



P.O. Box 545
Escondido, CA 92033

For Immediate Release, May 20, 2014

Contact: Richard W. Halsey, Director, (760) 822-0029

An Appeal to California's Fire Agencies

**Emphasizing home flammability, as well as vegetation management,
can save more homes during wildfires.**

SAN DIEGO, *Calif.* – Local, state, and federal fire agencies are urged to expand their fire education efforts. Currently, the primary, and sometimes the only message citizens hear is to clear native vegetation ("brush") from around their homes. While creating defensible space is a critical component of fire risk reduction, it fails to address the main reason homes burn - embers landing on flammable materials in, on, or around the home, igniting the most dangerous concentration of fuel available, the house itself.

Fire risk reduction education must emphasize BOTH how to reduce home flammability and how to create defensible space. As seen in the photo below, **many homeowners have complied with defensible space regulations only to see their homes burn in a wildfire.**

Educational materials and public announcements must make clear that without addressing the entire fire risk reduction equation, your home has a greater chance of burning in a wildfire. This includes creating defensible space AND retrofitting flammable portions of homes such as,

- the replacement of wood shake roofing and siding
- installation of ember resistant attic vents
- removal of flammable landscaping plants such as Mexican fan palms and low-growing acacia
- removal of leaf litter from gutters and roofing
- removal of flammable materials near the home such as firewood, trash cans, wood fences, etc.
- roof/under eave low-flow exterior sprinklers

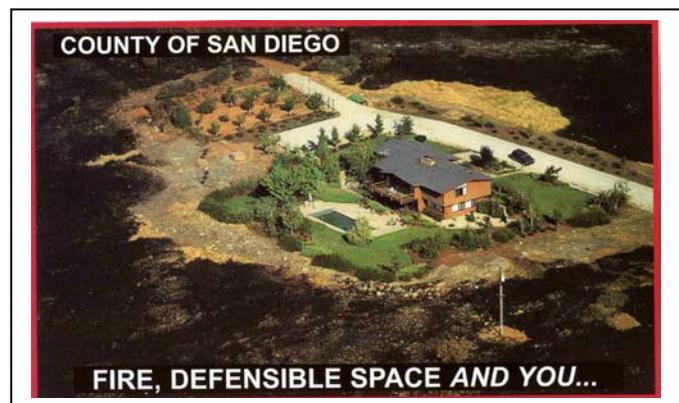
It also must be made clear to homeowners that by having well maintained and lightly irrigated vegetation within the outer 70 foot portion of the defensible space zone can play an important role in protecting the home from flying embers and radiant heat. Bare earth clearance creates a bowling alley for embers and can actually increase fire risk if invaded by flammable, non-native weeds.

We urge Cal Fire to address the full fire risk reduction equation when revising the draft of their proposed Vegetation Treatment Program, now under review by a scientific panel. The panel's review is scheduled to be released **June 30, 2014.**



The New Message. The photo above shows a home with extensive defensible space and proper vegetation management that burned during the May 14, 2014, Poinsettia Fire in Carlsbad, California. Addressing the entire fire risk reduction equation is essential.

The Old Message. The photo to the right, distributed widely after the 2003 California firestorm, creates a false sense of security by implying that defensible space is adequate to protect a home from wildfire.



More information on federal grants to assist communities in retrofitting flammable structures is available here:

<http://californiachaparral.org/wordpress1/2013/09/18/fire-official-using-science-to-become-a-hero-before-the-fire/>

The science behind how to effectively make a home more fire safe is available here:

<http://www.californiachaparral.org/bprotectingyourhome.html>