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July 16, 2026

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

Honorable Sheila F. Hanson:

The City of Aliso Viejo reviewed the Grand Jury report entitled "Wildfires Hit Home" during its July 15, 2026, City Council meeting. At that same meeting, the City Council also reviewed and authorized this formal response from our agency.

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. Should you require additional information, please contact our City Manager, Brett Channing, at bchanning@avcity.org.

Sincerely,

Max Duncan
Mayor

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

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.

The City agrees in part and disagrees in part with this finding. While the City agrees that more frequent and severe wildfires are occurring in our region, the City 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.

The City agrees with the finding. The City 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 datadriven evidence proves that addressing the home ignition zone is one of the most effective strategies to prevent fire disasters. Through proactive Community Risk Reduction initiatives and through home assessments, the City along with 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.

The City agrees with the finding. Community engagement and education remains a core component of the City and OCFA's current risk mitigation strategy, as evidenced by fully implemented and ever-expanding OCFA Grand Jury Response "Wildfires Hit Home" Orange County Fire Authority, June 25, 2026, Page 4 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.

The City partially agrees with the finding. While the City 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 OCFR Severity Zone.

The City agrees in part and disagrees in part with this finding. While the City agrees that home hardening and defensible space significantly increase a structure's protection from wildfire, the City lacks the specific analysis, tracking, and regulation of homeowners' insurance premiums to agree or disagree with that portion of this finding.

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.

The City partially agrees with the finding. The City 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, the City lacks sufficient information or expertise to evaluate the impact of such measures on private market insurability.

RESPONSES TO GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:

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. At such time, the City will 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.

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 the City, 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.

The recommendation has been implemented,. The City provides public information to our residents on the website and residents can contact the City's Building Official for additional information. The City, in coordination with OCFA, will continue to provide public education and outreach materials on social media, website, and at events.