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# Fire Safety News

*Serving the communities of Castle Creek, Champagne Village, Deer Springs, West Lilac, Hidden Meadows, Jesmond Dene, Rimrock and the Welk Resort*

April 29, 2017

## Ready, Set, Go



*CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Nick Brown discussed ways to stay safe if a wildfire threatens, during an evacuation seminar at Champagne Village. The seminar presented a possible wildfire scenario and advised Village residents to increase their awareness during an emergency, and to prepare to leave on a moment's notice. [Story below.](#)*

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## ***Seminar educates residents about fire safety, evacuations***



*Deer Springs Fire Chief Nick Brown, Deer Springs Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook, Champagne Village Emergency Committee Chair Susan Robinson, and committee member Greg Lorton fielded questions during a seminar that addressed a possible wildfire scenario and evacuations.*

## **‘When in Doubt, Get Out!’**

### ***Wildfire Scenario Used as Teaching Tool in Champagne Village***

A fire breaks out along Old Castle Road on the edge of Hidden Meadows. Santa Ana conditions prevail, with relative humidity in single digits and wind blowing from the northeast at 35 mph, gusting to 50 mph.

In minutes a bonfire is raging in the brush and the wind is driving it southwest. By now the smoke has attracted notice. Firefighters soon arrive and the incident commander determines that at its current rate, the fire will be threatening homes within two hours. The commander tells the Sheriff’s Department to begin evacuating residents.

At this stage, what should you do?

That was the scenario presented on April 5 to residents of Champagne Village, a community of manufactured homes that experienced a scare last year when a fire erupted across the freeway and triggered an aborted impromptu evacuation.

“There is a myth out there that the fire department is going to provide limousine service for people who can’t get out,” said Greg Lorton, a member of the Champagne Village Emergency Planning Committee and scenario presenter. “Don’t expect the fire department to get you out,” he said.

The purpose of the scenario was to educate residents about a likely path a wildfire would take if it struck the Deer Springs Fire Protection District, and to help them prepare in case one does.

Once a fire begins marching toward you, how much time do you have to get out? If Champagne Boulevard is gridlocked, what is your backup plan? If you can’t get out, where is your safety zone? What items do you need to have ready to go in case fire hits? How will you contact loved ones to let them know you are safe?

Presenters told residents to stay aware of their situation by keeping informed of the fire’s location and direction. Local media, such as TV and news sites, provide basic information. The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council maintains a call-in hotline, [949-972-1407](tel:949-972-1407), that is updated continually with fire information. It also updates its website, [www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com](http://www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com), during fires.

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council also operates an informational Emergency Communications System that it uses to call subscribers if an emergency appears dire. Residents can download the subscription through the Fire Safe Council’s website.

***Now is a good time to register your cell phone with Alert San Diego.  
To do this go to [www.readysandiego.org](http://www.readysandiego.org) and follow the steps.***

San Diego County maintains a smart phone app, SDEmergency, that it uses to inform residents during ongoing emergencies. The county also operates a reverse-911 phone line that it activates to evacuate neighborhoods. All land lines are automatically included on the Alert San Diego list. However, residents must register their cell phones. To download the app and register your cell phone, go to [www.readysandiego.org](http://www.readysandiego.org).

Champagne Village residents’ chief concern was Champagne Boulevard, a two-lane roadway that parallels Interstate 15 on the east. It is the principal ingress and egress for Champagne Village, a community of 457 homes.

Residents fear that if a fire strikes, the road will be jammed with vehicles.

CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Nick Brown, who also serves as the Deer Springs fire chief, noted that it is fire officials who order an evacuation, and sheriff’s deputies who carry it out. However, the Sheriff’s Department ultimately is responsible for all evacuations and can choose to evacuate if it feels it is necessary.

Brown said if he’s an incident commander on a fire and decides to evacuate a neighborhood, he gives the order to his Sheriff’s Department counterpart.

“If I say I need all of Champagne Village evacuated now, they will come and make that happen,” Brown said. “I’ve seen many times when the Sheriff and California Highway Patrol shut down intersections to make that happen. If we have several hours, we have enough time to evacuate the neighborhood.”

Brown encouraged residents to have backup plans ready, noting that one of last year’s fires broke out beneath a power line that crosses Interstate 15, causing him to shut down the freeway in both directions.

Is that likely to happen again? Probably not. Shutting the freeway down is a possibility, but a fire breaking out beneath that same power line again is unlikely.

But, he observed, “When we have 100,000 cars on the I-15, I don’t know what we can do about that. What’s your

secondary safety plan? You have to think about that.”

***We all should be ready to leave at a moment's notice.  
When in doubt, get out.***

Presenters noted that the gate on Welk View Drive leading to Rimrock would likely be open in such a scenario, but if that were to lead toward a fire, that is a bad alternative.

For that reason, presenters said, residents should have a “go bag” ready and be able to leave within minutes if a fire were to break out.

“The time to think about these things is not when you hear helicopters flying over your home,” Lorton said. “Who is responsible for your evacuation in the event of a threat to your safety in Champagne Village? You are!”

The scenario was developed jointly by the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council, the Champagne Village Emergency Planning Committee, and the Deer Springs Fire Protection District. Presenters included Lorton, Fire Chief Brown, Champagne Village Emergency Committee Chair Susan Robinson, and Deer Springs Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook.

About 200 residents attended the seminar at the Village Hall.

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## Defensible Space Saves Homes

*This house survived the Cocos Fire in 2014 largely because of a well-groomed defensible space buffer of ice plant and other landscaping. Note the chaparral that burned to the edge of the ice plant, and the ruins of a house that burned in the background.*



***Notes from the Wildland Urban Interface ...***

## Don't Suffer from Fire Amnesia

After enduring the kind of wet winter we just did, it's easy to get amnesia.

Fire amnesia.

All those rivers of mud, all those sandbags and those toppled trees can make us forget where we live the other nine months of the year.

That place is the Wildland Urban Interface, or WUI, where the city fades out and the country takes over.

The WUI is where homes intermix with native vegetation, which, when the brush dries out and dry winds kick up, can become matchsticks waiting for a spark.

The [Deer Springs Fire Protection District](#) is completely located in the WUI, with deep gorges laced between ridges sprinkled with homes. And nearly all of this is covered with thick chaparral.

There is only one major drawback to living in this type of terrain, and that is the exposure to fire. It's the yin and yang of living here.

We love its wildness, but we don't like our homes exposed to such fire danger. What makes it so desirable is also what makes it so risky.

So what should we do about it?

The immediate response is to worry.

But what we really need to do is stay vigilant and take extra precautions to protect our homes and neighborhoods.

One of the best practices is to surround your home with a defensible space buffer.

Defensible space works by reducing the opportunity for a fire to catch, minimizing its chance of spreading from your yard to the walls of your structure, and from there to inside your home. Wildfires are largely spread by flying embers that land on combustible surfaces, expanding the fire and keeping it alive.

A defensible space buffer gives firefighters a clear area to battle insistent flames, should it reach that point.

"You provide the offense and we will provide the defense," said Nick Brown, a CAL FIRE battalion chief and the Deer Springs fire chief. "We'll be able to respond to the fire."

To watch a CAL FIRE video on preparing for wildfire, click [here](#).

It is good practice, and a Deer Springs Fire District requirement, to clear combustible vegetation within 100 feet of your home. This is typically done in two zones.

**Zone one** includes the area within 50 feet of any structure. Plant fire-resistant, irrigated landscaping in this zone. Mow and maintain your lawn, weeds and other landscaping. Remove leaf litter from your roof and rain gutters. Trim tree limbs at least 10 feet from chimneys and remove dead branches.

**Zone two** includes the area between 50 and 100 feet of structures. It is okay to keep native vegetation in this zone, but cut and thin this vegetation so it is no taller than 6 inches. Do not scrape the plants to bare earth, as this promotes erosion. Remove dead and dying vegetation and all combustible vegetation within 10 feet of roadways and driveways. Remove limbs from the bottom one-third of trees, up to a maximum of 6 feet above the ground.

For more detailed information on defensible space, visit the San Diego County's web page, [Fire, Defensible Space, and You](#), which provides more detailed information.

CAL FIRE has also prepared a [brochure](#) on defensible space, and (Note that the video lists the zone one as within 30 feet of your home. In Deer Springs this zone is 50 feet.)

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## ***You Cut it, We'll Chip it***

*The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council operates a free chipping program for qualified residents, made possible by a grant from the US Bureau of Land Management. For information, consult the Fire Safe Council's [website](#).*

## ***Got Clearance? The Fire Safe Council Can Help with That***

You've gone out and cleared brush from around your property to create defensible space and now you have a pile of dead vegetation you want to turn into mulch. Who you gonna call?

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council, that's who. If you cut it, we'll chip it.

What will this service cost you? The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council will do it for free; all we ask is that you give us a donation that we'll use to continue fire safety education in our community.

The US Bureau of Land Management has given the council a grant to help reduce the wildfire threat in the Deer Springs Fire Protection District, and the grant helps pay for the chipping program.

Last year the council chipped 157,675 cubic feet of dry brush at 44 properties, enough to fill 58 standard semi-tractor trailers. If you lined those tractor-trailers up, they would stretch more than one-half mile. That's a lot of brush that could have burned hot and fast if a fire had broken out.

The way the program works is that property owners must cut the vegetation, and the council will provide a fully insured crew and equipment to chip it on site. You don't have to load and haul it to a central location.

This service is provided to homeowners as a safety measure and is not meant as a low-cost alternative for businesses that want to use the council as a way to cut their costs. That would violate the terms of the grant and jeopardize future grants.

To use this service, the council has several requirements to protect the volunteers, professionals and equipment. You must pile the material in an orderly manner in a place that is accessible for the chipper and its truck. It can't be far from a road or deep in a canyon at the end of a coyote trail, for example. And council volunteers need to see the pile before we chip it, as there is some material that the chipper and crews can't handle.

To learn more about the service, please visit our website [www.deerspringsfiresafecouncil.com](http://www.deerspringsfiresafecouncil.com). If you'd like to follow up, email [dsfsc1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsfsc1@sbcglobal.net) and a representative of the Fire Safe Council will contact you.

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council is a 501(c)(3) community service organization and council members who operate

the chipping program are volunteers who are not compensated for their time. The council hires a trained, fully insured crew to operate the chipper, to minimize risk to homeowners and volunteers.

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## Snake Season Is Here

Living in Deer Springs offers its adventures, and one of them is the opportunity of meeting up with a rattlesnake.

CAL FIRE Capt. Terry Heidmann said that his station in Hidden Meadows has received several calls from residents reporting snakes in their yards. Capt. Heidmann said that local firefighters will remove a venomous snake if it is near your home and posing a threat.

Capt. Heidmann said one way to tell if a snake is venomous is by the shape of its head. If the head is triangular, like an arrowhead, it's likely venomous, whereas a non-poisonous snake has a head that tapers into its body. Another way to tell a poisonous snake is that its eyes have elliptical pupils, like narrow slits. But if you can see the snake's narrow pupils you're probably too close.

You can reach a fire department dispatcher by calling 9-1-1 from your home's land line, rather than your cell phone. If the dispatcher says that the fire department doesn't respond to snake calls, call your local station. The phone numbers are below.

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## Safety Class for Kids

"Teaching Kids About 911 and Fire Safety" will be the topic of the next Deer Springs Fire District safety class.

The class will be held at 1 p.m. on May 20 at the Moose Lodge, 25721 Jesmond Dene Road. CAL FIRE Capt. Terry Heidmann said this class has been located at the Moose Lodge because it provides ample space for children to run around and play.

This class has been moved from its typical time – the fourth Saturday of the month – because of the Memorial Day holiday.

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### Helpful phone numbers

Immediate Emergency Assistance: 911

Emergency & Non-Emergency County Information Hotline (road closures, shelter locations, evacuation sites, fire related information, recovery assistance and more): 211

### Deer Springs Fire Stations

Station 1  
8709 Circle R Drive  
Escondido, CA 92026  
760-749-8001

Station 2

San Diego County Sheriff, San Marcos Station:  
760-510-5200

1321 Deer Springs Road  
San Marcos, CA 92069  
760-741-5512

San Diego Animal Services Emergency Dispatch:  
619-236-2341

Station 3  
10308 Meadow Glen Way East  
Escondido, CA 92026

Deer Springs Fire Safe Council Informational Hot  
Line: 949-472-1401

760-751-0820

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## We gratefully acknowledge ...

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## PLEASE DONATE

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<http://www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com>

**Or you can mail your donation to:**

**DEER SPRINGS FIRE SAFE COUNCIL  
P.O. BOX 460097  
ESCONDIDO, CA 92046-0097**

*DISCLAIMER: This information will provide a high level of protection to structures built in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area. However, there is no guarantee or assurance that compliance with these guidelines will*

*prevent damage or destruction of structures by fires in all cases.*

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