
FIRE PLAN FRAMEWORK

Five major components will form the basis of an ongoing fire planning process to monitor and assess the San Bernardino Unit's wildland fire environment:

- 1) **Wildfire protection zones.** Areas of low fire risk intended to buffer communities from devastating wildfire.
- 2) **Initial attack success.** Measurements of the percentage of fires that are successfully controlled before unacceptable costs are incurred. This measure can be used to assess the department's ability to provide an equal level of protection to lands of similar type.
- 3) **Assets protected.** The assets addressed in the plan are citizen and firefighter safety, watersheds and water, timber, wildlife and habitat (including legally protected species), unique areas (scenic, cultural, and historic), recreation, range, structures, property, and air quality.
- 4) **Prefire management.** This aspect focuses on evaluating which prefire activities to best protect assets from wildland fires. Specific themes of these activities include the Unit fire prevention collaboration at every opportunity, management of fire-prone vegetation, the management of fire ignition sources, fire prevention enforcement and education, and implementation of fire safe concepts in all existing and planned urban areas at risk from wildfire.
- 5) **Fiscal framework.** A framework to evaluate and insure that the most cost-effective means are being used to protect assets from wildfire.

STATUS OF FIRE MANAGEMENT IN THE SAN BERNARDINO UNIT

- Components of the San Bernardino Unit's Fire Plan process are being evaluated and verified using computer models, field surveys, community stakeholder involvement and historical data.
- Thirteen Fire Safe Councils exist within the Unit. Planning projects range from community clean-up days to fuel break improvements. Significant vegetation mortality resulting from several years of sustained and record setting drought and bark beetle infestation has increased the fire danger throughout the Unit but most significantly in the mountain communities. The Fire Safe Councils have been instrumental in, project implementation community outreach, public information, as well as representing the public on the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce (MAST) and support of CAL FIRE with its efforts to get increased awareness of fire safety.
- MAST began removing dead and dying trees under state and federal grants, including a \$70 million grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. At the height of the program, Southern California Edison contractors were taking out 650 trees a day. Since 2004, MAST members have removed more than 1.5 million dead or dying trees, and more are being taken out every day.

- Annual fire safe inspections are being conducted. Engine companies are conducting LE 100 inspections. An effort is being made to have engine companies make face to face contact with every homeowner in the highest risk areas that are experiencing the greatest degree of vegetation mortality. Additionally, due to the significant increase in timber removal operations, commercial operations have been targeted as presenting a greater than average threat of causing an ignition. All MAST agencies are being instructed in what fire prevention/safety requirements that CAL Fire, local San Bernardino county fire districts and the US Forest Service require.
- Work on the ground has begun on a collaborative fuel break project with the Forest Service and the Riverside Unit, in the Oak Glen/Yucaipa area. The Fuel breaks are intended to provide protection for the communities of Oak Glen, Yucaipa, Cherry Valley and surrounding areas. Because of the intermix of federal and private land, a collaborative approach is necessary to develop a viable project that will provide firefighters a potential control line in these areas. Some work has begun on the ground and planning is ongoing. See Appendix 5,6,7,8
- Planning has begun for a fuel reduction project in the Rovana area of Inyo County. The project will reduce heavy concentrations of live and dead fuels in a riparian corridor which historically carry fire in the Owens Valley.
- Several fuel reduction and fuel break projects have been identified in a draft CWPP for Inyo and Mono Counties. The San Bernardino Unit will be working with Fire Safe Councils and local government to evaluate and implement projects.
- A cost share fuel reduction program for small private landowners named Forest Care has been developed and is currently operating in San Bernardino and Riverside County. The program is a collaborative program between CAL FIRE and the San Bernardino National Forest Association (SBNFA), with funding from the US Forest Service. Forest Care combines the strengths of CAL FIRE (professional resource managers, name recognition, surety of a government organization) with SBNFA (fiscal and organizational nimbleness) to provide a small diameter fuel reduction program for forested landowners with 20 acres or less and is specifically targeted to small residential lots, typically one quarter acre or less.

Currently the program has treated over 1,000 private parcels and has funding to treat approximately 2500 additional parcels. Forest Care has partnered with both San Bernardino County Fire/Public Works/Code Enforcement, local fire districts and the US Forest Service to promote appropriate thinning in all areas of the community. Additionally, preliminary work has begun on establishing a similar program in Mono and Inyo Counties. See Appendix 2

- Fuel reduction is being carried out in support of the San Bernardino Sheriff's Evacuation Guideline for the Mountain Communities version 2009 and several community fire defense projects in the Crestline, Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear areas.

- Fuel break and fire access road improvements, Community Defense Fuel Modification, points of refuge and essential service sites have been identified for enhanced protection, prioritized and scheduled under MAST coordination, per the Incident Action Plan. See Appendix 9,10,11,12
- Public education programs are being conducted to promote fire safety from a pre-fire management/fire prevention perspective. The focus of MAST has expanded to include the strategic removal of green vegetation and thinning live trees in densely wooded areas. Property owners also are being informed of the need to thin the live trees and vegetation on their property to gain an upper hand on the bark beetle infestation and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.
- Unit Fire Prevention staff in cooperation with Southern California Edison are conducting inspections of electrical utility lines for compliance with clearance and maintenance regulations throughout the Unit. Enhanced Forest Practice Act law enforcement inspections are underway due to the huge increase of dead, dying and diseased tree cutting activity by Southern California Edison and other private contractors in the San Bernardino mountains.
- San Bernardino Unit personnel are assisting the Inland Empire Fire Safe Alliance and other Fire Safe Councils with the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in support of their efforts to obtain federal fire prevention assistance funding. These efforts are also showing positive results with regard to public awareness of the wildland fire risks in their communities.
- The San Bernardino Unit in conjunction with CSR Resource Management Staff as well as Sacramento FRAP staff has begun beta testing and use of the WinDET program, a GIS Data Base program. The program will track spatially as well as empirically fuels reduction and other land treatment projects.
- The San Bernardino Unit continues to be active in the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce (MAST) and its efforts to coordinate projects related to public safety, fuel reduction and forest health. MAST operational meetings are held monthly where projects by the various agencies are coordinated to help insure the best use of public funds, develop more effective fuel reduction projects and educate the public. The MAST has achieved a remarkable degree of success in this interagency cooperative environment.
- Unit personnel in collaboration with local Fire Safe Council grant funds and planning efforts have been instrumental in the establishment of community fire defense projects in the Wrightwood, Crestline, Twin Peaks Big Bear and Oak Glen areas and more are being planned throughout San Bernardino mountain communities.

- Chino Valley Independent Fire District (CVIFD) has applied for and is now implementing a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) fuels reduction grant for the Sleepy Hollow area in Carbon Canyon. While CVIFD is the lead agency on the project, CAL FIRE has provided technical support, through the Unit Forester, to guide the District in developing the project. Currently, the planning and environmental review is nearly complete. CAL FIRE will continue to provide the CVIFD with technical support as well as providing hand crews for the implementation of this fuels reduction project.

This important project is located in an area characterized by roads with very poor access and heavy fuel loading right up to the edge of homes. Despite a fire in the fall of 2008 which burned very close to the community, danger from wildfire is still very high. This project will help protect both the community from wildfires threatening homes as well as protect the Chino Hills State Park from fire coming out of the community.

- The City of Big Bear Lake, in collaboration with the MAST has received a grant to replace shake shingle roofs. Part of the stipulations for the homeowner to receive grant funds is that the property must meet, and pass inspection of the PRC 4291 defensible space requirements that have been set forth by CAL FIRE.