



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Smoke is in the Air, Are you Prepared?

Fire danger is at an above normal level. Dry conditions, coupled with already increased fire activity, is an indicator for potentially higher than normal fire activity. Are you prepared?

In early April, Southern California was already showing signs of being one of the most active fire seasons in history. With rainfall totals ranging from 5-25% of average, 2013 looks to be one of the driest years in recent memory. There have already been over 5,700 wildfires in California, with two wildland fires still burning right here in Southern California. Fuel is plenty and moisture levels are low, an ingredient for disaster, and the Santa Ana winds haven't hit the region as of yet. The dreaded Santa Ana's generally blow strongest in San Bernardino County in October.

It's not a question of "if" but "when" the next major wildfire will occur in San Bernardino County. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is you. Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for the next wildfire. The time to start safeguarding your home against the devastation of wildfires is now. The San Bernardino County Fire Department urges you to review the following steps in order to best prepare:

GET READY: Create Defensible Space around your home. Defensible Space is an area that extends from the structure out to 100 feet or the property line. Initial steps to creating this space begin with clearing all dead or dying vegetation from the ground, roofs, underneath decks and around propane tanks. Cleaning out rain gutters and moving wood piles at least thirty feet from structures are also included in this space creation. This is also a time to ensure that your address is clearly visible from the street, so firefighters can easily identify your residence.

GET SET: Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans. Remember that during a natural disaster, cell towers may be overburdened with traffic; text messages are more likely to be successful than phone calls. Have several different escape routes and plan a meeting location that is outside of the fire area. If you own horses or large animals, plan on how you would evacuate them as well.

GO EARLY: When law enforcement advises of evacuations, please leave early. This allows firefighters to focus their efforts on battling the oncoming fire and decreases vehicle traffic which allows multiple fire engines to operate in smaller neighborhoods.

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Another important factor in fire prevention is equipment use. Whether working to create defensible space around your home, just mowing the lawn, or pulling your dirt bike over to the side of the road, if you live in a wildland area you need to use all equipment responsibly. Lawn mowers, weedeaters, chain saws, grinders, welders, tractors, and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire. Do your part, the right way, to keep your community fire safe. Here are some tips on how to do it the right way:

- Mow before 10 a.m., but never when it's windy or excessively dry. Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawns, not weeds or dry grass. Metal blades striking rocks can create sparks and start fires.
- In wildland areas, spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline-powered equipment. This includes chainsaws, weedeaters and mowers. Keep the exhaust system, spark arresters and mower in proper working order and free of carbon buildup.
- Don't drive your vehicle onto dry grass or brush. Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can start fires that you won't even see - until it's too late!

For more information on steps you can take to prepare for a wildland fire, visit our website at www.sbcfire.org. For the latest updates, be sure to follow us on Twitter at SBCountyFire.

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