

Atherton Fire: How Preparedness and Response Prevent Disaster in Novato



August 13, 2024 Timeline of Events

- 11:07pm** - Fire reported to fire dispatch via 911.
- 11:08pm** - First alarm fire units were dispatched.
- 11:10pm** - First alarm fire units were enroute.
- 11:15pm** - Battalion 63 was the first fire unit on scene and reported $\frac{1}{4}$ acre burning uphill north of Atherton Ave.
- 11:16pm** - Law Enforcement reported the fire was moving toward Oak Shade Ln.
- 11:20pm** - A 2nd alarm wildland fire response was requested.
- 1:25pm** - Evacuations started by law enforcement - door to door.
- 11:39pm** - Office of Emergency Management sent out an evacuation order for Oak Shade neighborhood via AlertMarin. All residents requested to report to 450 Atherton Ave.
- 11:59pm** - Forward progress of the fire was stopped.
- 4:08pm** (8/14/24) - Incident was closed.

The threat of wildfire in Marin County became evident on August 13, 2024, when the **Atherton Ave Vegetation Fire** ignited in Novato. The fire began at 11:00 p.m. on a hillside north of Atherton Ave and quickly advanced uphill toward Oak Shade Lane. Local fire units responded within minutes, but as the fire intensified, additional resources were called, and law enforcement initiated evacuations for nearby homes.

A swift and coordinated effort, involving 18 type I fire engines, 8 type III fire engines, multiple battalion chiefs, 2 water tenders, 2 dozers, and a hand crew, managed to stop the fire's forward progress within an hour. Thanks to these efforts, a potentially devastating fire was brought under control.

The Atherton Ave Fire serves as a reminder of the importance of individual preparedness, timely alerts, and effective agency coordination

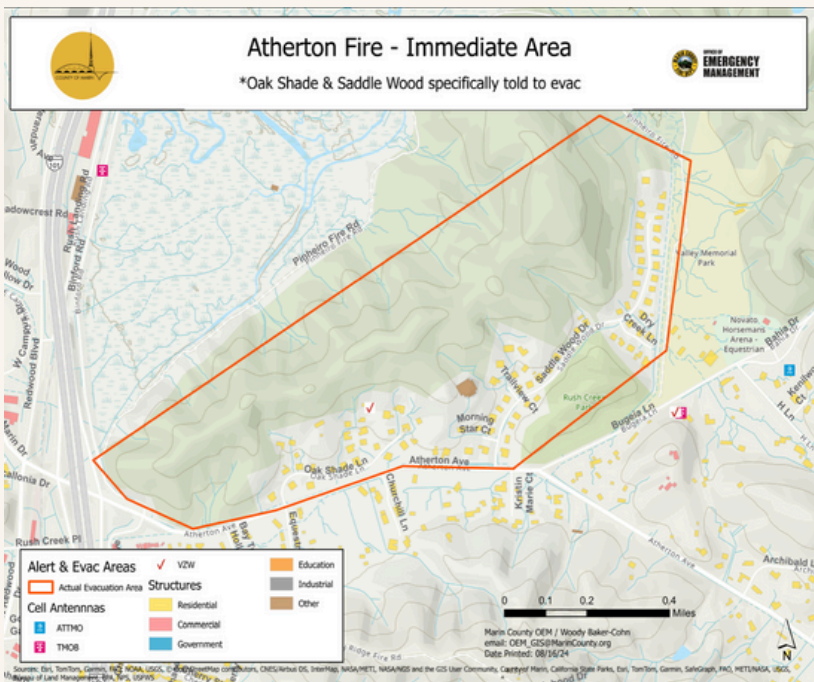
The Atherton fire highlights the critical role of communication during wildfire emergencies. During the fire, door-to-door contact, sirens and messaging alerts were used effectively. Addresses near the fire received notifications through Alert Marin, a service that provides geographically specific alerts for wildfires, power outages, and severe weather.

Marin residents are strongly encouraged to sign up for Alert Marin, customize their notification preferences, and save the Alert Marin contact (415) 473-6376 to ensure alerts bypass 'Silent' or 'Do Not Disturb' settings.

A safe and efficient evacuation requires thorough planning, especially for households with people who may need assistance to evacuate. Chief Tyler of the Novato Fire Protection District recommends creating evacuation plans well in advance, involving family members, caregiving teams, and neighbors. "Involve trusted neighbors in recognizing when you're at home, and see if they are willing to check on you and assist if you're alone." Taking these proactive steps can make a significant difference in an emergency.

Chief Tyler emphasizes focusing on the essentials first: people, pets, cell phones, wallets or purses, keys, and any necessary medications. If time allows, gather important documents, photographs, laptops with chargers, jewelry, stashed cash, and contact information. Fire Safe Marin suggests stapling a note to your Go-Kit to remind you to grab items you use daily. According to Chief Tyler, phone chargers and medicine are among the most commonly forgotten items during an evacuation.

The Atherton Ave Fire serves as a reminder of the importance of individual preparedness, timely alerts, and effective agency coordination. Staying vigilant, informed, and ready to act is essential for minimizing the impact of future wildfire threats in Marin.



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