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June 25, 2026

VIA USPS REGULAR MAIL

The Honorable Shelia F. Hanson
Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: Response to Wildfires Hit Home

Dear Honorable Shelia F. Hanson:

The City of Westminster City Manager's Office has completed its review of the Grand Jury Report titled "Wildfires Hit Home." The City of Westminster contracts its fire protection and emergency services through the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA).

On behalf of the City Manager's Office, the City affirms its commitment to working collaboratively with the Orange County Fire Authority to support, implement, and promote the applicable recommendations presented in the report. The city will continue to prioritize these efforts to enhance the safety, preparedness, and resilience of our community.

Please see the attached response provided by OCFA.

Respectfully,

Christine Cordon
City Manager

CC: Orange County Grand Jury
OCFA Board of Directors

ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY
P. O. Box 57115, Irvine, CA 92619-7115 • 1 Fire Authority Road, Irvine, CA 92602-0125
TJ McGovern, Interim Fire Chief **(714) 573-6000** **www.ocfa.org**

July 1, 2026

The Honorable Sheila F. Hanson
Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Honorable Sheila F. Hanson:

The Orange County Fire Authority Board of Directors reviewed the Grand Jury report entitled "Wildfires Hit Home" during its June 25, 2026, Board of Directors meeting. At that same meeting, the OCFA Board also reviewed and authorized this formal response from our agency.

On behalf of the firefighters and professional staff of the OCFA, I want to extend our sincere gratitude for the time and effort the Grand Jury has dedicated to the residents of Orange County and wildfire safety throughout our region.

If I may be of service in the clarification of this response, please let me know.

Sincerely,

T.J. McGovern
Interim Fire Chief

CC: Orange County Grand Jury

Page Reserved for Board Minutes Reflecting Formal Action

Background and History of Wildfires in California

Over the past decade, the OCFA and its leadership have clearly and consistently articulated and acted upon three main, interconnected themes regarding wildfires in the West:

1) The days of a traditional "fire season" have been replaced by a year-round, never-ending threat of wildfires. Megafires, once an anomaly, are now a regular occurrence, and to paraphrase an evidence-based assertion by UCI researchers at the beginning of the decade: Each new year of the 21st century threatens to be yet another record-breaker of wildfire damage in California.

2) Of all our wildland firefighting tools, none are more valuable than the measures we use to prevent wildfires and the damage they cause. Indeed, from home hardening and defensible space to fire prevention education and risk reduction resources, the best wildland firefighting begins with prevention, education, and resilience.

3) Wildfires are no longer solely a fire service problem; they are an "all of us problem," and they can only be mitigated by *all of us* working together.

These same three themes emanate from "Wildfires Hit Home," and we are proud to share responses that illustrate our continuous commitment to better engage and educate all stakeholders to prevent wildfires and the destruction they cause.

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

F1. More frequent and severe wildfires driven by increasingly hotter, drier, and windier conditions in the Orange County wildland-urban interface are escalating impacts on financial and non-financial resources. Among the financial costs are dramatic increases in homeowners' insurance premiums, nonrenewals, and inabilities to obtain insurance.

OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part with this finding. While the OCFA agrees that more frequent and severe wildfires are occurring in our region, the OCFA lacks specific analysis, tracking, and regulation of homeowners' insurance premiums to agree or disagree with that portion of this finding.

F2. Actions that address conditions in the home ignition zone to significantly reduce ignition potential can prevent a community wildland-urban interface fire disaster or suburban conflagration.

OCFA agrees with the finding. OCFA aligns with wildland-urban interface (WUI) science, which is directly supported by fire behavior research from many reputable agencies, including CAL FIRE, the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and the National Fire Protection Association. This widely accepted data-driven evidence proves that addressing the home ignition zone is one of the most effective strategies to prevent fire disasters. Through proactive OCFA Community Risk Reduction initiatives and through home assessments, OCFA consistently educates the public in this arena.

F3. Expanded engagement with the community to raise awareness and provide support regarding home hardening and defensible space will increase effectiveness of wildfire risk mitigation and insurance risk reduction efforts.

OCFA agrees with the finding. Community engagement and education remains a core component of OCFA's current risk mitigation strategy, as evidenced by fully implemented and ever-expanding comprehensive public education, property assessment, and home hardening support initiatives that actively address the intent of this finding.

F4. Achievement of community-level and property-level wildfire risk mitigation designations (such as Firewise USA Site, Fire Risk Reduction Community or Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety certification) lessens wildfire risk and helps reduce insurance premium costs.

OCFA partially agrees with the finding. While the OCFA agrees that community- and property-level designations lessen localized wildfire risk (which is why the agency assists communities with the home assessments and safety verifications required to earn Firewise USA and Fire Risk Reduction Community status), we lack sufficient information or expertise to evaluate the impact of such measures on private insurance premium costs.

F5. All county residents should be made aware that Safer from Wildfire regulation requires insurers to provide discounts to homeowners and communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures regardless of whether a property is located within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

OCFA agrees in part and disagrees in part with this finding. While the OCFA agrees that home hardening and defensible space significantly increase a structure's protection from wildfire, OCFA lacks the specific analysis, tracking, and regulation of homeowners' insurance premiums to agree or disagree with that portion of this finding. However, the OCFA agrees with the finding's suggestion that county residents should be made aware of any benefits that may be available to homeowners and/or communities that implement home hardening and defensible space measures. To that end, the OCFA will develop a notification program regarding this item.

F6. AB 888, California Safe Homes Grant Program, provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners, cities, counties, and special districts for home hardening and defensible space measures. Applying for and using these grant funds will reduce wildfire losses and improve insurability and resilience of vulnerable communities.

OCFA partially agrees with the finding. The OCFA wholly agrees that utilizing state grant funds under the California Safe Homes Grant Program (AB 888) significantly reduces localized wildfire losses and boosts structural resilience. However, OCFA lacks sufficient information or expertise to evaluate the impact of such measures on private market insurability.

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. By December 31, 2026, the Orange County Board of Supervisors should plan to host a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair for the County and all cities and fire service agencies, including Orange County Fire Authority, to showcase respective wildfire outreach programs, and for the first annual wildfire prevention fair to be scheduled no later than December 31, 2027.

This recommendation requires further analysis. As an independent fire service agency, the OCFA does not possess the jurisdictional authority to mandate or host a County-level event on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. However, if the Orange County Board of Supervisors chooses to establish and host this annual wildfire prevention fair, OCFA will fully cooperate by providing staff, educational assets, and promotional support to showcase our regional wildfire outreach and home hardening programs.

R2. By December 31, 2026, cities and fire service agencies, including Orange County Fire Authority should commit to participation in a county-wide annual wildfire prevention fair planned by the Orange County Board of Supervisors to showcase wildfire prevention outreach programs.

This recommendation requires further analysis. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be in the future, contingent upon the County of Orange electing to plan the event. As stated above, if the County elects to move forward with R1 and R2, OCFA intends to participate and showcase its regional wildfire prevention outreach programs. Already, the OCFA hosts an annual Open House at its headquarters and annual Station Open Houses across the county, all of which are open to the public and showcase wildfire prevention resources and programs.

R3. – By December 31, 2026, cities, unincorporated areas, special districts, and fire service agencies in High and Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zones should initiate planning activities to achieve community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations and/or establish a local Fire Safe Council within one year.

This recommendation has been implemented. The OCFA, in partnership with its member cities, is currently and actively executing the objectives put forth in this recommendation.

R4. By December 31, 2026, to ensure city residents are engaged and aware of wildfire risk reduction resources, OCFA member and non-member cities should provide information, develop their own outreach program, and establish a direct contact person(s) for their residents. This is in addition to whatever referrals or references made to OCFA outreach programs.

This recommendation requires further analysis. The recommendation cannot be implemented directly by the OCFA because it is directed at independent municipal governments rather than our agency. However, the OCFA currently works with its member agencies to ensure they are fully equipped to engage and educate residents through public education, localized risk reduction data, and technical wildfire safety guidance.