



County of Orange

County Executive Office

August 12, 2026

Honorable Sheila F. Hanson
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: "Wildfires Hit Home" Grand Jury Response

Dear Judge Hanson:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. The respondent is the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Fernandez of the County Executive Office at 714-834-7219.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KC Roestenberg".

Digitally signed by KC
Roestenberg
DN: cn=KC Roestenberg,
o=Interim County Executive
Officer, ou=County of Orange,
email=kc.roestenberg@ceo.oc.g
ov, c=US
Date: 2026.08.12 09:56:16 -07'00'

KC Roestenberg
Interim County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: 2025-26 Orange County Grand Jury Foreman
Jessica Witt, Chief Operating Officer
Lisa Fernandez, Assistant Chief Deputy Operating Officer
Elizabeth Guillen-Merchant, Assistant Chief Deputy Operating Officer

Responses to Findings and Recommendations 2025-26 Grand Jury Report:



Wildfires Hit Home

SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT

On May 19, 2026, the Grand Jury released a report titled, "Wildfires Hit Home." This report includes findings and recommendations directed to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. The responses to those findings and recommendations are provided below.

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

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 inability to obtain insurance.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The County acknowledges that more frequent and severe wildfires driven by changing conditions in the Orange County wildland-urban interface can escalate impacts on financial and non-financial resources. However, the County notes that homeowners' insurance premiums, nonrenewals, and inability to obtain insurance are influenced by a variety of factors beyond local wildfire conditions.

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.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

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.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The County recognizes that expanded community engagement regarding home hardening and defensible space may support wildfire risk mitigation efforts. However, the County cannot comment on the impact these activities have on insurance risk reduction efforts.

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.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The County recognizes that community-level and property-level wildfire mitigation designations may lessen wildfire risks, however, the County cannot comment on how those designations impact 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.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

F6. AB888, 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.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The County recognizes that the California Safe Homes Grant Program may provide financial assistance to eligible homeowners, cities, counties and special districts for home hardening and defensible space measures which may support wildfire risk reduction and community resilience. However, the County cannot comment on the impact these activities have on insurance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

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.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not within the authority of the Board to require cities and fire service agencies to participate in an annual county-wide wildfire prevention fair.

While the County supports regional coordination regarding wildfire preparedness and public education, wildfire outreach and prevention are conducted at the local fire service agency level. These efforts are tailored to the distinct characteristics and risk profiles of each jurisdiction which vary across coastal, canyon, and wildland-urban interface areas.

As a regional fire service agency that serves 23 cities and all unincorporated areas within Orange County, the Orange County Fire Authority oversees extensive public outreach and education programs, including school programs, participates in community events, and offers public safety presentations. In addition, they offer a variety of wildfire preparedness and risk reduction resources which include home hardening awareness and defensible space education and inspections. To ensure outreach is tailored to the needs of the communities they serve, this department assigns a dedicated Community Education Specialist to each of its seven divisions.

As a member agency of the Orange County Fire Authority, the County will continue to support the robust wildfire outreach programs already in place through its representation on the Orange County Fire Authority Board of Directors.

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.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not within the authority of the Board to require cities and fire service agencies to participate in an annual county-wide wildfire prevention fair.

While the County supports regional coordination regarding wildfire preparedness and public education, wildfire outreach and prevention are conducted at the local fire service agency level. These efforts are tailored to the distinct characteristics and risk profiles of each jurisdiction which vary across coastal, canyon, and wildland-urban interface areas.

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As a member agency of the Orange County Fire Authority, the County will continue to support the robust wildfire outreach programs already in place through its representation on the Orange County Fire Authority Board of Directors.

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.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

It is not within the authority of the Board of Supervisors to require cities, special districts or independent fire service agencies to initiate planning activities to achieve community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations or to establish local Fire Safe Councils.

While the County has authority over unincorporated areas, community-level wildfire risk mitigation designations and Fire Safe Councils depend on the voluntary participation of property owners and residents.

Local fire agencies typically work in partnership with their respective cities to support wildfire preparedness and hazard mitigation planning. Fire Safe Councils, where they exist, function as grassroots, community-based organizations that work alongside their communities with input and assistance from their respective fire service representatives, rather than as County-directed entities.

Within the unincorporated areas, the Orange County Fire Authority, as the County's fire service provider, is "actively executing the objectives put forth in this recommendation", as described in the Grand Jury response adopted on June 25, 2026.