

Fire Advisor Los Angeles and Orange Counties

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Position title: The Fire Advisor will be a Cooperative Extension (CE) Advisor position focused on fire resiliency and community adaptation.

Headquarter location and coverage area: The Fire Advisor position will be based at the UCCE-Los Angeles office. Office space is available and committed to this position if it is successful.

The Fire Advisor will cover Los Angeles and Orange counties. This region has been severely affected by wildfire in recent years - most notably in January 2025 with the Eaton, Palisades, and other fires, which killed more than 30 people and destroyed more than 16,000 structures and homes. The region is in dire need of support, expertise, and capacity as communities navigate post-fire recovery efforts and plan for inevitable future fire events. There is significant opportunity and need for fire-related research and extension in the two-county region, and potential for rich collaborations with local UCCE offices, campus-based academics, and ANR's statewide Fire Network.

UCCE-Los Angeles has an Environmental Horticulture Advisor, a Community Nutrition and Health Advisor, a Community Resiliency Advisor, and a 4-H Youth Development Advisor. There are also several Advisors and one Specialist (UCLA) in neighboring counties who support the needs in Los Angeles County, including in water, urban farms, integrated pest management, irrigation, and organic waste. There is potential for each of these positions to interact and engage in inter-disciplinary projects to address fire and related issues in the county.

Position overview:

The Fire Advisor will implement an innovative extension and applied research program that promotes post-fire recovery and wildfire adaptation, both locally in Los Angeles and Orange counties and throughout California. The advisor will work with and provide a point of connection for landowners, agencies, local governments, and community members to work together toward fire resilience. The advisor's research will inform management and policy efforts in the two counties, with potential for statewide collaboration and impact. The intent is for this position to help communities navigate recovery efforts related to recent wildfires, build community fire adaptation and resiliency for future fire events, and more generally, to reduce California's social, physical, and ecological vulnerability to wildfire.

Education and background: This position requires a minimum of a master's degree in fire science, natural resources, planning, social sciences, mechanical or structural engineering, or material sciences at the time of appointment. Experience in fire-related research is required, and experience with field

research and/or participatory social science research is desired. Community fire resiliency is naturally interdisciplinary, and we will welcome candidates from a diversity of backgrounds and expertise.

Supervision and reporting: The Fire Advisor will serve under the administrative guidance of County Director Keith Nathaniel, with input from Orange County Area Director Rita Clemons. The fire advisor will also be a core position of the UC ANR Fire Network, with Director Lenya Quinn-Davidson as secondary supervisor. The advisor will join a statewide team of five other fire advisors, a statewide academic coordinator, and a broad network of staff and affiliated academics throughout the state.

Justification: Southern California is a fire-prone region that regularly experiences wildfire, smoke, and debate about mitigation approaches. Wildfires in January 2025 impacted communities across Los Angeles and Orange counties, causing unprecedented damage to urban communities and infrastructure and creating a pressing need for post-fire recovery support and future fire adaptation efforts. Unfortunately, the 2025 wildfires overlapped with the recent departure of the first and only UCCE Southern California Fire Advisor, who was soft-funded and vacated the position in summer 2024 after only two years. Local UCCE leaders and the UC ANR Fire Network see a critical need for a permanent, centrally funded advisor position to work on fire resiliency in these two counties. This position ranked as the top priority for the Fire Management, Policy, and Resiliency Program Team, for UCCE-Los Angeles County Director Keith Nathaniel, and for the UCANR Fire Network. Given the large population in southern California, it is essential that ANR direct fire-related resources to this area, both for community impact and to further our partnerships and visibility in this space.

A 2023 statewide needs assessment by Fire Network advisors, which included responses from 200 southern California residents, highlighted outreach and education on home hardening, evacuation planning, and defensible space as regional priorities. The previous Southern California Fire Advisor began to fill those needs through his program, and he found significant interest in those three topics, as well as around plant flammability, building materials, and other wildfire mitigation activities, including fuels treatments and prescribed fire. Now, in the wake of the 2025 wildfires, we know that post-fire recovery efforts are also a significant priority and need across the region.

Outcomes and impact: In urban settings like Los Angeles and Orange counties, the impacts of wildfire are far-reaching, with implications across the natural and built environment as well as for public health and well-being and local economic stability and prosperity. Thus, this Fire Advisor position is anticipated to contribute to a wide range of UC ANR's condition changes, including improved community health and wellness, improved built environment, improved community disaster preparedness and resilience, improved land stewardship, improved air quality, improved water quality, improved ecosystem resilience, and enhanced community economic development, among others. Looking forward, ANR's fire resilience efforts in these two counties will exemplify UC ANR's Strategic Vision 2040, as we promote thriving people and communities in the face of complex ecological and climate challenges. We foresee this Fire Advisor position as a central driver in a more innovative, equitable, and effective fire adaptation approach in southern California and beyond.

Extension: The advisor will work with and provide a point of connection for residents, agencies, local governments, tribes, policymakers, academics, and community members to work together on post-fire recovery efforts and toward future fire resilience. The advisor will also work closely with the UC ANR Fire Network on extension events and materials throughout California, including webinars, conferences, and policy work. Potential collaborators include local/county government, fire safe councils and Firewise

communities, homeowners associations, prescribed burn associations, tribes, UC ANR's Master Gardener Program, landscape contractors, architects, academics, urban planning specialists, etc.

Research: Fire-related research in this region could span a range of disciplines and topics, given the breadth of fire impacts. Key areas of focus could include:

- Built environment: flammability of landscaping and structures, urban fire spread, firebrand generation, effectiveness of Zone 0 and other mitigation efforts, new material development to harden structures, post-fire recovery and rebuilding
- Policy: insurance strategies, social acceptability/adoption of state recommendations/requirements (e.g., Zone 0, home hardening, defensible space)
- Air quality/public health: impacts of wildfire smoke, effectiveness of public health interventions, environmental justice
- Landscape/ecosystem: role of fire in southern CA landscapes, cultural fire and tribal partnerships, fire ecology, vegetation management, potential for beneficial fire

The advisor will be expected to engage diverse partners with varied approaches to community fire resiliency, potentially including materials scientists, fire behavior and fuels analysts, public health experts, urban planners, landscape architects and builders, tribes, and others. Anticipated outlets for research and publications include the International Journal of Wildland Fire, Fire Ecology, Fire and Materials, Fire Safety Journal, Science of the Total Environment, and Fire, among others.

UC ANR network: The Fire Advisor will fill a critical geographic and knowledge gap in UC ANR's network of fire academics and staff. Currently there are no fire advisors in southern California, despite severe impacts from wildfire in recent years. A southern California-based fire advisor is the top priority for the UC ANR Fire Network and for the Fire Management, Policy, and Resiliency Program Team. This position will bring unique talents that complement the Fire Network, as it will be the only urban fire advisor with a focus on community resiliency and the built environment. The advisor will be able to draw on the expertise and experience of other Fire Network advisors and staff, who have well-established programs throughout the state. The advisor may also collaborate with Specialist Max Moritz at UCSB; Specialist Edith de Guzman at UCLA; AES faculty and specialists at UCB, including Scott Stephens, Rob York, and Kristen Shive; and other UC ANR statewide programs and teams, including Master Gardeners, the UC ANR disaster team, the UC ANR Policy Institute, and ANR horticulture advisors, among others.

Network external to UC ANR: The advisor may collaborate with a wide range of outside partners, including Los Angeles and Orange County fire departments, local fire safe councils, the nascent Los Angeles Prescribed Burn Association, the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), other UC faculty who work on fire issues (e.g., Michael Gollner at UCB, Tirtha Banarjee at UCI), and faculty from other regional universities (San Diego State, UC San Diego, UCLA, etc.). The advisor would likely collaborate on extension and policy with working groups from the Governor's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, and other statewide and national networks focused on fire adaptation and community resilience.

Support: This Fire Advisor position will be based at the UCCE-LA office, where office space, office supplies, travel, and administrative support will be provided. The Fire Network will also work with the advisor to support special projects/research, Fire Network collaborations, out-of-area travel, professional development, and other efforts as needed. The Fire Network also has 3 years of soft funding for a new Academic Coordinator fire position that could be based in southern California, and we anticipate that the AC will work closely with and provide support for this Fire Advisor.