

A: UNIT DESCRIPTION

The Ventura County Fire Protection District (District) has 32 stations serving a population of more than 480,000 in six cities --Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Port Hueneme and Ojai -- and the unincorporated areas of the County. The District operates 4 Administration and Support facilities, 31 first-run fire engines, 1 first-run Quint, 17 reserve fire engines, 11 wildland fire engines, 4 ladder trucks (including 1 reserve), 5 water rescue and fire boat craft, 4 paramedic squads, 14 command vehicles, 9 pieces of heavy equipment (bulldozers, etc.) and 38 other emergency response vehicles. The District responds to an average of about 90 calls for service every day.

Specialized Units: Also available for response are specialized units with unique capabilities for incidents involving special hazards or needs. These units are not normally staffed. Personnel with the specialized training and qualifications will move from their regularly assigned units at the fire station and respond with these specialized units as needed. Often, these specialized units will respond and operate in conjunction similar units from other fire departments to form a regional response to incidents that present unique challenges.

Crash/Rescue - Crash 50 responds to incidents involving flammable liquids, primarily aircraft crashes, oil field facility fires, flammable liquid storage and transportation emergencies. Crash 50 has the capability of extinguishing flammable liquid fires and securing spills.

Hazardous Materials (Haz Mat) - The Haz Mat unit responds to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, etiological hazards or any other unknown substances. The Haz Mat team will isolate a hazardous area, make entry, and identify and mitigate the hazard. They also perform decontamination of victims and emergency personnel.

Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) - The USAR unit responds to technical rescue incidents. These incidents involve victims who are trapped due to earthquakes, building collapse, cave-in, trench collapse, major transportation crash or other incidents where the entrapment exceeds the capabilities of the regular crews. The USAR team will stabilize the scene and make access to and extricate the victim.

Water Rescue - The water rescue unit responds to water rescue incidents that exceed the capabilities of land based units. The team is capable of in-water rescue and/or watercraft rescue. The team is trained in swiftwater, ocean and lake rescues.

Wildland/Aviation - The Wildland unit provides handcrew and bulldozer resources in the construction of fire control lines on wildland fires. The unit also operates with the Sheriff's Aviation unit to provide helicopter response to fire and rescue incidents.

B: UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

The District takes a dynamic and strenuous approach to the prevention of wildland fires. A key component to the prevention strategy is the Fire Hazard Reduction Program. This program calls for a 100-foot mandatory brush clearance zone from homes located in the wildland urban interface. The mandate is rigorously enforced, although the District typically receives better than 95 percent voluntary compliance.

In conjunction with the Fire Hazard Reduction Program (FHRP), the District employs a comprehensive wildland fire prevention program to educate Ventura County residents on how to prepare their homes against a wildland fire, how to assemble everything they need for an orderly and early evacuation and, finally, how to safely evacuate in advance of the fire. This program is called "Ready, Set, Go!" and consists of a multi-faceted educational approach that includes brochures, videos, community meetings and other methods of communication.

The "Ready, Set, Go!" and FHRP initiatives, along with effective code enforcement efforts, work together to create defensible space, promote fire-safe construction and fire-resistant landscaping, emergency preparedness and ember awareness.

These elements all combine to create tactical advantages for firefighters when the inevitable wildland fires occur. They help to provide homes hardened against wildland fires, with reliable water supplies and access and safety zones.

Defensible space, hardened homes and a population educated on the dangers of wildland fires allow firefighters to protect more property using fewer resources, while reducing the risk of injury to firefighters and civilians and helping to limit property losses.

The sum effect of the Ready Set Go! Program is a force multiplier for active firefighting resources. A single firefighting resource may protect many more structures when preventative measures have been properly employed. In some cases, firefighting resources may not be necessary at all, thus freeing them for other uses.

Fire Suppression

The most effective time to control a wildfire is in the incipient stages when intensities are lower and the perimeter is short. The combined resource attack is a coordinated suppression effort including ground assets (engines, crews and dozers), aviation assets (fixed and rotary wing), passive fire protection measures, and command elements. Using in-place passive fire protection systems, incident commanders weave the various active fire suppression assets into an aggressive and coordinated firefighting effort.

Aggressive prevention and suppression policies can artificially age fuel beds to a point of uncontrollable volatility. Fuel beds are managed to reduce the age and expanses of volatile fuel and provide barriers between values at risk and large areas of hazardous fuel. Particular attention is given to those areas in fuel beds that are adjacent to the interface.

One of the first steps in the hazard assessment process is the development of vegetation coverage maps and corresponding fuel rankings. The initial evaluation begins with identifying the vegetative communities that exist within the County. Having established a base from which to evaluate the available fuels, additional efforts are made to evaluate the hazards generated by these fuels in combination with other factors. The rankings depicted on Hazard Fuels Ranking Maps are based on a combination of factors that affect fire behavior, including the fuel type, slope and presence of ladder and crown fuels.

As part of the Unit Strategic Fire Plan (Fire Plan), methodology was developed for analyzing Assets at Risk (AAR). For each AAR, geographic areas will be ranked based on the potential impacts of a large fire event. This provides a series of displays of spatial rankings to assist in the identification of high value areas. Additional data related to fuels, weather, and level of service will be used to rank areas in terms of the likelihood or risk of a large fire event. This data provides the basis for identification of high value/high risk areas. As such, the analysis serves as a pointer to where pre-fire projects might have the highest benefit in terms of reduction of potential damages.

Assets susceptible to fire damage are identified in the Fire Plan as air quality, range, recreation, structures, timber, water and watersheds, wildlife and habitat, and other resources (cultural, historic, and scenic). For purposes of this plan, greater weight was given to the protection of structures and infrastructure. Additional assessment maps will be available to assist in locating future pre-fire projects once adequate data is available to evaluate ignition starts and successes and severe fire weather patterns.