



Fire and Floods

Fire and flooding are potential issues in most areas of California due to geography, vegetation, the weather, development and human behavior. Butte County has experienced a number of damaging fires and floods in its history, in part due to the natural features that make the area beautiful: multiple waterways, wide open spaces and a variety of vegetation. While we can't control Mother Nature, there are steps you can take to help ensure your property is protected from fire and floods.

Fire Safety

Municipal fire departments and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) are responsible for fire protection in Butte County. To protect people and property, state and local rules have been put in place. California law (Public Resource Code 4291) requires property owners and/or occupants to create 100 feet of defensible space around homes and buildings. Additionally, the Butte County Fire Prevention and Protection Ordinance (Chapter 38A of the Butte County Code), outlines local maintenance requirements for both the owners and occupants of real property in the unincorporated areas of the County to minimize fire hazard. Whenever the Butte County Fire Chief determines that a fire hazard exists on real property, they can notify the owner(s) and/or occupant(s) of the property, by issuing an "Order to Abate Fire Hazard." The Fire Prevention and Protection Ordinance also outlines approved road and driveway standards; street, building and roadway signage; required water supplies for fire suppression; and defensible space requirements.

In January 2005 a new state law regarding defensible space became effective. It extended the required defensible space clearance around homes and structures from 30 feet to 100 feet. Proper clearance of 100 feet dramatically increases the chance that your house will survive a wildfire. This defensible space also provides for firefighter safety when protecting homes during a wildland fire.

The Butte County Fire Safe Council is an excellent resource for information on fire safety. The Council offers evacuation planning tools and maps, guides on fire wise landscaping and the Chipper Program to help dispose of materials cleared from around your home. For more information on any of those programs or the nine local fire safe councils, visit www.buttefiresafe.org. For more information on Cal Fire programs, visit <http://www.fire.ca.gov/index.php>.

Minimum Horizontal Clearance

SHRUBS	TREES
<p>From edge of one shrub to the edge of the next</p> <p>Flat to mild slope (0% to 20% slope) Two times (2x) the height of the shrub (Two shrubs 2' high should be spaced 4' apart)</p>	<p>From edge of one tree canopy to the edge of the next</p> <p>Flat to mild slope (0% to 20% slope)</p> <p>10 feet</p>
<p>Mild to moderate slope (20% to 40% slope) Four times (4x) the height of the shrub (Two shrubs 2' high should be spaced 8' apart)</p>	<p>Mild to moderate slope (20% to 40% slope)</p> <p>20 feet</p>
<p>Moderate to steep slope (greater than 40% slope) Six times (6x) the height of the shrub (Two shrubs 2' high should be spaced 12' apart)</p>	<p>Moderate to steep slope (greater than 40% slope)</p> <p>30 feet</p>

Minimum Vertical Clearance

3X HEIGHT OF SHRUB = MINIMUM VERTICAL CLEARANCE

Example: A five foot shrub is growing near a tree.
 $3 \times 5 = 15$ feet of clearance needed between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branches.

3x height of shrub to lowest branches of tree.

Flood Risk

Flooding is also a risk in Butte County due to the many creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. Factors such as wildland fire, seismic activity, excessive vegetation, sedimentation, inadequate storm drainage and lack of levee and channel maintenance significantly affect flooding in Butte County.

There are seven watersheds in Butte County, each with different naturally occurring features. The watersheds are:

- Big Chico Creek Watershed
- Butte Creek Watershed
- Cherokee Watershed
- Feather River/Lower Honcut Creek Watershed
- Lake Oroville/Upper Feather River Watershed
- Little Chico Creek Watershed
- Pine Creek Watershed

Each of the local watersheds has flood risks associated with it. Risks include:

- Potential high flows during storms
- Erosion
- Excessive vegetation
- Sedimentation
- Lack of freeboard, or space on the levee above the water line
- Dangers present if residents need to evacuate via bridges, and
- Potentially dangerous facilities, such as fertilizer storage, located within the floodplain

You can prepare for a flood by developing an evacuation plan, securing flood insurance, researching possibilities to retrofit your home to protect it from flooding and ensuring you are tracking flood stage announcements during major storms. FEMA has developed the "Homeowner's Guide to Retrofitting: Six Ways to Protect Your Home from Flooding," which provides descriptions of different retrofitting methods, construction guidance and cost estimates.

This document can be found at: <http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/mat/rfit.shtm>.

Butte County has plans in place to handle various types of emergencies and disasters, including fires and flooding. The Butte County Multi-Jurisdictional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan was approved by the Butte County Board of Supervisors, and adopted by the five other local municipalities, in 2007. The purpose of the Mitigation Plan is to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. You can find tips for preparing your home, family, animals and other belongings for any kind of disaster at: <http://www.buttecounty.net/Office%20of%20Emergency%20Mgmt/Disaster%20Preparedness.aspx>.

Resources

Butte County Fire Safe Council

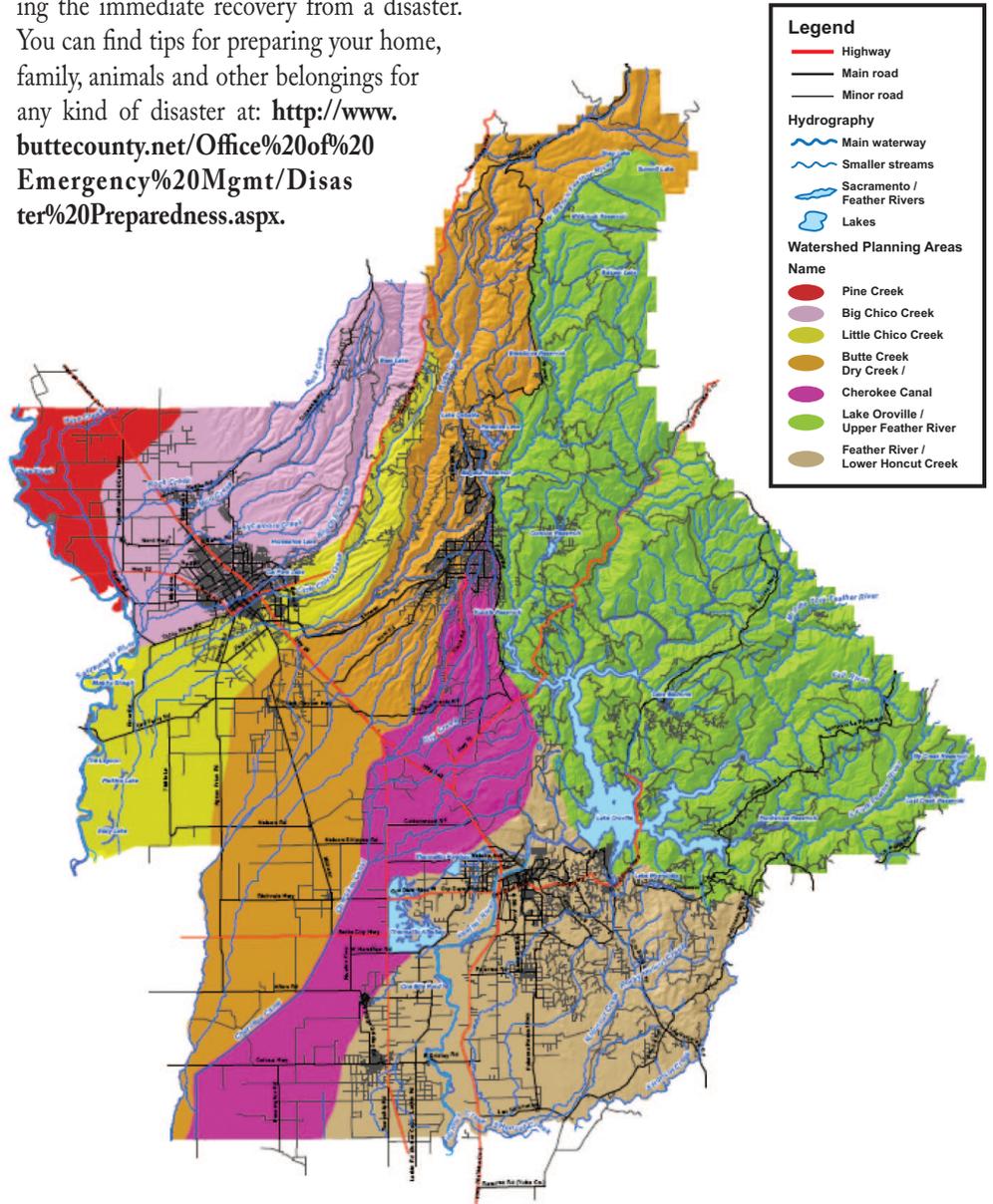
<http://www.buttefiresafe.org>

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/index.php>

Butte County Office of Emergency Management

<http://buttecounty.net/Office%20of%20Emergency%20Mgmt.aspx>



BUTTE COUNTY WATERSHEDS

The Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation's Watershed Education and Outreach Project is designed to share information on a variety of water-related topics that are important to residents of Butte County. There are multiple interrelated watersheds in Butte and Tehama Counties that are affected by our actions. Watershed protection is important not only for the health of the natural environment, but for all of us, too. Funds for this project have been provided by a grant from the CALFED Watershed Program and administered by the Department of Water Resources. For more information about the Watershed Education and Outreach Project, please visit <http://www.buttecounty.net/waterandresource/>.