

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisor Bob Buster

SUBMITTAL DATE:
June 9, 2009

SUBJECT: Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force Report

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the board receive and file the report from the Riverside County Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force.

BACKGROUND: This is an update from the Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force (FHRTF) which will provide information and recommendations for reducing fire hazards within Riverside County, informing and educating the public regarding the fire hazards and risks, planning fire safe communities, enforcing fire laws and ensuring safe and timely evacuation of citizens in the wake of an advancing wildfire.

The FHRTF is a standing committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors following the October 2006 Esperanza Fire that killed 5 United States Forest Service firefighters. Supervisor Bob Buster authored the initial Form 11 (November 21, 2006, Policy Item 3.25) to create the FHRTF. The committee is comprised of federal, state and local government representatives in addition to civilian members appointed by each Supervisor.

Bob Buster

Bob Buster, 1st District Supervisor

**ATTACHMENTS FILED WITH
THE CLERK OF THE BOARD**

Departmental Concurrence

Consent Policy
 Consent Policy

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$ N/A	In Current Year Budget:	N/A
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$ N/A	Budget Adjustment:	N/A
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ N/A	For Fiscal Year:	N/A

SOURCE OF FUNDS:	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	<input type="checkbox"/>

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:

County Executive Office Signature

Dep't Recomm.:
 Per Exec. Ofc.:



FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION TASK FORCE

**REPORT
TO**

**THE RIVERSIDE COUNTY BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS**

JUNE 23, 2009

**PRESENTED BY
RIVERSIDE COUNTY FIRE CHIEF JOHN HAWKINS**

2009 JUN 23 10:03 AM
RIVERSIDE COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

This is an update from the Fire Hazard Reduction Task Force (FHRTF) providing information and recommendations for reducing the fire hazard within Riverside County, informing and educating the public regarding the fire hazards and risk, planning fire safe communities, enforcing fire laws and ensuring safe and timely evacuation of citizens in the wake of an advancing wildfire.

The FHRTF is a standing committee appointed by the Board of Supervisors following the October 2006 Esperanza Fire that killed 5 United States Forest Service firefighters, destroyed 34 residential structures and burned over 40,000 acres. Supervisor Bob Buster authored the initial Form 11 (November 21, 2006, Policy Item 3.25) to create the FHRTF. The committee is comprised of federal, state and local government representatives in addition to citizen members appointed by each Supervisor. Since the task force formation, the committee has met at least quarterly and made its first annual report and presentation to the Board of Supervisors in May 2008.

Right after the formation, the FHRTF determined the major considerations of the task force should be: (1) evacuation, (2) education, (3) engineering (planning), and (4) enforcement. Subcommittees were formed to represent each of these disciplines.

This second annual report to the Board of Supervisors will update activities of the FHRTF. It will provide significant recommendations to improve evacuation notifications and citizen evacuations, to better inform and educate the public about the risk of wildfire, to better plan development within the County, to better enforce existing fire laws and to recommend other fire regulatory measures.

ENFORCEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

Goal #1 Working to Standardize Enforcement

Accomplishments

- Have conducted training with local Riverside County Code Enforcement Office
- Have attended Southern California Hazardous Vegetation Management Association meetings

Challenges

- Bringing local agencies together

Recommendations

- Have Board assist in locating contacts with other agencies
- Fiscal restraint of agencies involved to facilitate enforcement

Goal #2 Coordinate and cross train with County Code Enforcement

Accomplishments

- Have conducted training with Code Enforcement
- Were educated on residential fire hazard reduction program (LE100), RCO 695 & 772
- Code Enforcement rode along with Fire Prevention Technicians

Goal #3 Adequate Staffing

Accomplishments

- Prioritizing of inspection areas based on Fire Severity Zones

Challenges

- Current funded positions are not filled for current level of hazard abatement necessary under County Ordinance
- Additional Office space would be needed in other areas of the County
- Increase staffing to equal increase in County areas inspected

Recommendations

- A funding mechanism to assist with program costs
- Automation of the inspection program could reduce staffing needed, funding to establish automation program would be necessary. The bark beetle program in the Idyllwild area is beginning research on an automated program which may be compatible to hazard abatement inspections.

Goal #4 Penalty Issues

Accomplishments

- Current administrative fee for contractor hazard abatement costs under County Ordinance 695 is estimated to increase from \$126 to approximately \$300
- Current administrative fee for contractor abatement costs under County Ordinance 772 is estimated to increase from \$126 to \$1000

Challenges

- Fees are only based on properties requiring abatement by Contractor
- Properties inspected and abated by the property owner has no fee associated

Recommendations

- Administrative fee returned to budget to assist in funding program

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Goal: In cooperation with our partner agencies including local, county, state, and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, public and private partnerships, a thorough public education campaign for wild land fire safety and defensible space in Riverside County is continuing to the best of our ability and utilizing all resources available.

Accomplishments

- Important public information was printed in the County Connections Newsletter produced by Economic Development Agency.
- Working with the Evacuation Sub-Committee, we continue to expand the County's Early Warning Notification System (EWNS)
- Working with Cal-Fire, public information about Defensible Space and the 100' clearance requirements have been widely distributed in the high fire areas of Riverside County.

- Several training exercises have been conducted in Riverside County focusing on the danger from wildfire and the impacts on the residents.

Challenges

- The main challenge facing the Education Sub-Committee is the lack of available funding and staff to fully support our educational outreach efforts. While everything possible is being done with existing resources, additional resources are needed to continue and expand the program.

Recommendations

- Continue to support existing Fire Safe Councils and assist with the creation of new Fire Safe Councils in high fire danger areas.
- Continue to update and expand the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the San Jacinto Mountains (San Bernardino National Forest) and continue work on the CWPP for the Cleveland National Forest.
- Continue to support outreach and education efforts taking place in our local schools.
- Continue to pursue grant opportunities.

ENGINEERING SUB-COMMITTEE

Accomplishments

Accomplishments include the Fire Department and Building and Safety Department drafting new conditions of approval, requiring the most current construction and fire-flow standard to reduce fire hazards in High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. These conditions would apply to new construction and newly installed manufactured homes, mobile homes, and commercial modular structures in these areas.

Accomplishments include County staff's continuing efforts to alert the public early in the process of the hazards and added responsibilities of building and living in High Fire Areas, including establishing and maintaining defensible space, and constructing buildings with enhanced fire resistance, adequate fire flows, and secondary access.

Recommendations

Engineering recommends introducing an amendment to the Safety Element of the General Plan to raise standards in high fire areas for new subdivisions when the County Fire Department takes the updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps for the Local Responsibility Area back to the Board for approval.

Engineering recommends amending the General Plan to include strategies and policies to implement the existing Riverside County General Plan Incentives Program (Administration Element) and Density Transfer Program (Land Use Element) to encourage development outside of high fire areas.

Engineering reviewed the role of Homeowner Associations and Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). The challenge is to maintain common areas free of flammable vegetation in high fire areas, and although fire protection/vegetation management plans are required by the Fire Department for new subdivisions in these areas, the responsibility of the Homeowner Association for adhering to its plan is not included in the CC&Rs. Engineering's recommendation is to establish a new condition of approval that requires this responsibility to be set forth in the recorded CC&Rs.

The Task Force identified other engineering challenges including hardening structures housing critical public and private facilities like water pump stations in high fire areas. The Task Force's recommendation is for the Fire Department to establish model standards for hardening these critical facilities against fire.

EVACUATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Accomplishments

In cooperation with county and local fire and law enforcement agencies, emergency evacuation procedures have been further developed and standardized throughout the operational area.

Training:

- A multi-jurisdictional Wild Land Fire Training Exercise was recently held at the Clark Training Center. A portion of the event was dedicated to training first responders (law enforcement, EMS, animal control, etc.) in evacuation procedures, fire behavior, situational awareness and fire camp protocols. Nearly 300 students attended the training over a three day period.
- A workshop where numerous county and regional fire, law and EMS agencies gathered to discuss and further develop true inter-operability through radio communications was held locally with a total of fifteen mobile command posts present.
- In conjunction with County Fire, the Sheriff's Department produced a training video aimed at line level personnel, outlining proper procedures and protocols to be used during an evacuation.

Through joint cooperation with allied county agencies, the Early Warning Notification System has been brought on-line and will have a significant impact on affecting more efficient evacuations in the future.

An Evacuation Task Force concept has been developed where a sheriff's supervisor, eight deputy sheriffs, two ambulances and an animal control unit comprise a standardized team that is deployed during evacuations ahead of an approaching fire.

Law enforcement participation in town hall meetings and informational forums with County Fire helps inform residents regarding emergency plans, evacuation procedures and how we as response agencies are prepared to meet the needs of the community during a crisis.

Challenges

While great strides have been made to accomplish true radio inter-operability, many challenges remain, not only between emergency response agencies within Riverside County, but with adjoining counties as well.

Recommendations

Continue with annual Wild Land Fire training and inter-operability radio forums. Strive to include all local, county, state and federal agencies in this endeavor.

Continue with more extensive and uniform training for line level personnel, supervisors and managers on emergency response protocols.

Continue to foster inter-agency cooperation through regional training, the development of unified command ideals and the joint presentation of information through public forums.

FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Mike Palmer, First District Representative
Ray Russell, Second District Representative
Larry Kueneman, Third District Representative
Gary Thibeault, Fourth District Representative
Bruce Cowie, Fifth District Representative
Lee Wagner, Riverside County Sheriff
Henry Sawicki, Riverside County Sheriff
Ken Graff, Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Agency
Dave Driscoll, Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Agency
Steve Bloomquist, Riverside County Code Enforcement
John Boyd, Riverside County Code Enforcement
Larisa McKenna, Riverside County Counsel
Mike Harrod, Riverside County Planning Department
Mark Bayls, Riverside County Planning Department
Adam Rush, Riverside County Planning Department
Paul Russell, Riverside County Transportation Department
Mark Bernas, Riverside County Transportation and Land Management Agency
Nick Anderson, Riverside County Building and Safety
Dave Stahovich, Supervisor Bob Buster's Office
Sandy Isom, Supervisor Bob Buster's Office
Bob Tremaine, Riverside County Executive Office
Judy Hamrouni, Riverside County Executive Office
Ray Smith, Riverside County Executive Office
J.P. Crumrine, Idyllwild Town Crier
Garrett Aitchison, Mt. San Jacinto State Parks
Jerald Frates, Mt. San Jacinto State Parks
Ken Kietzer, California State Parks
Rick Meier, California Highway Patrol
Martin Gordon, United States Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest
Michael Nobles, United States Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest
Frank Romero, United States Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest
Jim Snow, United States Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest
Rocky Opliger, United States Forest Service, San Bernardino National Forest
Kristen Allison, Bureau of Land Management
Tim Dunfee, Bureau of Land Management
Peter Lent, Riverside County Fire /Office of Emergency Services
Jackie Williams, Riverside County Fire Department
Tracy Hobday, Riverside County Fire Department
Tim Williams, Riverside County Fire Department
Steve Diaz, Riverside County Fire Department
Greg Everhart, Riverside County Fire Department
John Hawkins, Riverside County Fire Department
Mary Moreland, Retired