

Prescribed Fire Newsletter



Photo Credit: North Tahoe Fire Protection District

Welcome to the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT) Prescribed Fire Program Newsletter. We are happy to have you here! During the Tahoe Basin's prescribed fire season, TFFT will share project updates, education, and resources to help you stay informed. As always, operations may shift due to weather and site conditions.

Program Updates

Due to the heavy snowfall, prescribed fire programs have been paused. Teams continue to monitor burning conditions and plan for next steps as weather and conditions permit.

Check out the **Education Corner** below to learn more about *How Much Snow is Too Much?*

Education Corner

How Much Snow is Too Much?

How Winter Weather Influences Prescribed Fire Operations

By: Annabelle Monti

Winter weather creates the most opportunities for pile burning in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Snow on the ground helps contain heat, limits fire spread, and protects the surrounding vegetation. However, more snow does not always mean better burning conditions. In fact, heavy or persistent storms can make it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for implementors to safely and effectively conduct prescribed fire operations.

One of the biggest challenges is access. Deep snow, icy roads, and ongoing storms can prevent crews and equipment from safely reaching burn units. Even when access is possible, large snow accumulations can bury piles or make it difficult to locate and ignite them efficiently. If piles are too wet or frozen, they may not light well, which leads to incomplete consumption of pile material and more smoke over a longer period.

Snow also affects fuel moisture and burn quality. While some moisture is helpful, overly saturated piles may smolder instead of consuming cleanly. This can create excessive smoke impacts without achieving the intended fuels reduction benefits. Land managers carefully balance weather, snow depth, and fuel conditions to ensure that when burning occurs, it's done safely and produces the best outcome for forest health and community protection.

Finally, winter storms influence visibility, air quality planning, and crew safety. Strong winds, poor visibility, or unstable weather forecasts can limit the ability to manage fire behavior and smoke impacts. Agencies work closely with air quality regulators and weather forecasters to identify burn windows that meet strict smoke management requirements.

If you notice fewer prescribed fire operations during heavy winter storms, it does not mean work has stopped – it means conditions are being evaluated carefully. Crews continue to prepare sites, monitor weather, and plan for the next desirable burn window. Taking advantage of the right conditions helps ensure prescribed fire remains an effective tool for reducing wildfire risk in the Tahoe Basin.

Follow Us on Social Media!

Stay up to date with the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team on Prescribed Fire, Forest Health Projects, education on wildfire resiliency and the benefits that come from management, and more! Stay tuned as communication and outreach continues to develop for partners and the public in the Tahoe Basin.

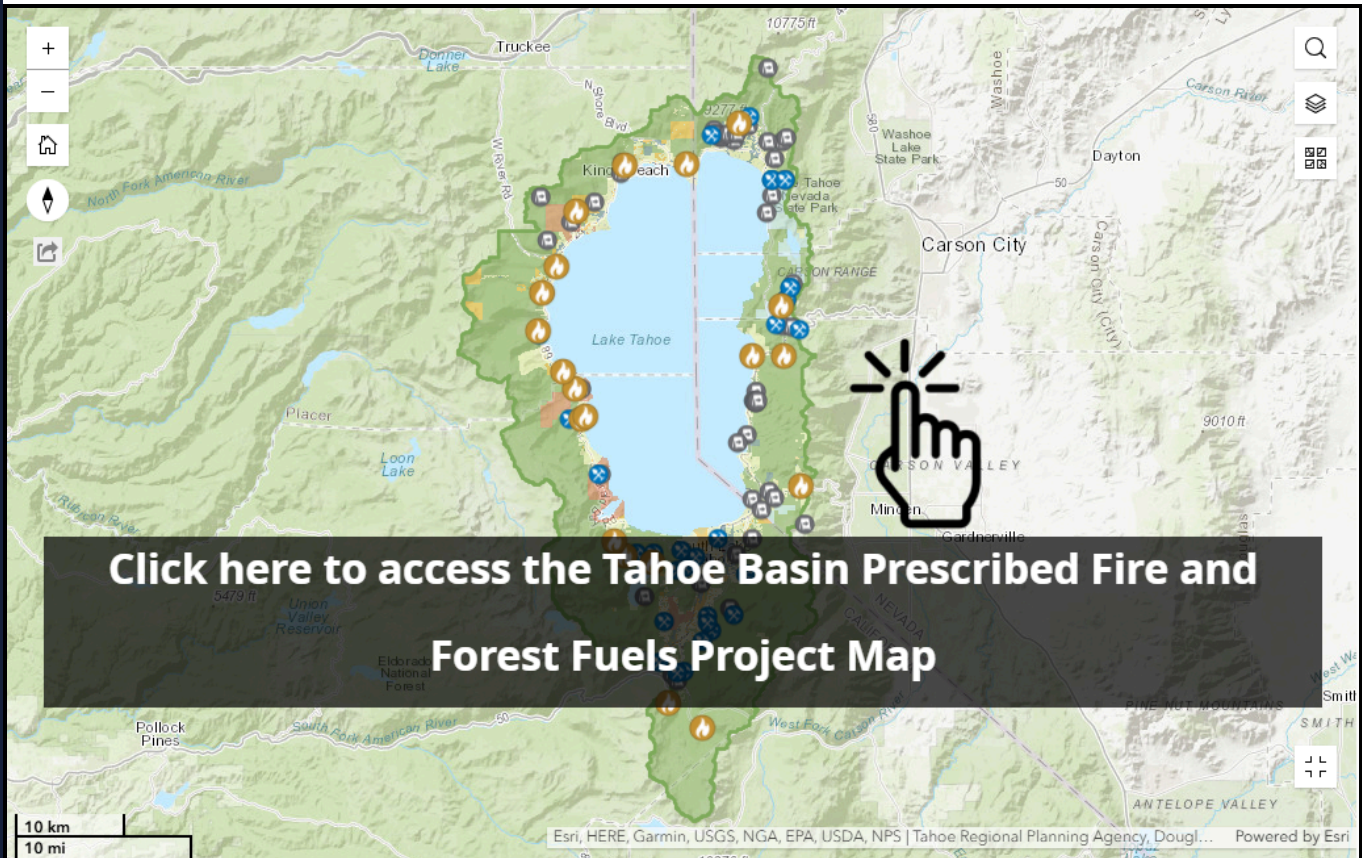
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Have an idea for this newsletter?

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Katlyn Lonergan, TFFT Program Coordinator
tfft@tahoercd.org



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Would you like to get in touch with the Tahoe Fire & Fuels Team?

Contact Annabelle Monti, TFFT Program Manager
tfft@tahoercd.org



Tahoe Fire & Fuels Team | 870 Emerald Bay Rd Ste 108 | South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150 US

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