

Santa Barbara County Communities

Wildfire Protection Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Prescribed burn, target planning block, completed burn, wildfire, and Copter 308 with helitorch attached.

Plan Status and Direction

Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBC) personnel have prepared this annual update to the unit fire management plan to fulfill administrative responsibility as an agent to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF). In addition to fulfilling the administrative obligation to CDF, the preparers are attempting to format this document so as to comply with federal guidelines as well. As a result of the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act, guidelines have been set forth for the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Consequently, this document has been formatted with the goal of achieving CWPP compliance. The name of the plan has also been changed to the Santa Barbara County Communities Wildfire Protection Plan. A third goal in the formatting of the plan is to incorporate the wildfire hazard element of the Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan required by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. As the State forest agent, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department is soliciting cooperation, collaboration and concurrence with local

governments and fire agencies, along with the Federal agencies to develop a countywide CWPP.

Wildfire Situation

Due to record winter rainfall the current seasonal wildfire situation in Santa Barbara County is, like much of Central and Southern California, late and mild in nature. For the period beginning January 1, 2005 to the month of July, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department has responded to approximately 49 wildfires that burned approximately 49 acres. Although the wildfire season has been mild with no large, damaging or costly fires to date, live fuel moistures appear to be dropping to levels typical for this time of year. Typical live fuel moistures and an abundance of light flashy fuels could produce high rates of spread and high intensities later in the season.

Activity Status

There has been progress towards implementing several of the programs, projects and activities outlined in the 2004 wildfire management plan. In the at-risk community of Mission Canyon, a large-scale wildfire evacuation drill was successfully conducted, a grant was applied for and has been awarded for a roadside hazard reduction maintenance project, a Vegetation Management Program (VMP) project has been proposed for the upper end of Tunnel Road, the annual hazard reduction program (PRC 4192), and strategic fire access road maintenance programs have been completed. In the at-risk communities of Vandenberg Village and Mission Hills, SBC has been working with the California Department of Fish and Game to implement a defensible space fuel break in the interface of these communities, several meetings have taken place to increase awareness and provide wildfire education and to encourage stakeholders to become members of the Santa Barbara County Fire-Safe Council. In the at-risk community of Tepusquet Canyon, several wildfire awareness meetings have taken place with the resulting participation in the Santa Barbara County Fire-Safe Council, four potential VMP projects have been identified, roadside hazard reduction was completed by the newly re-commissioned SBC handcrew, and the

annual hazard reduction program was completed. Significant progress has occurred on the Painted Cave VMP project where handcrews have cut, stacked and burned approximately five acres of vegetation. A wildfire safety awareness meeting was conducted in the at-risk community of Refugio Canyon. VMP projects have been identified for the Jalama Road and Santa Ynez areas.