

Dear Property Owner/Occupant:

As Fire Season 2010 quickly approaches we are once again asking for your help and cooperation in maintaining a fire-safe community. This flyer has been used for the past few years with a great deal of success. It points out the current, basic requirements of California Law for fire prevention in the wildland areas. Most importantly, it points out the things that you can do to help protect the structures on your property from a wildfire moving through the area.

To increase our ability to reach the communities we serve we are asking for your help by participating in a “**Self-Inspection Program**.” It allows residents to make their own determination on whether their property is in compliance or to determine the work that is necessary to bring their property into compliance with the basic fire prevention standards. Included in this pamphlet is a Fire Hazard Abatement Checklist, which you should use to determine what needs to be done in order for your property to meet these standards.

This year we are asking you to pay particular attention to the three areas that are critical to our ability to reach you in an emergency. The section titled “**FIRE ENGINE ACCESS**”, identifies how to post your address, make your driveway accessible by fire apparatus and how you can secure your gates while allowing for emergency access.

We are asking that your property meet these standards identified in the *fire hazard abatement checklist* and *fire engine access section*, by **June 1, 2010**. Your property *may* be inspected by the fire department. By participating in the “Self-Inspection program,” you allow the fire department staff to concentrate their inspections in hazard areas and on special compliance problems.

For help with any questions you may have about this fire safety information, please contact your local fire station: Toro Station (455-1721), Chualar Station (679-2323), Laureles Station (484-1197) or visit our website at www.mcrcfd.org.

Included in this mailer is information about:

- fire engine access
- having addresses posted
- doing the right thing the wrong way
- fire hazard abatement checklist
- homeowner’s checklist inside and out

Please take the time to review the material and follow the checklist to prepare your property for wildland fire season. We will conduct inspections of our target areas beginning in June. If you should have any questions, please contact your local fire station.

Michael B. Urquides, Fire Chief
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection
District

Rick Hutchinson, Unit Chief
California Department of Forestry
& Fire Protection



Fire Engine Access

Can a fire engine get to your home? Whether to put out a wildland fire, structure fire or to respond to a medical emergency, firefighters must be able to get equipment to the scene. If the fire engine is unable to get to your house, they are unable to help with your emergency. Here are things that you can do to help us help you:

1. **Addresses** - Post your address so we can find your house. In the rural areas, it can be very difficult to locate houses. Where the address is not readily visible from the road, it should be placed at each driveway entrance and visible from both directions of travel along the road. Post your address at any branch or forks in shared driveways; indicate all address numbers on each branch or fork on a post with a directional arrow. The signs should be a minimum of 4 inch height with a 1/2 inch stroke; they should consist of contrasting colors and be reflective for visibility at night. An example would be black background with white reflective numbers.
2. **Driveways** - Now that we can find the address, you must make sure we can get our fire engine up your driveway. The driveway should be a minimum of 12 feet wide. If your driveway is less than 12 feet wide, make sure you clear the trees and brush along side the driveway, giving the fire engine 12 feet of unobstructed clearance. You will also need to make sure the fire engine has vertical clearance of at least 15 feet. Trim any trees or brush that over hang the driveway to a height of 15 feet.
3. **Gates** - If your driveway is gated or chained with locks to provide security, this creates a barrier for firefighters. Gates should be at least 30 feet from the public right-of-way and open inward. If they are electric, a Knox key switch is required so that firefighters can open the gate. If it is a chain and padlock, you can add a Knox padlock, which allows firefighters the ability to gain access without using forcible means. (Order forms for Knox padlocks and key switch can be obtained from the Fire Prevention Bureau by calling (831) 455-1828.)

By doing the items listed above, you will allow us to get to your house as quickly as possible. During any emergency, time is crucial. If we are spending time looking for your address, getting the fire engine up a narrow driveway or blocked by locked gates, we have wasted valuable time that could be spent putting out a fire or administering to a medical emergency.

HELP US HELP YOU!



FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT CHECKLIST

Please use this checklist to fire safe your property.

Complete by June 1, 2010.

TWO ZONES MAKE UP THE REQUIRED 100 FEET OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE:

Create a Lean, Clean and Green Zone *An area of 30 feet immediately surrounding your home.*

Remove all flammable vegetation and any dead or dying plants within 30 feet of each building or structure.

You may keep single trees or other vegetation that are trimmed of all dead and dying foliage and are well-pruned and maintained.

Decrease Fuel in the Reduced Fuel Zone - *The fuel reduction zone in the remaining 70 feet (or to the property line, whichever is closer)*

Surface litter consists of fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, pods, small branches, etc. Remove surface litter so it does not exceed a depth of 3 inches.

Roof, eaves and rain gutters are clear of debris.

There are no tree limbs within 10 feet of chimneys and/or stovepipes.

There are no dead tree limbs hanging over the building(s).

Trees have been "limbed up" 6 feet from the ground. This does **not** include ornamental trees within the 30 foot "defensible space".

Chimney outlet or flue is protected with a 1/2-inch mesh screen.

Address numbers (4" min.) are posted and are visible from the street.

Vertical clearance of 15 feet and a minimum width of 12 feet completed on the driveway.

IN ADDITION, WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

Stack woodpiles at least 30 feet from buildings, fences and other combustible materials.

Clear all vegetation and other flammable materials from beneath your deck. Enclose undersides of elevated decks with fire resistive materials.

Are you doing the right thing the wrong way?

Are you doing the right thing the wrong way—for example, trying to eliminate the fire hazards around your home and in the process starting a wildland fire? Each year fire departments respond to nearly 1,500 fires started by people using equipment in the wrong way.

When working to create a defensible space around your home by mowing your weeds, don't mow during the heat of the day, you could hit a rock with the blade causing a spark to ignite dry grass. If you live in a wildland area you need to use all equipment responsibly. Lawnmowers, weed-eaters, chainsaws, grinders, welders, tractors, and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire. Do your part, the right way at the right time, to keep your community fire safe!

Here's how to do it the right way:

- Mow before 10:00 a.m. If it's too hot for you it's too hot to mow. ***Remember, don't mow during the heat of the day or when the wind is blowing!***
- **In Wildland areas**, spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline powered equipment. (Tractors, harvesters, chainsaws, weed-eaters and mowers).
- Keep the exhaust system, spark arresters and mower in proper working order and free of carbon buildup. Use the recommended grade of fuel and don't top off.
- Keep the engine free of oil and dust, and keep the mower free of flammable materials.
- **In Wildland areas**, a permit may be required for grinding and welding operations. Be sure to have 10 feet of clearance, a round point shovel, and a back-pump water-type fire extinguisher or garden hose ready to use.
- Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can start fires you won't even see—until it's too late! Don't park your vehicle in dry grass or brush.
- Keep a cell phone nearby and call 911 **Immediately** in case of a fire.