CITY OF RENO

Memorandum

DATE: February 18, 2026

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Jackie Bryant, City Manager

FROM: Jenifer Alvarez, Council Relations Liaison

DEPT: City Manager's Office

SUBJECT: Washoe County Emergency Management Evacuation Study and Zoning

Washoe County Emergency Management (WCEM) is leading a comprehensive regional evacuation study to strengthen community resilience in the face of wildfires and other emergencies that may require evacuation. This work is being conducted in close collaboration with local agencies, regional partners, and the community. It is designed to improve safety, coordination, and clarity during emergency events.

Evacuations during wildfire or emergency events follow a coordinated, multi-agency process. Fire agencies evaluate conditions and determine when an area is unsafe, law enforcement agencies implement evacuations and ensure routes remain clear, and Emergency Management coordinates public communication, alerts, maps, and resource support. This study is intended to strengthen coordination across all phases of that process.

To support this effort, WCEM has retained two professional vendors: Perimeter and CNA. Perimeter is providing traffic modeling to better understand evacuation movement and roadway capacity, while CNA is supporting data analysis and updates to the regional evacuation plan. The study is currently focused on the development of standardized evacuation zones that will be used by first responders during real-world incidents for orders such as "shelter-in-place" or "evacuate." These zones will be used internally by first responders through the Perimeter platform and are intended to replace past practices where evacuation areas were manually drawn, sometimes resulting in unclear or inconsistent boundaries, including lines cutting through individual properties. The goal is to improve accuracy, consistency, and operational effectiveness during emergencies.

WCEM and regional partners recognize the importance of local knowledge in this process. Workshops are being planned with first responders and partner agencies, including Reno Fire Department, Reno Police Department, Reno Public Works, Parks, Perimeter, Washoe County GIS, and WCEM. These sessions will focus on building evacuation zones that reflect how neighborhoods function in real life, including access points, road networks, and community characteristics.

Residents are being invited to participate in developing evacuation zones through surveys, interactive tools such as community mapping, and public meetings. These tools allow community members to share past evacuation experiences, identify neighborhood-specific challenges, and suggest practical improvements. Public input is being reviewed alongside technical data to inform decisions. Ongoing WCEM updates will explain how feedback is shaping the outcomes in order to build an evacuation plan which prioritizes safety, coordination, and clarity. Those interested in participating can access the *Swift Exit: Evacuation Study,* which closes on March 30th, 2026 at 4:59pm.