



## **A Public Works Action Plan For Wildland Fire Evacuations Paradise, California**

*Summary: Located north of Sacramento, Calif., the town of Paradise is in a high-risk area for wildland fires. In the event of a wildland fire, it may be necessary to evacuate hundreds or even thousands of people in a very short period of time. Consequently, the Paradise Public Works Department developed an emergency evacuation action plan for wildland fires.*

Although it's difficult to predict when wildfires will occur, Paradise wants to be ready when they do. So the town's Public Works Department decided to take the lead in developing an Emergency Action Plan for Wildland Fire Evacuations. The plan sets out procedures for all public works employees, including actions to be taken during Red Flag fire conditions.

"We spent the better part of two years developing the plan," said Public Works Director Dennis Schmidt. "This involved working with virtually every agency that might be involved in evacuations, including the Butte County Sheriff's Office, the Paradise Police Department, the Paradise Fire Department, the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Forestry and many others."

The plan provides model traffic control diagrams for 11 different wildfire scenarios that could affect the town. Public Works has outfitted a trailer with all the necessary road closure and evacuation route signs, barricades and cones. The types of personal protective equipment required for workers are identified and conditions when they are to be used are outlined in the plan. These include, for example, high visibility jackets or vests to be worn when workers are exposed to traffic; fire shelters available for traffic control personnel that may be exposed to wildfires; and fire-resistant clothing, helmets and goggles for those employees who may encounter fire, smoke or burning embers.

The plan specifies that if there is a fire call during non-working hours that the Police Departments will have command and control of traffic operations until traffic control signs and barricades can be deployed and public works crews can arrive. It also lays out a typical sequence of events, communications callout procedures, voice communications procedures, potential hazards protective measures, and post evacuation responsibilities.

"We also have a mutual aid arrangement with the local water provider as well as the local Parks and Recreation District to bring in additional traffic control workers, if necessary," Schmidt added. "They have all participated in training in wildland fire safety and the basics of emergency traffic control." The emergency action plan can be accessed or downloaded from the Town of Paradise's Web site at [www.townofparadise.com](http://www.townofparadise.com); just click on "What's New" and scroll down to "Wildland Fire."

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*Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact Dennis Schmidt, public works director, Paradise, Calif., at [dschmidt@townofparadise.com](mailto:dschmidt@townofparadise.com) or 530-872-5059. To submit a 'Smart Practice' for consideration or to subscribe to Smart Practices Spotlight send an e-mail to [SmartPractices@fema.gov](mailto:SmartPractices@fema.gov).*