

October 2007 is . . . Brush Clearance Month



Our Fire Season began early this year with several high profile fires. The Governor has made several Emergency Fire Declarations in just the past few weeks. These fires resulted in the loss of homes, animals and thousands of acres of forest. The importance of brush clearance cannot be overemphasized. Everyone must be cognizant of the dangers caused by a single match, cigarette or campfire.



HOME LANDSCAPING AND YARD CARE:

- Remove flammable vegetation and other combustible growth within 50 feet of any structures. Increase to 100 feet in high hazard areas. Thin out or remove other vegetation an additional 100 feet from structures for a total of 200 feet (in very high hazard areas).
- Some examples of high hazard plants are: Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, Pine, and Pampass Grass.
- Single trees, ornamental shrubbery and ground covers are allowed if they do not readily transmit fire from native vegetation to structures.
- Landscape with plants that are drought tolerant and fire resistant.
- For trees taller than 18 feet, prune lower branches within 6 feet of the ground.
- For trees and shrubs less than 18 feet, prune lower branches to one-third of their height.
- Maintain all plants by regularly removing dead branches and leaves.
- Remove all stacks of combustible materials.
- Stack wood at least 30 feet from structures and remove flammable vegetation within 10 feet of woodpiles.

PRECAUTIONS YOU CAN TAKE:

- Chain saws, tractors or other brush clearing devices should be used during the coolest hours of the day and never when winds are blowing. A single spark from this type of equipment is all it takes to start a raging fire.
- Remove very dry or dead vegetation from your yard, roof top and rain gutters means you will have less fire fuel around your home.
- While mindful of water conservation, maintaining some level of moisture in your landscaped areas may help discourage embers from igniting trees, plants and grass.
- Have several working water hoses around your home in the event they are needed to wet your roof or yard.
- If you have a pool, consider purchasing a water pump. Water pressure usually drops when a fire is being fought. A swimming pool is a great water source if you can pump the water.
- Cover your chimney outlet with a spark arrester. Use a metal or non-flammable screen half an inch diameter or smaller.
- Inside your home, do not forget to install smoke alarms and check them regularly.
- The most cost-effective means of protecting homes from destruction by fire is a combination of approved fire-resistive roofing, and brush clearance of 200 feet or more.

Source: LAFD, LACOFD, USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station.



Did You Know?

The Los Angeles City Fire Department conducts an annual brush clearance inspection program. Its goal is to protect your life and your home from wildland fires. This is accomplished by ensuring that all property in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone is maintained in accordance with the Fire Code Brush Clearance Requirements. Currently, there are approximately 130,000 properties identified within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. These areas include the Santa Monica Mountains, Mount Washington, El Sereno, Baldwin Hills, Elysian Park, parts of San Pedro, and the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains. The minimum requirement for brush clearance is 200 feet. For more information on brush clearance and red flag warnings, visit <http://www.lafd.org/brush>



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