

September 19, 2024

Response to the revised September 10, 2024, Lake Tahoe Regional Evacuation Plan and recent coverage of the TahoeCleanAir.org Independent Lake Tahoe Basin Wildfire Evacuation Analysis.

The revised Lake Tahoe Regional Evacuation Plan dated September 10, 2024, released to the public yesterday, was developed by the cooperative efforts of the Lake Tahoe Fire Chiefs and Lake Tahoe Law Enforcement agencies following the Caldor Fire.”

<https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/3/documents/public-safety-amp-justice/public-safety/sheriff/operations/oes/laketahoeregionalevacuationplan.pdf>

Regional strategy implementation plans, like this plan, are critical to help ensure coordinated agency and stakeholder response during public peril evacuations. The work and coordinated effort on the part of our Tahoe regional agencies to produce the plan should be recognized and applauded.

Agencies invite a 60-day public comment period on the revised regional plan.

The plan cites the definition of an organized, phased, and supervised withdrawal, dispersal, or removal of civilians from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas, and their reception and care to safe areas and further describes the “strategies for managing evacuations with a special emphasis on wildfire, which exceed the day-to-day capabilities of the various public safety agencies in the Lake Tahoe Basin”.

While the plan shows a revision date of September 10, 2024, the plan contains annexed sections displaying county emergency plans, including what appears to be the unrevised Placer County plan dated March 2015 (9 years ago) and Washoe County plan dated July 2020 (4 years ago).

It is important to point out differences between the regional plan, which contains strategic coordinating implementation information for an “organized, phased and supervised” evacuation and the TahoeCleanAir.org “Independent Lake Tahoe Wildfire Evacuation Analysis”, generated from the most up to date, and best available technology, of which purpose is to inform land use planners and the public regarding potentially perilous roadway evacuation capacity times during a no-notice wildfire evacuation under a variety of scenarios.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64148b655dc36a6ea811d09e/t/66cf1f0a79dd411d4bf3f867/1724850064376/Final+8-27-24+Indpnt+LT+Wildfire+Evac+Analys+--+TahoeCleanAir.org.pdf>

The important and necessary “regional evacuation” strategy implementation document emphasizes a “planned” phased evacuation. It does not however, address (except for brief mentions in one or two county annex Sections) a “no-notice” unplanned evacuation.

No-notice evacuations are sudden fast-moving events that can almost immediately overwhelm agency resources.

Further, the regional plan does not contain an analyses of traffic impacts, and evacuation times under a variety of scenarios. This, as suggested by the CA Attorney General, best practices for wildfire evacuation planning for projects within very high fire hazard severity zones.

TahoeCleanAir.org looks forward to providing public comment during the 60-day comment period, and providing what we believe will be a comprehensive set of suggestions to help further inform the public and agencies regarding evacuation roadway capacity perils and evacuation times based on Tahoe’s regional unique and limited roadway evacuation capacity restraints. This, further supported by up to date and relevant data utilizing the best available technology.

Doug Flaherty

TahoeCleanAir.org