

4.5 Prefire Management

Over time, all California's wildlands *will* burn. Just as certainly, there are conditions and behaviors that will increase the likelihood that fires will occur; that will make them larger, more intense and more damaging, and thus more costly to fight; and that will take a higher toll. Not all of these factors can be controlled, but most can be anticipated and mitigated.

Riverside County's extreme diversity and complex patterns of land use and ownership require equally diverse and complex techniques to effectively manage the fire environment. Some options fall under the jurisdiction of State, Federal and local governments; others fall to private citizens or businesses; most are joint responsibilities. Custom strategies can be created through combinations of prefire management, suppression, and postfire management. They should lessen the costly impacts of future wildfires. As a starting point, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (2000) prefire management initiative includes a systematic application of risk assessment, fire safety, fire prevention and fire hazard reduction techniques.

The County has many fire fighting allies. For example, numerous Federal Agencies have roles in fire hazard mitigation, response and recovery, including:

- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Office of Aviation Services
- National Weather Service
- National Association of State Foresters.

4.5.1 Fire Prevention

Firefighters often repeat that "it is not if, but when, fire will burn through an area, and, there are not enough fire engines to protect every house". Therefore, firefighters need help in reducing the fire danger.

Comprehensive programs to reduce fire risk and hazard consist of engineering, education and law enforcement contributions. Of key importance is a planning process focused on ignition management and loss reduction. Tactics include biomass harvesting, fire resistant landscaping, mechanical and chemical fuels treatments, building construction standards, infrastructure, and land use planning.