

RANCHO SANTA FE: Fire destroys home

SEPTEMBER 02, 2012 8:00 PM • [BY MORGAN COOK MCOOK@NCTIMES.COM](#)

A fire sparked Sunday morning destroyed a home in Rancho Santa Fe, a fire official said.

Firefighters responded at 8:18 a.m. to a report of a fire at a home in the 19000 block of Lake Drive in Del Dios, said Julie Taber of the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District.

Smoke and flames were coming out of the 400-square-foot home when firefighters arrived moments later, Taber said.

Firefighters stopped the blaze from spreading to vegetation and other structures, but the home was destroyed, Taber said.

No one was hurt, said Taber. The cause of the fire was under investigation.



Fire destroys small home in Del Dios

By Lori Weisberg

Sunday, September 2, 2012

An early morning fire Sunday destroyed a small home in Del Dios, but fire officials reported there were no injuries.

Firefighters responding to a report of a house fire on Lake Drive near 3rd Place saw smoke and flames coming from a 400-square-foot structure, according to the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District. Working quickly, firefighters from both Rancho Santa Fe and the Escondido fire department were able to extinguish the flames and keep the blaze from spreading to nearby structures and brush.

The home, occupied by a woman, was a total loss, said Julie Taber, spokeswoman for the Rancho Santa Fe fire district. The cause is under investigation.

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Join 4S CERT

Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District, which includes 4S Ranch, is accepting applications for its Community Emergency Response Team fall session. The four sessions will be held at RSFFPD Station No. 2, 16930 Four Gee Road, 4S Ranch. They will be 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 2; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 6 and 13; and 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 20.

Topics to be covered include disaster preparedness, disaster medical operations, fire safety and extinguishment, CERT organization, terrorism, disaster psychology and light search and rescue.

CERT members could be called upon to use the skills learned to help their family and neighbors during natural or man-made disasters.

Training is free. Participants must be at least 16 years old and live or work within the 38-square miles Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District. To apply, fill out the application at www.rsf-fire.org.

RSF Firefighters to host annual pancake breakfast and Open House

The Rancho Santa Fe Professional Firefighters Association (RSFFPA) and Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District (RSFFPD) are hosting their annual Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, Oct. 7, from 8 a.m. – noon, at RSF Fire Station 1, 16936 El Fuego in Rancho Santa Fe.

District firefighters will be on hand to serve pancakes, eggs, sausage, orange juice, and coffee for a requested donation of \$5 for adults or \$3 for kids. In addition to breakfast, the event will include an open house featuring station tours, photos with the firefighters, fire engine and ambulance displays, a chance to spray a fire hose with a firefighter, a Basic CPR class, and jump houses. Baked goods and T-shirt will be available for purchase to help raise money for breast cancer research and awareness.

For more information, please visit www.rsffire.org or call 858-756-5971.



Santa Fe Irrigation District, Helping the Environment

The Santa Fe Irrigation District is hosting a Free Electronics Recycling Event and we are inviting you. The Free Event will be held at its District offices at 5920 Linea del Cielo, on Saturday, October 6th. Come drop off your unused electronics and receive a Conservation Gift Bag with a shower timer, hose nozzle, and other great conservation materials. To find out what electronics will be accepted at the event, go to the District's webpage at www.sfidwater.org and find the October 6th event on our Calendar. If you have any additional questions, please call our offices at (858) 756-2424. We look forward to seeing you at the Free Electronics Recycling Event!



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FIRES

HOUSING: Wildfires could scorch more houses than previously thought



2 HOURS AGO • BY ERIC WOLFF
EWOLFF@NCTIMES.COM

Potential wildfires threaten far more homes than previously thought, [a study](#) from data firm CoreLogic said this week.

Wildfires tore through San Diego County in 2003 and 2007, taking lives and causing billions of dollars in property damage. Many homeowners took steps to reduce their fire risk, and some moved to urban areas that they believed would shelter them from the

danger.

But in places such as Ramona and Murrieta, the potential for wildfires lurks closer than they realize. As more and more homes have been built in Southwest Riverside County and North and East San Diego County, that risk has grown, said Tom Jeffery, one of the study's co-authors.

"Most people are concerned with what's inside their property because that's what they have the most control over," Jeffery said. "Then you look at risk adjacent to property ----- we all know that wind doesn't just travel along the ground. Embers travel on the wind."

The researchers used satellite imaging to study vegetation and slopes (steeper slopes lead to faster-spreading fires) and then tied that data with historical fire information and property records to assess risk of damage from wildfires. They concluded that dramatically more properties were at risk than previously thought.

In San Diego County, there are 665 houses worth \$284 million previously believed to be at very high risk. But when the study authors considered how close houses were to high-risk areas, the number at high risk jumped to 14,382, worth \$3.4 billion.

In Riverside County, there are 168 properties worth \$31 million with very high risk of damage from a wildfire, but when proximity is calculated into the risk factor, that figure rises to 9,325 houses worth \$1.8 billion.

The number of properties and the dollar value at risk has grown in the last decade thanks to a building boom that pushed construction out into mountainous and brushy areas.

"From 2001 to 2008, especially in the Southwest, there's a tremendous amount of growth," Jeffery said.

Adding to the risk, the report showed that the number of acres burned in wildfires in the U.S. has been increasing.

[California Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones](#) was in Vista Wednesday to discuss the risk.

"We are once again in wildfire season in San Diego and throughout California, in fact, it seems that wildfire season never leaves us," Jones said. "So it's absolutely essential that everyone do everything they can to prepare themselves from the worst happening, and that is a fire, fire that could end up consuming your home, injuring or in the worst possible case killing loved ones."

Even with the new data, the report probably won't change anyone's insurance premiums, said Pete Moraga, a spokesman for the [Insurance Information Network of California](#), a non-lobbying trade association. He said insurers have much more detailed information with which to make assessments.

"They'll look at not just what this kind of report looks at," he said. Among other factors, "They look at how close the home is to a fire station, and what the rating is for the fire station, whether it's full-time or part-time."

CoreLogic's report also highlighted which areas are at the greatest risk in the region. Ramona had the most residences at risk in North County, with 1,754 houses worth a total of \$406 million. In Southwest County, Murrieta has the greatest fire risk, with 896 houses worth \$452 million.

Jeffery said he worried about people in the Southwest.

"Even though my business is this hazard and disaster data, I feel for the people who deal with these fires," he said.

Fire risk above normal this season, Rancho Santa Fe fire chief reports

By Karen Billing

Five years removed from the Witch Creek Fire, the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District is preparing for the risk of another devastating blaze coming through the community.

“Right now we are in the height of fire season. This year we are expected to have an above normal large fire season in Southern California,” Fire Chief Tony Michel told the Rancho Santa Fe Association board on Sept. 20. “We have had more fire starts this year in California than ever before in recent history.”

Several elements are in play to heighten the risk for a wildland fire event, Michel said.

Last year Rancho Santa Fe had more grass fires than ever and the fuels that burned in the Witch Creek Fire are coming back. Additionally, because there was a lot of rain early on in the year, there is a lot more grass crop.

“We are at critical fuel levels,” said Michel, noting the level of moisture within the fuels is at 60 percent, which means fire starts much more easily.

Also amping up the risk is the extremely dry offshore Santa Ana winds that come at this time of year.

“Fall Santa Ana winds really expedite what fire season is in Southern California,” Michel said. “They really dry things up and can foster fire.”

Michel said the fire district has been very aggressive about fire prevention. The district has been working on a strong weed abatement program, roadway clearing and creating buffers in fire corridors such as the San Dieguito River and Escondido Creek. The district has also done eucalyptus grove clearing in the Del Dios Gorge area where fires can travel from east to west.

The district has also sent letters out to homeowners about the removal of dead and dying trees that can serve as fuel during fire events. RSF Association President Roxana Foxx said she and some of her neighbors have received letters and they are very polite and professional.

Michel said they have worked very hard to ensure that community stakeholders are involved in prevention with brush abatement and tree removal.

“We have to be aware how our individual properties affect the entire community,” RSF Association Vice President Anne Feighner said.

Brush abatement companies are listed on the fire district’s website at rsf-fire.org. Information on disaster preparedness and planning is also available online.

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Sept. 27, 2012

Fire risk above normal this season, RSF Fire Chief says

BY KAREN BILLING

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See FIRE, page 18

RSF Association board, Village gas station rep. address screening issue

BY KAREN BILLING

The Rancho Santa Fe Association is trying to resolve a Covenant violation issue with the gas station at the entrance to the village and held a hearing with gas station representative Mark Rababy at the Association board's Sept. 20 meeting.

RSF Association Manager Pete Smith made the determination that the station was in violation of the regulatory code that states that no vehicle, such as horse trailers, shall be stored when in view from the street or other residences.

Trailers have been observed parked for long periods of times in the lot adjacent to the station.

Typically such hearings are held in closed executive session, but Rababy requested it be held in open session.

Rababy and Smith had differing opinions on what constituted "storage."

"I feel like I'm being harassed by this board," Rababy said, who noted that the trailers are there for repairs, awaiting estimates or parts.

See SCREENING, page 28



Art of Fashion 2012

Dazzling clothing and accessory styles returned to the stage in Rancho Santa Fe on Sept. 20 at the Country Friends' 57th Annual Art of Fashion Runway Show, held in partnership with South Coast Plaza. The event took place at The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe. (Top left) Joy Bancroft, Jenny Craig and Honoree Connie McNally enjoy the show. (All other photos) Models on stage wearing unique designs. See pages 24 and 25 for more. Photos/McKenzie Images

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BOND*continued from page 3*

to know that our proposal met their criteria, and that the request to be decided upon by the voters in this district is one that is thoughtful, reasonable and responsible."

The San Dieguito Union High School District is proposing a \$449 million General Obligation Bond which is estimated to increase the current tax rate by a maximum \$25 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation for properties within the district.

SCHEME*continued from page 3*

million on renovations of the Juan Dolio resort and diverted approximately \$68.6 million to commissions and other payments. The renovations were never completed.

Catledge is scheduled to be arraigned on Oct. 5, 2012, before Magistrate Judge Joseph C. Spero in San Francisco. A court date has not yet been set for Elliott.

The maximum statutory penalty for each count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and mail fraud in vio-

Fairbanks Republican Women Federated to hold major autumn fundraiser 'Oktoberfest'

Fairbanks Republican Women Federated (FRWF) President Cinda Lucas announced recently that FRWF will hold its major autumn fundraising event 'Oktoberfest' on Saturday, Oct. 6, from 6 to 10 p.m. at a private residence. This will be a signature FRWF event featuring Republican elected officials and candidates for the upcoming November election. There will be many unique items available by silent and live auction. Also featured will be traditional Oktoberfest German food and beverages.

Tickets are now available for \$95 until Sept. 30; afterwards, the price increases to \$110. Upon reservation, details of the location will be made available. Sure to be a sellout, guests are invited to RSVP as soon as possible at: www.FairbanksRepublicanWomen.com. For any further questions, please call (858) 353-1929.

Fairbanks Republican Women Federated (FRWF) is one of the largest clubs chartered by the National Federation of Republican Women. Founded in 1994, its mission is to educate, inspire and encourage involvement in the political process. For more information on this and other upcoming events, contact www.fairbanksrepublicanwomen.com or call (858) 353-1929.

National ballot measures to be discussed at public AAUW meeting

The Del Mar-Leucadia branch of the American Association of University Women invites the public to a presentation by the League of Women Voters on the pros and cons of the November ballot measures. The AAUW meeting will be held on Oct. 10 at 7 p.m. at the Cardiff Library, 2081 Newcastle Avenue. A brown bag dinner at 6:30 p.m. precedes the meeting.

Nancy Hand and Roni Seay, members of the League of Women Voters and the Del Mar-Leucadia branch of AAUW, will make the presentation. Both women are officers of the League of Women Voters of San Diego County. Nancy Hand is the treasurer and Roni Seay the president. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government. LWV never supports or opposes political parties or candidates for public office. LWV advocates on selected issues and has many of the same positions as AAUW. Before elections LWV members work to help voters become more knowledgeable about issues and candidates.

Membership in the American Association of University Women is open to all graduates who hold an associate or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university. The Del Mar-Leucadia Branch reflects the varied interests of its members with informative, educational monthly meetings and special interest groups such as Gourmet, Foreign Affairs, Book Groups, Mini Courses, Gadabout, and Theatre.

For more information, call 760-918-6806 or visit www.aauwdelmar-leucadia.org. The national organization, founded in 1881, advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.

FIRE*continued from page 1*

ating buffers in fire corridors such as the San Dieguito River and Escondido Creek. The district has also done eucalyptus grove clearing in the Del Dios Gorge area where fires can travel from east to west.

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Brush abatement companies are listed on the fire district's website at rsf-fire.org. Information on disaster preparedness and planning is also available online.

lation of Title 18, United States Code Sections 1349 and 1341, respectively, is 20 years' imprisonment, a fine of \$250,000 or twice the total loss, and restitution. However, any sentence following conviction would be imposed by the court after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statute governing the imposition of a sentence, 18 U.S.C. § 3553.

For more, visit www.fbi.gov/sanfrancisco/press-releases/2012

— FBI press release

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Extinguish your fire FEARS

Firefighters Give Advice on How to Keep Your Home Safe from Fire

by WYNNE LOVE

Over the past decade, many Rancho Bernardo homeowners have seen firsthand the worst a fire can do. The Cedar Fire of 2003 and Witch Creek Fire of 2007 burned over 250 homes in Rancho Bernardo zip codes alone. This year, "we are looking at some pretty good fire activity already," warned Chief Jim Sturtevant of the Rancho Santa Fe Fire District. A drier summer, he explained, may well lead to greater fire activity this fall, and communities that have previously burned are just as vulnerable as ever.

The city has a wealth of resources available online to help educate and assist homeowners in the best defense against wildfire. While Chief Sturtevant stressed, "What saves local structures is having that hundred feet of defensible space." But he also acknowledges that there is no single way to protect homes threatened by wildfire.

Fellow firefighter David June of Station 40 in Ranch Penasquitos agreed. Having fought the Witch Creek fire in Rancho Bernardo himself, June saw firsthand how cedar fences and palm trees can fuel the fire and worse, how embers carried by unpredictable winds can put any house at risk. "There's no rhyme or reason to what fire will do," he said, so he also emphasized the importance of properly securing your home before you leave it by closing doors and windows.

“What saves local structures is having that hundred feet of defensible space.”

*— Fire Chief Jim Sturtevant,
Rancho Santa Fe Fire District*

June also recommends homeowners have important documents saved off premises and critical paper and digital files centralized so they can be packed easily. June emphasizes the importance of knowing how to secure your utilities, encourages registration on Alert San Diego, and insists you should have an escape route and a rendezvous point planned. June also stressed the importance of being ready to evacuate, even if you live in a "shelter-in-place" community, as many Rancho Bernardo residents do. "It's a good idea to keep a full tank of gas in the car this time of year," said June. "If you are in the direct path of the fire, you should always evacuate no matter what."

"It pays to be ready," agreed Chief Sturtevant. Reading up and preparing now can save you precious moments, not to mention your valuables, later. Download your own "Family Disaster Plan and Survival Guide" by visiting ReadySanDiego.org and make time to talk about it with your family, so you can keep them, and your home, safe this season. ■

Witch Creek Fire: 5 years later

photos by Spark Photography

You have those moments in your life

where you remember exactly what you felt like and where you were when something monumental occurred. The squeeze of my dad's hand when he walked me down the aisle on my wedding day was one. The first time I heard the cry of one of my three daughters when they were born resonates beautifully. Those celebratory moments are precious. On January 28, 1986, my grade school friends and I watched in sadness as the Challenger explosion occurred. On September 11, 2001, I watched the World Trade Center collapse with friends at a YMCA in Florida, while my husband was deployed, knowing little of what was to come. And, on the morning of October 20, 2007, my family of five evacuated our home after the reverse 911 call came through. We feverishly packed up our favorite things. The smoke was already present and we watched the air grow from grey, to red, to black as we sat in a line of cars exiting 92127. The Witch Creek Fires had jumped in to our very own community. Those moments are vivid.

We had the absolute privilege of meeting with Larry Himmel, longtime newscaster for Channel 8 News, and his family to get their personal account of how they were affected by the Witch Creek Fires. We asked Larry to take us through the day of when he watched his own home smolder to the ground. He, so graciously and effortlessly, told us the story. His family gave us a bird's eye view of the path of the fire as they toured our team around their fireproof home that has been rebuilt on the very grounds of remains of their old home. It's clear, after looking back at the fires and the rebuilding that has occurred, our community and communities at large are quite a team. We welcome you to reminisce, reward those who were the heroes, and remind yourself to be prepared as we enter fire season.

~Tara Pritchett, Editor

WITCH CREEK FIRE

DATE/TIME STARTED: OCTOBER 21, 2007 AT 11:00 A.M.

AREA BURNED: 197,990 ACRES

EVACUATION SITES (ALL MANAGED BY THE AMERICAN RED CROSS):

- QUALCOMM STADIUM
- ESCONDIDO HIGH SCHOOL
- MISSION HILLS HIGH SCHOOL
- POWAY HIGH SCHOOL
- MIRA MESA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
- DEL MAR FAIRGROUNDS

STRUCTURED DESTROYED:

- 1040 HOMES
- 414 OUTBUILDINGS
- 239 VEHICLES
- 70 HOMES DAMAGED
- 25 OUTBUILDINGS DAMAGED

INJURIES

- 2 DEATHS
- 39 FIREFIGHTERS
- 2 CIVILIANS