DATE: *May 8, 2017*
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SBCoFD Emphasize Wildfire Preparedness and Arson Awareness

We may have received an above average amount of rain this winter, but the risk of wildfire has not washed away. On Monday May 8, fire agencies gathered to stress the current risk of wildfire in our region and highlight the importance of being prepared.

San Bernardino County Fire along with CalFire, US Forest Service, law enforcement and Fire Safe Councils continue to work together to make wildfire safety a priority for our region as a year-round reality.

Contrary to belief, with an increase of rain, an increase of wildfires also exists. San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig explained how we will continue to see wildfires spread this season with high intensity. "The rain helped combat the bark beetle infestation in our local mountains; however it also causes growth of light flashy fuels. These flashy fuels mixed with high temperatures and winds are a recipe for disaster." The Blue Cut Fire of last August, which burned 36,274 acres, is an example of the type of fire behavior our region can continue to expect.

Fire Chief Mark Hartwig emphasized the urgency to prepare in advance for wildfire season, by local fire agencies as well as by residents. San Bernardino County Fire's Red Flag Warning Program warns citizens when conditions for extreme fire danger arise by flying a Red Flag below the American Flag at all County Fire Stations.

Residents are included in fire prevention by clearing vegetation and debris from around the home, creating a wildfire preparedness plan, and reporting suspicious fire activity. "We are already seeing vegetation fires this year grow at a rapid rate; now is the time to start preparing," stated Fire Chief Mark Hartiwg. SBCoFire also encourages residents to get involved in one of 4 community volunteer programs, as part of the newly implemented Emergency Support Services.

May 7-13 is Wildfire Awareness Week, which provides important information to help local communities stay informed about protecting their families and homes from wildfires and other disasters. SBCoFire reminds residents to do their part in understanding fire danger by exercising extreme caution around dry, flammable vegetation. Wildfire safety isn't limited to those who live near wild lands; it's for anyone camping or spending time in these locations as well.

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May 7-13 is also Arson Awareness Week, where residents are reminded of the adage, "If you See Something, Say Something." More than half a million wildfires are set by arsonists each year in the U.S., resulting in over $3 billion in damages (National Institute of Standards and Technology and U.S. Department of Agriculture). "Reporting suspicious fire activity immediately can save your life and the lives of others," said San Bernardino County Fire Marshal Mike Horton. Report tips anonymously through We Tip at (800) 47- ARSON or online at www.WeTip.com.

We invite you to join forces with SBCoFire and all fire agencies this year in saving lives by preventing wildfires and reporting arson activity. Be vigilant in wildfire preparedness, and help reduce risking the lives of firefighters by evacuating when asked to by law enforcement.

San Bernardino County Fire Department has resources available 24/7, including fire, rescue, EMS service, hand crews, dozers, and aircraft. One spark is all it takes to start a devastating wildfire, but preparedness is how we defend ourselves.

For more information on wildfire preparedness or volunteer opportunities in your community, visit our website at www.sbcfire.org. Download our Ready, Set, Go! Guide at www.sbcfire.org/ReadySetGo.aspx.

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