

Blame traded in California fire losses

by UPI

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. - Homeowners near Lake Tahoe, Calif., said government regulators made it too hard for them to clear trees to protect their homes from forest fires.

"I hate to get political, but environmentalists wouldn't let us cut down the dead trees," Jerry Martin said at a meeting of residents with state and federal officials, The Los Angeles Times reported.

Martin's home survived a forest fire this week that burned thousands of acres in the Tahoe Basin but eight nearby houses burned, the Times reported.

Some residents at the meeting said government regulators, under pressure from environmental groups, make it too hard to clear trees around homes, the Times reported.

Sgt. Don Atkinson of the El Dorado County, Calif., Sheriff's Department said the growth of other plants contribute to the area's fire danger. Officials have asked residents to clear underbrush within 30 feet of homes, he said.

"Sometimes people do it and sometimes people don't," he said in the Times reported. "There's a lot of residences where manzanita grows right up to the house and that's unfortunate. It's very flammable and it's got oils and stuff in it that really tend to drive a fire."

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