

SAN FRANCISCO | MULTIFAMILY

Exclusive

Fire Response Tests Multifamily Managers

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Woodmont's management response to the wildfires was recently recognized by IREM.

SANTA ROSA, CA—Many property owners were seriously tested during the [North Bay fires](#) in October. As an example, more than half of the Santa Rosa apartment communities managed by Belmont-based [Woodmont Real Estate Services](#) required mandatory evacuation by all residents and staff.

For its management response to the wildfires and leadership in sustainability, Woodmont was recently awarded the Accredited Management Organization Firm of the Year by the San Francisco chapter of the [Institute of Real Estate Management/IREM](#). In this exclusive, [GlobeSt.com](#) caught up with Woodmont CEO Ron Granville to learn more about the company's sustainability practices and what transpired during the Wine Country wildfires.

GlobeSt.com: First of all, why the award and what are the specifics on an IREM Certified Sustainable Property credential?

Granville: The credential is a prestigious sustainability certification program that focuses on the role of exceptional real estate management in green building performance. To earn the certification, a property must first meet key baseline requirements, and then earn additional points across energy, water, health, recycling and purchasing categories. Our firm was the first in the country to earn the certification in June 2016 with a property we manage in Dublin, CA. We have since added seven more communities and have eight more sustainable certifications pending. We have not yet confirmed this with IREM's headquarters in Chicago, but we believe we have more sustainable property certifications than any apartment owner or manager in the country.

GlobeSt.com: What is the significance to having a certified sustainable property?

Granville: Residents increasingly associate environmental performance with quality, so the certification presents a prime opportunity to showcase quality and responsible real estate management. It's also an added feature when we market communities to attract residents—it's a differentiator.

GlobeSt.com: How did the North Bay wildfires impact apartment communities you manage, its residents and your staff?

Granville: Five of the eight apartment communities managed by Woodmont Real Estate Services in the Santa Rosa area required mandatory evacuation by all residents and Woodmont staff. The evacuations affected approximately 750 apartment homes and temporarily displaced some 2,000 people. We're thankful to the first responders and everyone associated with the various emergency and fire agencies. They did an amazing job under the circumstances. Fortunately none of the residents or Woodmont employees were injured by the wildfires, although one community lost a building of eight apartments to the fire. During the evacuation period, Woodmont staff worked to communicate with residents to keep them updated as information was released by authorities. When the evacuation orders were lifted, we hired a specialized restoration company to clean the exteriors and interiors of apartment buildings impacted by smoke and ash to facilitate residents' return to their apartments.

GlobeSt.com: In the 40-plus years of Woodmont's business as a third-party property manager, have you had to manage through any disasters comparable to the North Bay fires?

Granville: No. Not even the 1989 earthquake compares to the October fires. We are grateful to the Woodmont team members who worked tirelessly to take care of residents and properties during the horrific fires. Their dedicated response—often while concerned about their own homes and families—was exemplary. Fortunately, we were able to quickly implement our emergency-management protocols, which helped produce the best possible outcome from a truly disastrous situation.

Woodmont is the largest independent third-party property management company in Northern California with more than 12,000 apartment homes and 5 million square feet of commercial property under management.