



# KENAI PENINSULA CITIZEN CORPS

*Resources for building stronger, safer  
communities on the Kenai Peninsula  
Summer 2007*

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## KENAI PENINSULA CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL

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## PREPARING FOR WILDFIRE

BY KIM LORENTZEN

THE CARIBOU HILLS FIRE, WHICH AT THIS WRITING IS ONLY 60% CONTAINED AND HAS BURNED MORE THAN 200 STRUCTURES, IS A GRIM REMINDER OF THE SERIOUS WILDFIRE RISK SURROUNDING MANY OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

Defensible space is a term that most of us are familiar with by now. Creating defensible space reduces the fire-feeding fuels around your home in order to give you the best possible chance to evacuate and see your house spared by fire. At a minimum:

- clear all flammable vegetation within a 30-foot radius of your house. You may want to increase the radius up to 100 feet, depending on the slope of the surrounding land and the fuels that border your property.
- replace highly flammable plants in the cleared area with fire-resistant plants. Grass should be kept mowed and green. A list of fire resistant plants is available from the Division of Forestry (260-4260), the Kenai Peninsula Borough Office of Emergency Management (262-2098), or the Cooperative Extension Office (262-5824).
- after you've taken care of the land immediately surrounding your home and any other structures you want to protect, consider thinning trees in the outlying wooded areas of your property – particularly any that are dead or diseased.
- keep your roof, gutters, decks, and other areas of the house free of dead leaves, needles, bark or other debris that could ignite if burning embers fall.

When it's time to clean up the dead stuff, make sure you follow all requirements for burn permits and keep your burn barrel at least 30 feet from any structure, clear the ground around it (at least

ten feet), keep the barrel in good condition and cover it with a screen.

When it's time to start putting up firewood, be sure to stack it (along with any scrap wood piles you may keep) at least 30 feet away from any structure, in a cleared spot that's free of vegetation. You don't want to lead the fire right to your front door! You'll also want to store fuel, snow machines, four-wheelers, lawnmowers and machinery away from your house.

While you're out in your yard, take a look at your property from the firefighter's perspective: are your house numbers easily seen from the road? (If your house is set back from the road, post your address or name at the entrance of the property.) Are any road signs missing in your neighborhood? Is the access to your house fire truck-friendly? Narrow roads, overhanging vegetation, unmarked dead-ends or weak bridges all make it difficult or impossible for a fire truck to reach you.



Caribou Hills Fire, June 2007

If your summertime agenda includes building or remodeling, use materials (like metal roofing) that make your house itself more fire-resistant. Skirt the access underneath your house or porch to prevent embers or flames from being trapped and igniting your home. If you're building a new house, situate the house at least 30-feet from the lot boundaries to allow for proper defensible space planning. You'll also want to consider the slope of your property when planning structure placement: ridges, canyons and areas that sit between two high points are all high risk for wildfire because fire can intensify as it moves up a slope.

More information about preparing for wildfires, is available in the Community Wildfire Prevention Plans. The draft plans can be reviewed online at: [http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/sbb/pages/community\\_pages/cwpp.html](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/sbb/pages/community_pages/cwpp.html).

Be sure to watch for Fire Corps classes, which will be offered in conjunction with the planning and implementation of the Community Wildfire Prevention Plans. FireWise information is also available online at: <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry/>.

## After a Wildfire.....

### Wildfires change the landscape...

Whether you evacuated during the fire or stayed throughout the Caribou Hills Fire, the fire has changed conditions around your home and in the community. Please be especially careful in this new environment.

#### Hazards...

Burned trees: Shallow roots systems have burned and standing dead trees (called snags) will be falling down, especially in high winds.

Ash pits: White ash on the ground may indicate deep pockets of hot ash where roots and ground vegetation have burned and may be continuing to burn below ground level.

Broken glass and sharp metal edges: When fire has burned through trash heaps, sheds, etc. glass is often broken and metal edges exposed. Children and pets should be carefully supervised to avoid these hazards.

Hazardous smoke: Smoldering piles may include plastics or other materials that produce toxins in the smoke. Please avoid breathing direct smoke from smoldering areas.

#### Retardant Cleanup...

The orange retardant used to protect homes and resources is non-toxic and actually has a fertilizing agent. When re-wetted it becomes slick. It can be cleaned up with water, but may require a low-pressure spray or scrubbing on windows and vehicles.

#### Sprinklers...

Sprinklers are important when fire is threatening your home. Winds from fire can carry embers for hundreds of yards and sometimes even miles when fire behavior is extreme. When evacuating during a fire, sprinklers can be left running in place on roofs and porches. After the wildfire threat is over, the sprinklers can be removed or left in place for ash and dust mitigation.



Cabin Destruction, Caribou Hills Fire - June

(Courtesy of the Caribou Hills Fire Information Team)

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### Training and Recent Goings On.....

#### SCHOOL DISTRICT EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING

In April, we worked with the School District Administration and the Office of Risk Management to organize training sessions, which combined the School District's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) procedures with sections of CERT training (fire suppression, search and rescue, incident command, and emergency medical triage). Seven training sessions were held around the peninsula and involved 133 principals, teachers and parents, as well as 27 trainers! Planning is in progress to deliver similar training to school staff in August.



We owe the following instructors a big thank-you for their help delivering the CERT portion of the training: Sam Satathite, Warren Isham, Mike Huckabay, Curt Jacobson, David Squires, Mike McConahy, Lesley Quelland, Gary Hale, Sam Evanoff, Dave Christianson, Robert Painter, Chris Cushman, Paul Pellegrini, and Dan Miotke. Thanks also to Chiefs: Tilly (Kenai), Mokracek (CES), Painter (Homer), Squires (Seward) and Swen (Nikiski) for supporting the training by directly helping or providing trainers. This training was a great example of how leadership, commitment and cooperation can foster disaster readiness in our schools!



## **VOLUNTEERISM**

In almost all modern societies, the most basic of all values is people helping people and, in the process, helping themselves (Wikipedia). Citizen Corps asks you to embrace the personal responsibility to be prepared; to get training in first aid and emergency skills; and to volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety.

***As with most volunteer programs, we operate with limited resources - what we do have, though, is an abundance of volunteer opportunities of all kinds! If you have a few hours to spare and are interested in helping foster preparedness in your community, here are some of the ways you can help:***

- ***Help organize a "Disaster Dinner" as a way to have fun and get together with your friends, neighbors and other CERT trained folks in your area. Annette Hakkinen, who is the director of the Kenai Peninsula American Red Cross Chapter, used to hold annual disaster dinners with her kids to see how creatively they could combine and use their dated disaster foods. Annette has some great stories and memories that I'm sure she'd be willing to share!***
- ***Plan September National Preparedness Month Activities***
- ***Inventory CERT and Red Cross Disaster Supplies***
- ***Write "preparedness" articles for the newsletter and newspapers***
- ***Help with "Disaster Ready Kids" and "Pet Ready" outreach (distribute brochures to your church, clubs, or local library)***
- ***Volunteer to be a Neighborhood Emergency Watch leader in your neighborhood***
- ***Help organize a Teen CERT program in your child's school or club***
- ***Help hand out preparedness information in August at the Ninilchik Fair Booth***

***Or - you tell me what your area of interest is - and I'll bet I'll find a productive use of your time! If you're willing to help, please give me a call or shoot me an email -***

***(907) 262-2098, 1-800-478-4441, x2098, glandua@borough.kenai.ak.us***



### **Yep, we're still nagging about NIMS!**

If you've been tuned in to recent emails and newsletters, you'll recall that we need all of our CERT volunteers to complete two of the introductory **National Incident Management System (NIMS)** training modules - **ICS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System** and **IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction**. The courses need to be completed as soon as possible and are available online at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp> The course materials are also available in hard copy or on disk - just stop by or give us a call.



## Online Courses

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp>

**ICS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System**



**IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction to the National Incident Management System**

*As you complete the ICS 100 and IS 700 courses, please forward the course completion acknowledgement from FEMA to [glandua@borough.kenai.ak.us](mailto:glandua@borough.kenai.ak.us). Thanks!*

**IS -22: Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness**

**IS - 317 CERT Refresher Course**

The National Association for Amateur Radio Operator's website has online classes available at:

<http://www.arrl.org/cce/courses.html#ec001>

## KENAI PENINSULA CITIZEN CORPS PROGRAMS

### **CERT ALERT**

We have **lots** of people wait-listed for fall CERT classes. *If you're a CERT trained instructor - please get in touch - we need your help!*

### **American Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED/Shelter Ops**

The Kenai branch of the American Red Cross offers monthly First Aid, Adult, Infant & Child CPR and AED classes. They also periodically offer classes on shelter operations. Check with Annette Hakkinen for the current class offerings (283-4556 or by email: [hakkinena@usa.redcross.org](mailto:hakkinena@usa.redcross.org)).

**Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness** We're turning our attention to the important work of neighborhood readiness. Get in touch if you'd like to work with your neighbors to be better prepared for natural disasters and other kinds of emergencies. If you're willing to be a neighborhood leader, contact Glenda Landua (262-2098 or 1-800-478-4441, ext. 2098).

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