



Citizens Emergency Response and Preparedness Program

Early Fire Season Brings Greater Threat to Local Residents

Adequate preparation more important this year because of low moisture levels

Woodside, CA – June 4, 2012. Fire season is both earlier than normal and potentially more dangerous this year in the Woodside Fire Protection District, making adequate preparations even more important, according to the Citizens Emergency and Response Preparedness Program (CERPP).

The drier season has caused just enough rain growth to stimulate a late grass growth, according to Woodside Fire Chief Dan Ghorso. “Grass is a fuel that quickly loses its moisture, thus becoming a great source for easy ignition. It’s an extremely fast burning fuel, which makes it easier to escape our fire extinguishing effort,” he said.

Ghorso notes that this year’s lower than normal rainfall means the season starts with a lower moisture rating, which will dry out more quickly than normal during the summer months, especially if temperatures rise and winds are prevalent.

According to Ghorso, it’s critical that local residents do their part to be prepared for fire season. “The beautiful rural setting that we all love is also the biggest threat when it comes to fire safety,” he said. “Our 32 square miles of hard-to-access areas, along with steep hills and canyons many of which have limited water supplies, are a true test of the preparedness of our community.”

Because of this Urban Interface, all firefighters within the Woodside District are trained in Wildland firefighting. In addition, the district has specialty vehicles, such as a Water Tender that carries 3200 gallons of water, as well as a brand new patrol that is capable of accessing tight areas in which a typical fire engine would not be able to maneuver.

Prevention and Preparedness is Key

The most important thing local homeowners can do is to ensure their own properties are defensible in the event of fire. According to CERPP President Gaylynn Mann, the best preparation for homeowners is to mow their grass fields and remove ladder fuels—those fuels that allow fire to spread from grass to brush and trees.

CERPP has been working with the Fire District for the last 12 years to promote emergency readiness and safety preparations in Woodside, Portola Valley and surrounding unincorporated areas, according to Mann.

A key focus is the annual Chipper program, sponsored by the Fire District and the Towns of Woodside and Portola Valley, which kicked off in May and continues through November. The program brings a

wood chipper to local neighborhoods throughout the Woodside Fire District to chip vegetation removed by homeowners on site and easily dispose of large amounts of fuel. More information on when the Chipper will visit each neighborhood is available on the Fire District website, www.woodsidefire.org/chipper-program.

Upon request, the Woodside Fire Protection District will also conduct residential fire inspections to advise residents what additional precautions should be taken to protect their homes.

More tips on preparing homes for fire season are available at CERPP's website, www.bereadytoday.org/fire.

About CERPP

CERPP is the Citizens Emergency and Response Preparedness Program serving the Woodside Fire Protection District, including the Towns of Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas.

CERPP's primary goal is to promote emergency preparedness and response capability at the citizen and neighborhood level in the event of a disaster that overwhelms traditional emergency response resources. CERPP offers classes in emergency response training on an ongoing basis at no charge to local residents. Information about CERPP and disaster preparedness is available at www.bereadytoday.org.

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