

# Temporary Fire Refuge Areas (TFRA)

*a factsheet for residents*

**What is a TFRA?** A TFRA is a location with enough space around it that it can provide less exposure to flames and heat. This should **ONLY** be used when evacuation routes are unavailable or there is not enough time to evacuate safely. Examples of TFRAs are parks, ballfields, parking lots, or cul-de-sacs in your community.

**A TFRA is not a guarantee of safety – it is a refuge of last resort.**

**When do I use a TFRA?** The use of TFRAs may be appropriate when fire spread through the community is too fast or widespread to allow safe evacuation from the community.

- ➔ **When you are told to evacuate out of the fire area, go immediately.**
- ➔ **When you are told to seek refuge in a TFRA, go immediately to the closest TFRA you can get to.**

Fire conditions can change quickly. In some cases, fire may spread faster than warnings from officials. You may need to go to a TFRA before an evacuation order is announced.

**Where are TFRAs?** TFRAs throughout your community may include parks, ballfields, parking lots, and cul-de-sacs.

- ➔ **Know the locations of identified TFRAs in your community.**
- ➔ **Depending on fire spread, the nearest TFRA may not be safely accessible.**

**How do I get to a TFRA?** Any way you can. Use a vehicle, bicycle, walk, or get a ride from a neighbor. Depending on traffic and the size of a TFRA, vehicle access may be limited.

**What should I do in a TFRA?** Get as far away from the smoke and fire as you can. Walls and mounds may block heat and radiation. In some cases, vehicles and structures may provide some protection, but they are not built to withstand fire and may burn. Limit the amount of smoke you breathe by covering your nose and mouth with a mask (N95 > medical > fabric) when possible.

**How long will I be at the TFRA?** You may need to stay in a TFRA for several hours. First responders may or may not be present at the TFRA for the entire duration you are there. First responders will instruct you about evacuation from the TFRA when conditions permit.

## **Core Messages** A TFRA is...

- intended to enhance life safety by reducing exposures to flames and avoiding burnovers. Conditions may be hazardous or uncomfortable in a TFRA; smoke, embers, and elevated temperatures may be present.
- not a guarantee of safety; it is an area to be used only as a last resort.
- not a substitute for early evacuation before the fire arrives.
- not a substitute for evacuation out of the fire area. When possible, early evacuation is the safer action.

**Know your community notification and evacuation plans, including the TFRAs around your home and workplace.**

## TFRA



The photo above shows an active TFRA during a WUI fire. Traffic and fire conditions prevented safe evacuation from this area of the community. First responders directed people to take refuge at this parking lot for several hours to avoid becoming entrapped by the fire. The size of this TFRA limited the fire exposures from surrounding properties.

## Scenario to avoid...



The post-fire photo shown above, from the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, CA. The image shows one example of where civilians were overtaken by fire during their evacuation using a primary egress route. This event is called a *burnover*.

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a factsheet for first responders and community leaders

**How to identify TFRAs.** First, identify existing areas throughout the community. Areas that may be suitable include cul-de-sacs, parks, golf courses, ballfields, parking lots, or cleared undeveloped parcels. Consider ease of access and proximity to population and egress arteries. TFRA locations should enable rapid access by nearby residents.

## TFRAs are not Safety Zones

### Attributes of TFRAs.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ large area clear of combustibles               | ✗ nearby sites with high-energy fuels (e.g., propane/gas/chemical facilities or storage) |
| ✓ readily accessible by surrounding neighborhood | ✗ access through high fuel load areas  |
| ✓ multiple access pathways                       | ✗ locked gates   |
| ✓ space to accommodate vehicles                  | ✗ topographic features such as chimneys and steep slopes                                 |
| ✓ near fire hydrants                             |  |

**Location and size of TFRAs.** A distributed network of TFRAs is necessary to limit travel distance and enhance access. The density of TFRAs depends on accessibility and community population. Pre-existing locations may need to be supplemented by creation of new areas suitable as TFRAs (such as a new park) to meet local needs. TFRAs can be as small as a cul-de-sac or as large as several acres (parking lots or parks). Local conditions (e.g., fuels & population density) will dictate how many TFRAs are needed and how large they need to be.

**Signage and maps for TFRAs.** A sample sign is shown in the image on the right. Communities must ensure that information on the signs is consistent with local notification and evacuation plans. Large TFRAs and TFRAs with multiple access points will require more than one sign.

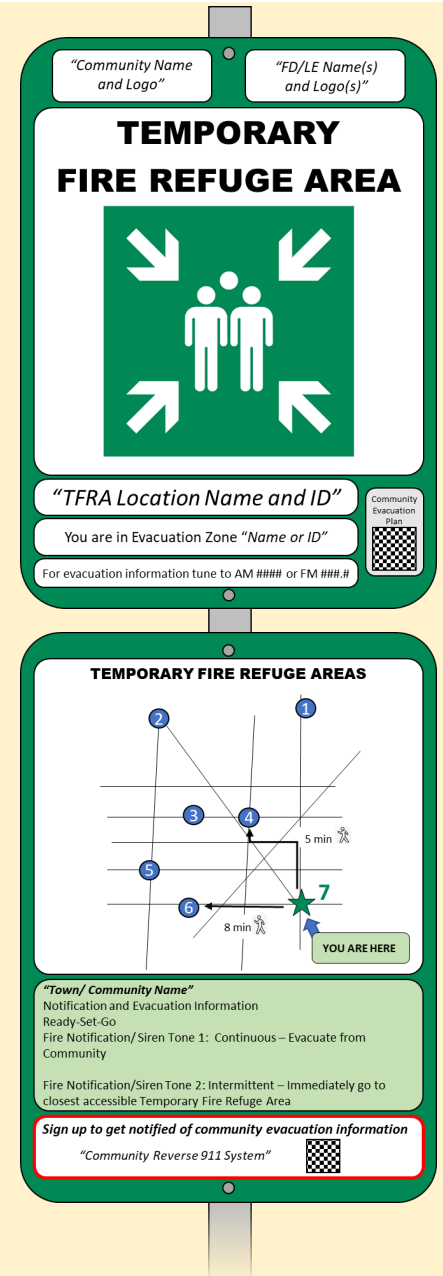
**Integrating TFRAs into evacuation plans.** While the use of TFRAs is more hazardous than evacuation from the fire area, the use of TFRAs must be incorporated into the community evacuation plan. Advance planning, including identification, training exercises, signage, and community education are necessary steps to make TFRAs an effective evacuation option of last resort.

**Educating the community.** Community leaders must inform citizens of the local notification and evacuation plans. Emergency managers must understand that the role of TFRAs is to identify areas of potential refuge and reduced fire exposures for use as a last resort. The following groups should be informed about notification and evacuation plans well before a fire incident:

- |                      |                             |                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • emergency managers | • neighboring jurisdictions | • schools & health care |
| • first responders   | • residents                 | • entities managing     |
| • public works       | • commuters & tourists      | TFRA spaces             |

### During a fire, first responders should...

1. Monitor TFRAs for presence of civilians.
2. Facilitate evacuation of civilians from TFRAs as conditions allow. This may be accomplished by escorting convoys of vehicles, providing transportation, or telling civilians specific directions of when and which route to follow.
3. Periodically revisit TFRAs to ensure all civilians are safely evacuated.



The image above shows a sign that can be posted at community-designated TFRAs. The upper sign identifies the area as a TFRA and includes a name and identification number. Local radio frequencies used to broadcast fire information can be included, along with a QR code to the evacuation plan. The lower sign shows a map of nearby TFRAs and may include additional information about emergency alerts, such as sirens or reverse-911.