



Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District

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Palm Trees

Following the 2007 wildfires, it was determined that certain species of palms increased the fire hazard due to tree form and lack of maintenance. The following is the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District requirements for palm trees.

Palm Tree Requirements (Local Policy). Palm Trees that have fibrous tissue (Photograph 1) or leaf bases (Photograph 2) on the trunk shall be planted and maintained 30 feet from the trees drip line to any combustible structure. Some examples of tree species with fibrous tissue are *Chamaerops humilis* (Mediterranean Fan Palm), *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm), *P. dactylifera* (Date Palm), *P. reclinata* (Senegal Date Palm), *P. roebelenii* (Pygmy Date Palm), and *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Windmill Palm). The *Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican Fan Palm) is an example of a palm tree with leaf bases. All dead palm fronds including older leaves that persist on the tree, forming a “skirt” of brown thatch (Photograph 3) shall be removed annually; this requirement applies to palms within 100 feet of any structure or within 20 feet of a driveway or roadway.

Exception: Existing palms that can be “skinned” or cleaned of the fibrous tissue or leaf bases may remain within 30 feet of any combustible structure. These trees shall be maintained annually.



Photograph 1. Palm with fibrous tissue on the trunk.



Photograph 2. Leaf bases on Mexican Fan Palm trunk.



Photograph 3. Mexican Fan Palm with “skirt”.

