
CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Karen Terrill
Public Information Officer
916 654-7554

RELEASE
DATE: October 5, 2004

National Fire Prevention Month Begins With Warning for Californians

South State Conditions are Comparable to Last Year at this Time

Sacramento – Declaring grass, brush and trees in California critically dry, especially in the southern part of the state; officials with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) remind all Californians that the end of fire season is often the worst of fire season.

“This is the time of year that we typically have our largest and most damaging fires,” said CDF Chief of Fire Protection, Jim Wright. “National Fire Prevention Month is an opportunity to reach out to the public we serve and remind everyone not to become complacent simply because it’s a little cooler and the days are shorter. Our tests show that the fuel moisture levels in Southern California are well below critical and are similar to this time last year when we were facing the worst fire siege in our history. Until we get a couple of good soaking rains, California’s wildlands are ready to burn. And as we saw last year, wildland fires threaten houses and business as well.”

Last year, Southern California endured the most destructive fire siege in the state’s history. Fourteen major wildfires burned through seven counties, blackening more than 750,000 acres, and destroying more than 5,000 structures, 3600 of which were homes or commercial properties. For details about the Siege of 2003 visit the CDF website at www.fire.ca.gov and click on “The Story”.

“We must never forget that 24 people lost their lives during last year’s fires,” said State Fire Marshal Rueben Grijalva. “At one point, the Cedar Fire in San Diego County was burning two acres

-more-



per second. We must respect how truly dangerous these fires can be. In California, wildfire usually means structure fires and that means people's lives are at risk. Homeowners are responsible for creating a defensible space around their property and everyone should have an emergency evacuation plan."

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the State Fire Marshal's Office offer the following recommendations for living Fire Safe.

Create defensible space around your property:

Clear away dry weeds and brush at least 30 ft. around all structures. (As of January 1, 2005, state law will require a minimum of 100 ft.)

Prune tree branches away from the roof.

Remove flammables such as pine needles, twigs and leaves from the roof and gutters.

Trim all large trees 6 ft. up from the ground.

Note: Only use equipment such as chainsaws, weed eaters, and lawn mowers in the early morning to avoid sending sparks into dry grass.

Be careful with fire:

In areas where debris burning is allowed, a valid permit is still required.

Don't throw smoking materials out of a vehicle.

Remember, when pulling off to the side of the road, the under carriage of a car can get hot enough to set the grass on fire.

Never operate an off-road vehicle without a proper spark arrester.

Make sure camp fires are completely extinguished and never leave a fire unattended.

If you accidentally start a fire call 911 immediately.

Have an evacuation plan:

Last year thousands of people had to evacuate immediately as wildfires were coming toward their homes. Every family should have a plan which includes a list of the essentials that can be collected quickly and a safe location where everyone will meet.

For more fire safety tips visit the CDF website or contact your local CDF facility.

###

