

# Communities At Risk

During the 2000 fire season wildfires burned millions of acres throughout the United States. These fires dramatically illustrated the threat to human lives and development. Under Executive Order, the National Fire Plan was created as a cooperative, long-term effort of the USDA Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters, to protect communities and restore ecological health on Federal lands.

A major component of the National Fire Plan was funding for projects designed to reduce fire risks to people and their property. A fundamental step in realizing this goal was the identification of areas that are at high risk of damage from wildfire. Federal fire managers authorized State Foresters to determine which communities were under significant risk from wildland fire on Federal lands.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection undertook the task of generating the state's list of communities at risk. With California's extensive urban Wildland-Urban Interface situation the list of communities extends beyond just those on Federal lands.

Three main factors were used to determine wildland fire threat to Wildland-Urban Interface areas of California.

**Ranking Fuel Hazards** = ranking vegetation types by their potential fire behavior during a wildfire.

**Assessing the Probability of Fire** = the annual likelihood that a large damaging wildfire would occur in a particular vegetation type.

**Defining Areas of Suitable Housing Density that Would Create Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Strategy Situations** = areas of intermingled wildland fuels and urban environments that are in the vicinity of fire threats.

The **Fire-Threatened Communities in California** list includes a total of 1,283 communities. Of those, 843 are adjacent to federal lands (USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, etc.) and are indicated as such with an "F" in the Fed. Threat column. The Hazard Level Code included on the list designates a community's fire threat level with 3 indicating the highest threat.