

The sheriff's office anticipates easily integrating the technology with its current emergency notification system, CodeRED (which sends out alerts via landline, cellphone text and email), with all of the alerts sent out at the same time.

"There's no one perfect solution to this very complex problem," Honea said. "We have to have multiple platforms, multiple tools."

Other emergency evacuation improvements are underway as well. Notably, the sheriff's office is working with Cal Fire and other Butte County departments, including the Office of Emergency Services, to create evacuation zone maps.

Three years ago, when the Camp Fire struck, Butte County had no public facing evacuation map, according to BCSO spokeswoman Megan McMann. The zones are intended to make it much clearer for residents when disaster strikes—all they need to know is which zone they inhabit.

Butte County tentatively plans to release the zones to the public next year, McMann said.

All of these improvements are part of the county's evolving understanding of the way fires develop, Honea said.

## Engaged and alert

Phillips has chosen to stay in Berry Creek, but his grandfather, who is in his 70s, and mother have since relocated to the Bay Area. Though his grandpa

The North Complex Fire blew through Berry Creek, leaving no time for firefighters to get to Butte County Fire Station 61 before it was destroyed.

CN&R FILE PHOTO BY JASON CASSIDY.



is a "mountain man," it's not practical for him to live in such a rough, remote area, given the dangers, he said.

When it comes to the evacuation improvements that are underway at the county, Phillips said he supports "any step to help us ... one million percent."

However, he's still uneasy about the future. He worries that the county will have a hard time reaching secluded residents who live off-the-grid, he said. One of his friends was killed by the blaze.

"These are some of the best people I've ever met in my life," he said. "I just feel like we were kicked to the curb at the end of the day, and those are lives people are playing with."

Honea stressed the importance of community members staying engaged and alert. The sheriff's office conducted interviews with the family, neighbors and friends of those who perished during the North Complex Fire. Some knew the fire was coming but chose to stay, he said.

Residents living in wildfire-prone areas need to create defensible space, be ready to go and heed evacuation orders "to prevent those kind of tragedies from occurring in the future," Honea said.

"It is certainly my hope and desire that we never lose another person to these fires," he said. "And that is one of the reasons that we continually look at ways that we can enhance and develop and improve our ability to alert and warn people." □

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