July 7, 1920 fire that destroyed Oak Harbor.





Response

Plans

The Island County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and Associated Support Function and Incident Annexes Describe the roles, responsibilities, and resources during major events. During a major event, all Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) could realistically be activated. Some of the immediate ones include:

- ESF 1 Transportation
- ESF 2 Communication
- ESF 4 Firefighting
- ESF 5 Emergency Management
- ESF 6 Mass Care
- ESF 7 Logistics
- ESF 15 Public Information
- Incident Annex 4 Evacuation



Response

Alert and Warning

If responders determine that a wildfire puts the community at risk and evacuation is necessary, we can send alerts through different methods.

- Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) – An audible alert and message is sent to all cell phones in a selected area.
- Emergency Alert System (EAS) – Alerts are sent to all media including radio, television, and weather radios.
- Island County Emergency Alert – Alerts are sent to all registered subscribers. They can be sent as voice messages, text messages, emails, or to the phone app.
- All Hazards Alert Broadcast (AHAB) – 7 sirens placed around the county.
- Door to Door/Loudspeakers through neighborhoods
- Communication network through amateur radio
- Social Media

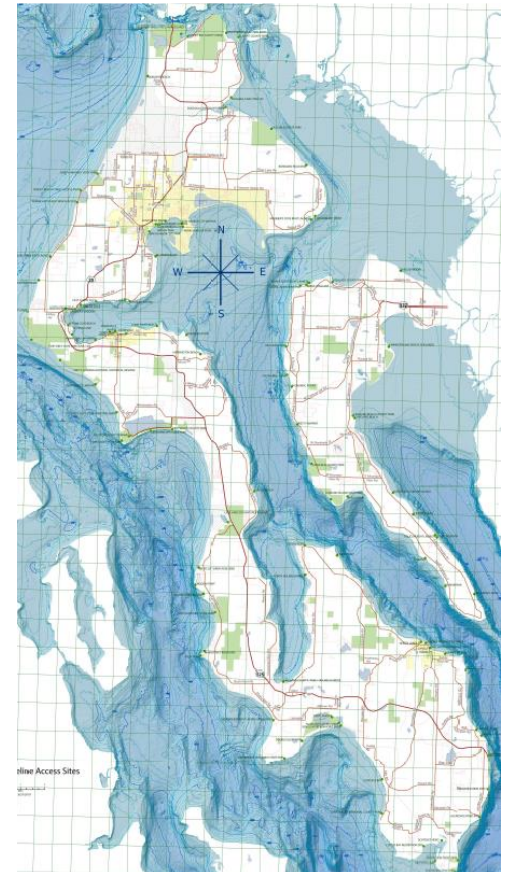




Response

Evacuation

- Unlike an event like a tsunami, it is difficult to establish a specific route for wildfires as the course it could take can be unpredictable.
- When sending evacuation alerts, we will be as specific as we can about the location of the fire and the areas to avoid.
- We work with other partners to clear routes and provide transportation.
- The best/safest/only route may not be via roads. We may need to work with maritime resources to provide evacuation from the water if necessary.





Response

Operations & Logistics (not limited to)

- Local, Regional, State, and Federal resources.
- Mobilization of Volunteer/Community Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD/COAD)
- Staging areas for mobilizations
- Resource tracking
- Evacuation centers/Sheltering operations
- Points of Distribution (PODs)
- Public information
- Debris and HAZMAT clean-up
- Volunteer management
- Donations management
- Reunification
- Recovery operations, short & long-term housing
- Facility management



Preparedness

Be ready to evacuate

Prepare a Go-Bag in case you need to evacuate quickly. This a 3-day kit with essentials to sustain you and provide comfort.

- Food
- Water
- Light
- Radio
- Warmth
- Clothes
- Hygiene Items
- 1st Aid Kit
- Medications
- Money
- Comfort Items
- Important Documents
 - Insurance
- Titles/Deeds
- Financial
- Prescriptions
- Identifications
- Pictures

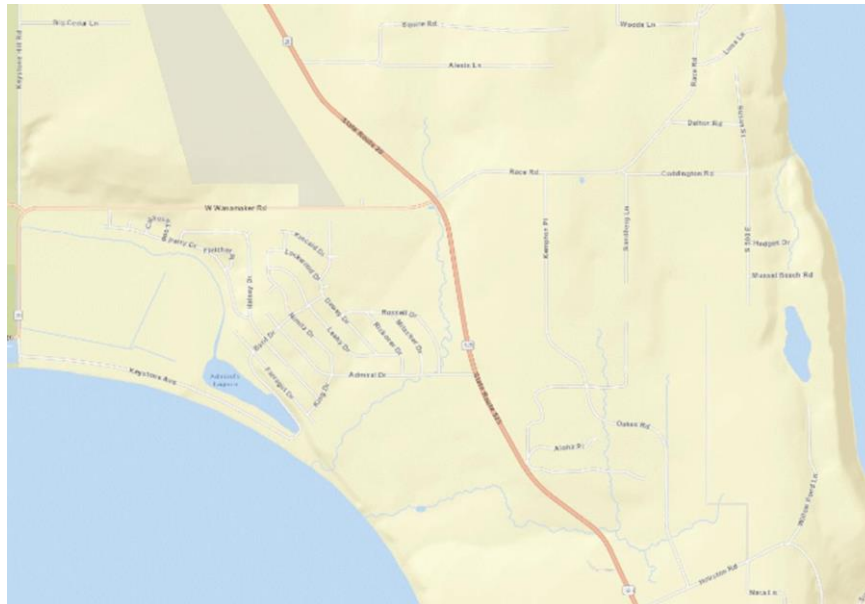
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/478/Personal-Family-Preparedness>



Preparedness

Be ready to evacuate

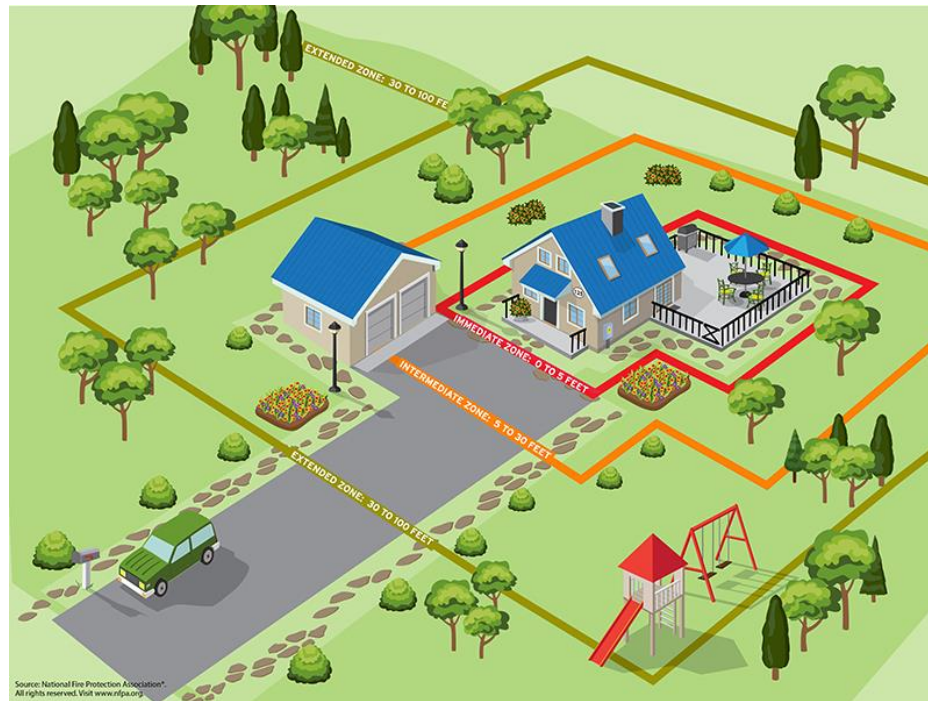
Know/Learn potential routes of escape. Wildfires are unpredictable so there is not one standard evacuation route. The route you typically take may not be the safest.





Mitigation

Wildfire Risk Reduction Steps That Can Make Your Home Safer During A Wildfire





Mitigation

7 Ways to Reduce Risk that Homes and Property will Become Fuel for Wildfire

1. Clear – Clear anything that can burn from rooflines, gutters, decks, porches, and along fence lines.
2. Store Away – Store furniture cushions, mats, decorations, or anything that can catch fire.
3. Screen and Seal – Wind-borne embers can get into your home through vents and other openings. Screen or seal up openings.
4. Rake – Mulch that touches your house, deck, or fence can catch fire. Rake out to at least 5 feet away.



Mitigation

7 Ways to Reduce Risk that Homes and Property will Become Fuel for Wildfire

5. Trim - Trim back shrubs or tree branches that come closer than 5 feet to the house and attachments.
6. Remove – Remove any large fuel sources at least 30 feet from the house. This includes woodpiles, spare lumber, vehicles, and boats.
7. Close – If ordered to evacuate, close all windows and doors tightly and seal pet doors.

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/474/Wildland-fires>



Mitigation

The Lone Surviving House





Preparedness Fair



WHEN
DISASTER
STRIKES, WILL
YOU KNOW
WHAT TO DO?

Preparedness Fair

PRESENTATIONS • BOOTHS • PRIZES • FOOD TRUCKS • DEMOS

FEATURING

- Contacting Loved Ones in a Disaster
- Surviving After a Disaster
- First Aid and CPR Demo
- Tsunami Impacts
- Secure Your Utilities
- Important Documents to Store and MORE!



FREE EVENT, FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

September 30, 2023

10 AM to 2 PM

AT NORTH WHIDBEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

67 NE Izett St, Oak Harbor, WA 98277

WWW.ISLANDCOUNTYWA.GOV/754/SEPTEMBER-PREPAREDNESS-FAIR





Affordable Housing Update

September 13, 2023



Camas Flats

Developer: Shelter Resources

County Investment: Land at 820 Oak Harbor Road
\$3.9 Million ARPA

Number of Units: 81 rental units
(8 designated as Permanent Supportive Housing)

- Received Housing Trust Fund award. Project is fully funded.
- Completed pre-application meeting with City of Oak Harbor.
- Permit applications to be turned in at the end of this month, anticipate receiving permits by end of this year.
- Begin construction by end of Q1 2024.



Harbor Inn

Developer: Low Income Housing Institute

County Investment: \$1.5 million document recording fees

Number of Units: 20 Supportive/Bridge Housing

- New stairs have been completed and signed off by Building Inspector.
- Waiting on occupancy permit from State Dept. of Health.
- Development team working to complete the pre-application paperwork prior to conference with county departments.



Generations Place (Langley)

Developer: Goosefoot Community Foundation

County Investment: \$1,097,293 ARPA

Number of Units: 15 rental units

- Application in for Housing Trust Fund Dollars.
- Hired Consultant (formerly with Housing Hope)
- Still need additional funds for construction to complete funding stack (\$650,000-\$800,000). Will be applying for HOME funds and any County funding made available.



Swantown/Windmill Court

Seeking Developer

- Land purchased 11/22 with ARPA funds.
- Land currently platted for 58 townhomes.
- One respondent to recent RFQ for developer
- Will bring recommendation/considerations to a future work session.



Camano

Current Workgroup planning

- Housing Hope has researched a number of property options and will be presenting this Friday at a workgroup meeting on Camano.
- Housing Authority of Island County and Habitat have expressed interest in developing on Camano and are part of the current work group.



Current Challenges

Developer issues:

- Reduced labor force
- High Interest rates
- Access to capital



Fund Balances

3 Revenue Streams

- **Document Recording Fees** (HB 2060 – benefit households that support affordable housing to households with incomes at or below 50% AMI): **\$190,169**
- **1406** (State Sales Tax Reimbursement - benefit households that support affordable housing to households with incomes at or below 60% AMI): **\$544,986**
- **1590** (1/10th of 1% for Affordable Housing - benefit households that support affordable housing to households with incomes at or below 60% AMI) : **\$1,838,242**



Fund Balances

Steps to Consider

- Create ongoing application for projects that are ready to apply for Housing Trust Fund dollars and need County match/investment to complete funding stack.
- Seek opportunities to purchase suitable land to bank for affordable housing