



RANCHO SANTA FE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wildfire Awareness Week May 1-7

RANCHO SANTA FE, Calif. — Wildfires are a constant threat for those of us living in Southern California, especially in wildland-urban interface areas such as those inside and surrounding Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District's (RSFFPD) communities. Adding to the danger is the increasing number of dead and dying trees seen, not just here in our fire district but throughout California and beyond. A number of plant and tree species that have been infected by insect infestation or disease, a problem compounded by the drought we have been experiencing over the last several years, the effects of which mean the vegetation is not getting the nutrients it needs to fight off infestation or disease.

In an effort to protect the healthy trees and plants in our forests and wildland areas, the State of California has formed the Tree Mortality Task Force, a group of federal, state, and local agencies tasked with developing ways to defend against infestation and disease as well as monitoring the health of the vegetation. The task force also provides information and resources for homeowners.

RSFFPD has been working directly with state and other local officials and agencies to do everything we can to protect lives and property within our communities. By working with property owners and the Rancho Santa Fe Association, the district has seen hundreds of diseased and dying trees removed and those efforts are continuing.

"Over the past couple of years, the District has seen a vast number of diseased and dying trees be removed from both private and public land," said RSFFPD Urban Forester Conor Lenehan. "As a whole, the community of Rancho Santa Fe has done a really great job at reducing the overall fire hazard.

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Although we are not out of the woods yet, the community should be proud of their efforts and should continue to remove trees that are dead and dying within 100 feet of a structure or 30 feet of a roadway.”

“We are currently in the process of sending letters out to all residents within the RSFFPD service area reminding them of the local hazard abatement requirements,” added Fire Prevention Specialist Nicole Berry. “Fire prevention staff would be more than happy to meet with homeowners at their residence and identify any weed abatement hazards that may be present. Removing these hazards will help keep not only their home safer in a wildfire but their neighbors’ homes safer, as well.”

Here are some ways, in addition to removing diseased and dying trees from your property, that you can safeguard not only your home, but your entire community. These requirements can also be found in their entirety on our web site.

Create and Maintain Defensible Space

“Defensible space” is a term used to describe a 100-foot “buffer zone” around all structures on your property and 30-foot zone along either side of roadways and driveways in which dead and dying vegetation is removed and excess growth is thinned. Defensible space will not only give firefighters a safe place to make a stand against threatening flames, but it has been proven to save homes and minimize property damage.

Creating a defensible space around your home can be as simple as removing combustible vegetation and flammable materials and replanting with drought-tolerant, fire resistive trees, shrubs and plants. Keep vegetation well-maintained and remove any dead foliage throughout the year. Weeds and grasses must be cut below six-inches in height. Trees and native vegetation should not come into direct contact with structures or parts thereof. Tree limbs and foliage must be trimmed 10 feet from rooftops, chimneys, and outdoor barbecues. Mature trees must be pruned back at least four to six feet from structures and branches trimmed six feet off the ground.

Roofs and Rooftops

Most homes with wood-shake roofs *do not* survive wildfires. During a fire storm, these homes burn from the outside-in. If you own a home with a wood roof, there is no more time to delay; retro-fit

your home with a roof made of non-combustible materials. Many newer roofing materials now resemble wood-shake so homeowners can experience the aesthetic qualities they desire while making their home a defensible one. However, a non-combustible roof can become a combustible roof quite easily if leaf litter and debris accumulate on your roof. To safeguard your roof, regularly maintain your roof and rain gutters free from any debris.

Roadways and Driveways

Keep roadways and driveways clear from overhanging vegetation, which may hinder both evacuation efforts and access of incoming fire engines. From the edge of driveways and roadways, measure 13-feet, 6-inches straight up from the ground. Any overhanging bushes or branches in this area must be pruned back or removed to create vertical tree clearance.

Other Important Items

- Remove dead palm fronds on palm trees within 100 feet from a structure or 30 feet from a roadway/driveway.
- Trim combustible vegetation 10-feet away from propane (LPG) tanks and keep wood piles at least 30-feet away from any structure on your property.
- Stack and store firewood 30 feet from all structures. All flammable vegetation and combustible materials must be cleared or removed within 30 feet of firewood stacks.
- Maintain a visible address. Whether it's a wildfire or an every-day emergency, firefighters need to be able to read your address. Your address number should be visible from the street, with numerals at least 4-inches in height, mounted on a contrasting background.
- If you own a private gate, it must be equipped with an approved fire district gate access switch and/or strobe sensor to allow firefighters to access your property during emergencies. Additionally, during wildfires, many firefighters arrive from out of the area and won't be able to access your gated property. During a wildfire, disconnect the manual override motor on your electric gate, or if you have a manual gate, leave the gate open. Otherwise, firefighters may have to use blunt force on your gate, causing significant damage.

If you have questions regarding vegetation management, please contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at 858-756-5971. More wildfire prevention tips are available on our web site at www.rsf-fire.org.

The mission of the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District is “To protect life, property, and environment through prevention, preparedness, education and emergency response.” Formed in 1946, the Fire District now spans approximately 38-square miles and protects over 29,000 citizens. The Fire District currently operates out of five full-time fire stations and serves the communities within and surrounding Rancho Santa Fe, Fairbanks Ranch, and 4S-Ranch.

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