

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting of October 9, 2019**

To: Board of Directors

From: Christie Neill, Battalion Chief – Vegetation & Fuels Management Program

Subject: Year-End Review of Defensible Space Inspection Program

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive staff report regarding Ross Valley Fire Departments 2019 Defensible Space Inspection Program, provide direction to staff.

**BACKGROUND:**

The RVFD Board asked the fire department to expand the defensible space program for Ross Valley Fire for the 2019 field season MAY 7<sup>TH</sup> through September 30th. Funding was provided to hire **4 Inspectors/Evaluators** and split the cost of a **shared lead Inspector with MCFD**. The intent of the program was to provide an educational contact to as many residents as possible while abatement actions of non-compliant properties were beyond the capability of the staff and program.

The primary goal of the expanded program was to provide residents with a quality inspection that linked to compliance with local fire code while providing information about emergency alert and warning systems, home hardening techniques, advice on flammable plants, and other fire prevention and awareness information. All inspections were captured through the CALFIRE Collector application utilizing tablets and programs that report to the CALFIRE State database and follow-up reporting into our records management system. Ross Valley Fire Battalion Chief Dan Mahoney identified community neighborhoods for inspections.

The goal was to complete approximately **3800 inspections** based on funds provided by the Towns: Fairfax – 1800 residents, San Anselmo – 1800 residents, and Ross – 225 residents.

Reporting and processing of hazard complaints were facilitated between Ross Valley Fire staff and Defensible Space program to ensure timely and appropriate follow up.

**DATA & ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 4017 inspections complete**

**San Anselmo 1808 inspections (45.6%) 41% compliant with law/code**

Area	Total	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Uninspected	Occupant Contacts	Public Contacts
*Forest (SA)	366	117 (32%)	242 (66%)	7	202	58
Herrera	652	279 (42%)	369 (57%)	2	328	57
Oak	411	158 (38%)	238 (58%)	15	220	49

Sequoia	433	206 (48%)	224 (51%)	3	231	61
---------	-----	-----------	-----------	---	-----	----

\* least compliant

**Fairfax 1750 inspections (44.1%) 32% compliant with law/code**

Area	Total	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Uninspected	Occupant Contacts	Public Contacts
*Cascade Canyon	460	113 (25%)	343 (75%)	4	195	54
Deer Park	352	129 (36%)	219 (62%)	4	184	59
Forest (Fairfax)	270	88 (33%)	174 (64%)	8	150	43
Oak Manor	80	48 (60%)	32 (40%)	0	26	15
Tamalpais	588	181 (31%)	399 (68%)	8	305	81

\*least compliant

**Ross 405 inspections 10.2% 41% compliant with law/code**

Area	Total	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Uninspected	Occupant Contacts	Public Contacts
Wellington	405	165 (41%)	229 (57%)	11	229	43

**FISCAL IMPACT & COST SUMMARY:**

There is no direct fiscal impact to RVFD; the cost of this program was covered by the three towns Fairfax, San Anselmo, Ross, and Marin County Fire Department. The true full cost of the program was not fully covered by the funded allocation. General costs associated with the program are displayed below and should be considered for future program development and funding.

Funding by Towns	
Fairfax	\$46,000
San Anselmo	\$48,000
Ross	\$6,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
Expenditures	
Lead Inspector (.5 )	\$19,200
Seasonal Inspectors (4)	\$80,960
Rental vehicles (2.5)	\$13,500
Supplies /Equipment	\$5,000

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$118, 660</b>
--------------	-------------------

**Contributed costs for the program:**

	\$2,000 Tablets/equipment from MCFD
	\$6,400 Supervision/Oversight Captain salary – MCFD
	<u>\$2,900 Pub Ed Materials /Evac Checklist - FIRESafe Marin</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,300 Tablets</b>

#### **DEFENSIBLE SPACE & PUBLIC FIRE PREPAREDNESS RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Consider increasing funds to ensure 2020 inspections are completed. Further investment could allow for follow up inspections and enforcement/abatement
- Ongoing public fire education was well received and should be continued.
- Increased interaction from the Fire Department in FIREWISE efforts is needed – FIREWISE sites were very low in compliance and could likely need more involvement on implementation priorities – ie; roadside veg removal for access and egress.
- Opportunity to support and increase integration between FIRESafe Marin, FIREWISE leaders to prioritize or summarize neighborhood need for action.
- Utilize department Social Media resources for defensible space messaging
- Increase education and training for inspectors
- Maintain access to Acorn Building Dspace side for Fire Department use
- The program requires strong leadership; we were fortunate to have a retiree step in to serve in this capacity. Future programs will require additional oversight.