

# MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT STANDARD 93-1

## Vegetation Management

### I. HAZARD ABATEMENT

This standard is intended to clarify the Fire District's intent to remediate fire hazards to life and property that are posed by the accumulation of dead and/or decadent vegetation. The Fire District Board of Directors has adopted this Standard to augment relevant requirements put forth within the 1998 California Fire Code and the California Public Resources Code. The Board further recognizes that these minimum measures are necessary because of adverse climatic and topographic conditions that typically exist throughout the Fire District.

- A. Annual Grasses/Light Fuels (< ¼" shaft diameter). This standard applies to all parcels, regardless of proximity to structures.
1. Parcels less than one acre in size: All grasses mowed or disced to less than 4 inches in height.
  2. Parcels one acre or larger in size: Create 30 foot wide fuel breaks around and across the property dividing it into approximately one acre sections. Grasses shall be mowed or disced to less than 4 inches in height.
  3. The use of mechanized equipment such as discs and plows, which tend to disturb soils, shall be avoided in all environmentally sensitive habitat areas.

### II. VEGETATION CLEARANCE FROM STRUCTURES (DEFENSIBLE SPACE)

A. Primary Zone (zone 1)

1. Property owners shall clear all flammable vegetation away from the structures or buildings for a minimum of 30 feet. Owners of adjoining properties shall effect such clearance on their property when property line boundaries are within 30 feet of structures on neighboring parcels. Property owners shall clear dead and/or decadent native brush and other related shrubs. Young healthy trees and shrubs should be retained while dead and/or decadent portions of older, more mature specimens must be removed.
2. Remove that portion of any tree, which extends to within 10 feet of any chimney outlet.
3. Maintain the roof and decking of any building free of leaves, needles, or any other accumulations of dead vegetation.
4. *Slope consideration:* Additional fuel reduction, and the maintenance thereof, must be considered when significant (>20%) slopes exists. Clearance of up to 100 feet may be required by the Fire District.

B. Secondary Zone (zone 2)

1. From the edge of the first priority zone, the Fire District may require creating a second zone for additional protection. This second zone begins at the edge of the primary zone and then extends to 100 feet from the structure. Owners of adjoining properties shall effect such clearance on their property when property line boundaries are within 100 feet of structures on neighboring parcels. Generally, this second zone is necessary where the landscape has a significant potential for adverse fire behavior. Issues relevant to such findings may include sloped topography, indigenous fuel

types, and solar aspect exposure considerations. The main objective in this zone is to reduce the anticipated fire behavior. Should the site burn, the fire would be considerably less intense, producing lower flame lengths and a reduced rate of fire spread, thus significantly reducing the opportunity for structural ignition.

2. Limb all branches from trees to a height at least 6 feet above grade level to prevent a ground fire from spreading into the trees.
3. All native shrubs and brush should be thinned and stripped of dead and/or decadent materials.
4. If it is necessary or desirable to re-vegetate, adhere to the attached guidelines or to those firescape guidelines in the architectural elements of the Montecito General Plan
5. In the case of retained single specimens, these must be maintained in a manner as to not readily provide a means of transmitting fires. (Examples of specimens which readily contribute to fire spread are pine trees, eucalyptus, pittisporum, miyosporum, cypress, etc.) This generally involves the removal of dead and/or decadent materials which these species generate continuously.

### III. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE HABITAT (ESH)

When portions of the Secondary Zone are located in an ESH, it must be determined that fuel management activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species, nor shall archeological resources be violated in the course of such activities.

Selective fuel management shall be practiced to minimize the removal or clearance of dead and/or decadent native riparian vegetation to the extent feasible. Maintain native vegetation to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with fuel modification requirements. Avoid clearing vegetation during the bird breeding and nesting season (typically April 1 to July 31) in key habitat areas known to support sensitive nesting bird species. Leave live native riparian vegetation and maintain native vegetation adjacent to creeks as much as possible. Plant materials in excess of 6" diameter generally don't need to be removed. It is important to minimize any disturbance of soil. The removal of non-native invasive plants is to be encouraged.

### IV. ROADWAY/DRIVEWAY VEGETATION CLEARANCE

Property owners are responsible for vegetation maintenance of private roadways and, in most cases, public roads, which front their property.

A minimum 13 ½ foot vertical clearance shall be maintained above roadways and driveways to allow for the effective response of emergency vehicles at all times.

Horizontal clearance of vegetation shall be maintained to the road right-of-way or the edge of the pavement depending on individual easements to maintain maximum traffic circulation in the event of emergency evacuation.

Flammable vegetation shall be removed for 10 feet on each side of every roadway to prevent wildfire from spreading as a result of vehicular causation (catalytic converters, sparking due to metallic/asphalt abrasion, discarded cigarettes, vehicle fires, etc.).

## **MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT S.O.P 106.03**

### **Fire Prevention Fire Hazard Abatement Procedures**

Due process to require removal of a fire hazard within the Montecito Fire Protection District begins with demonstrating the fact that a hazard does exist. This is to be verified by the response of fire district personnel to the specific hazard site and the actual observation of the hazard. If personal contact with the responsible party is possible during the inspection, a discussion of the hazard should ensue. The dialogue must relate to the fact that a hazard does, in fact, exist and the hazard mitigation process which is to be followed. Many hazards may be tactfully mitigated during this type of contact. A tactful explanation should identify concerns for personal and property safety, the safety of others, insurance ramifications, prevention of the perpetuation of fire spread, and finally, the fire code mandates. The respondent should then be informed of the initial noticing (first notice) process. If no personal contact is made, fire district personnel must identify the hazard, the location of the hazard, and prepare the first notice of violation.

To prepare the first notice of violation the legal property description of the parcel or occupancy must be identified. This identification is most readily accomplished by citing the assessor parcel number and street address (close approximation is acceptable where necessary.) From this information, the legal owner and/or responsible party and mailing address are referenced. When this is accomplished the first notice document can be prepared. This document shall include a description and location of the hazard and a reference to the applicable code sections that are being violated. The document shall also announce the date of a follow-up compliance inspection. The actual document is to be generated on the dispatch computer. Dispatchers are to assist in the document preparation and processing.

In fourteen days, the assigned personnel will re-inspect the hazard. If the hazard has been abated, the process is complete. If the hazard has not yet been abated and if the responsible party can be contacted, fire district personnel must re-emphasize that compliance is required. Explain that a second notice will be issued with a re-inspection date in fourteen days. Attempt to negotiate with the owner (public relations must be maintained) by stressing the importance of compliance. When no personal contact can be made, a second notice shall be mailed to the responsible party. Make an entry into the computer files to correct any ownership information and to indicate inspection status (corrected or continuing). Retain documentation for re-inspection.

In fourteen days, on the third scheduled inspection the hazard shall be re-evaluated by the assigned personnel. If the hazard has been abated the process is to be completed by making an entry into the computer files. If the hazard remains unabated the inspecting personnel shall issue a pre-citation letter

(third notice) with a re-inspection scheduled in ten days. This letter is to be delivered by certified mail.

Retain documentation of the re-inspection.

In ten days, on the fourth scheduled inspection, the hazard is to be re-evaluated by the assigned personnel. If the hazard has been abated the process is completed with an entry into the computer files. If the hazard remains unabated the following procedure will be followed:

- a. Take sufficient photographs to demonstrate the hazard.
- b. Prepare photocopies of all correspondence and documentation.
- c. Prepare and sign a written affidavit describing the preceding sequence of events. All dates, times, contacts, and any supportive information shall be included.
- d. These materials should be complete to the extent that no further clarification will be needed by fire prevention staff to process a criminal complaint through the judicial process.
- e. Submit the affidavit, with supportive documents and photos, as a single package to the Battalion Chief for his review and approval.
- f. The Battalion Chief shall submit the approved package to the fire prevention bureau within five days of the fourth inspection.

The fire prevention bureau will continue the hazard abatement process and gain compliance through the issuance of a citation which will require the property owner's appearance in municipal court.

Fire District personnel should be familiar with the following codes and ordinances as these are the tools to enforce this hazard abatement program:

- a. 2001 California Fire Code Section II-A 16&17
- b. Title 19 – California Code of Regulations Section 3.07(b)(1)
- c. Public Resource Code (PRC) Section 4291

The present standards refer to the following:

1. Grass, weeds or rubbish of any kind shall not be permitted to remain in any yard, vacant lot or open space. All such materials, when same endangers property or is liable to be fired, shall be cut and removed by the owner. 2001 California Fire Code Section 1103.2.4 and Appendix II-A 16&17.
2. Grass and weeds on open space or vacant lot in excess of one acre (40,000 square feet) may be mowed or disked into quartered sections to form thirty foot wide fire breaks. In addition, the entire perimeter shall have a thirty foot wide mowed or disked firebreak. 2001 California Fire Code Section 1103.2.4 and Appendix II-A 16&17
3. Maintain round and adjacent to structure a thirty foot clearance and removal of all flammable vegetation or other combustible growth. This does not apply to single specimens of trees, ornamental shrubbery, or similar plants used as ground

cover, which does not form a means of rapidly transmitting fire from the native growth to any structure. In addition, remove any dead material and thin out native vegetation to form a mosaic pattern to a perimeter width of 100 ft. from structures. T-19 Section 3.07 (b) PRC Section 4291.

4. Remove that portion on any tree which extends within ten feet of the outlet of any chimney or stovepipe. T-19 Section 3.07 (b) (3) PRC 4291.
5. Cut and remove all dead or dying portions of trees located adjacent to or overhanging any building. T-19 Section 3.07 (b) (4) PRC 4291.
6. Maintain the roof of any structure free of leaves, needles or other dead vegetative growth. T-19 Section 3.07 (b) (5) PRC 4291.
7. Provide and maintain at all times a screen over the outlet of every chimney or stovepipe that is attached to any fireplace, stove or other device which burns any solid or liquid fuel. The screen shall be constructed of noncombustible material with openings of not more than ½” in size. T-19 Section 3.07 (b) (6) PRC 4291.

## **MONTECITO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT S.O.P. 106.04**

### **Fire Prevention Complaint Process**

The complaint process within the Montecito Fire Protection District shall be handled in the following manner:

When a complaint is received, either in person, by telephone or in writing, the individual receiving the complaint should initially fill out a complaint form in triplicate and forward to the Station Captain.

Within twenty four (24) hours of receiving the complaint, the Station Captain will verify the existence of the hazard by responding to the specific site and observing the described hazard. An entry shall be made into the station log (Red Book) which notes this inspection.

Once the complaint is verified as a hazard the inspecting Captain will either initiate the hazard abatement process (in accordance with S.O.P. 106.03) or pass the complaint form on to the geographically responsible Captain who will initiate the compliance process. This shall also be completed within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.

When the complaint form is completed, the white copy goes to the dispatch file, the blue copy to the inspecting Captain, and the yellow copy to the geographically responsible Captain (if different from the inspecting Captain).