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READY FOR EL NINO

Rescuers Face Flash Flood Challenge

CAL FIRE swift water rescue teams practiced hoist rescues with the county Sheriff’s Helitack pilot/deputies. / Photo Courtesy of the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department

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The Sheriff’s Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies (ASTREA), which provides aerial fire suppression and rescue support, practices water rescue training at El Capitan Reservoir. / Photo Courtesy of the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department

**CAL FIRE, Sheriff Chopper Unit Train for Swift Water Rescues**

San Diego’s dry creeks can turn into raging torrents in heavy rains, and CAL FIRE and the county Sheriff’s Department have teamed up to practice rescuing people trapped by flash floods.

With the threat of El Niño storms and possible floods this rainy season, CAL FIRE increased its ranks of swift water rescue technicians to about 45 qualified members who could respond anywhere in the county.

“Everybody is pulling out all the stops to help the San Diego County community come through El Niño unscathed,” said CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Deron Hunt, who directs the CAL FIRE Swiftwater Rescue Team. CAL FIRE and the Sheriff’s Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies (ASTREA) Helitack Team have trained together, with CAL FIRE firefighters practicing water rescues by being lowered into the water from Sheriff’s helicopters.
Sheriff’s Sgt. Mark Johnston, a pilot and supervisor for the ASTREA fire-rescue program, told the San Diego County News Center that the Sheriff’s ASTREA program can equip two of their three fire-rescue helicopters with hoists if needed. In that kind of situation, a chopper crew lowers a rescuer into the water by hoist, and the rescuer pulls a person out of the water. Then the pilot lowers them onto dry land. CAL FIRE and the Sheriff’s Helitack Team recently practiced hoist rescues at El Capitan Reservoir.

CAL FIRE and San Diego County invested in equipment and training to prepare for water rescues, and CAL FIRE increased its swift water rescue team in anticipation of flash floods.

“We put extra effort into the program as part of the County’s preparations for El Niño,” County Fire Chief Tony Mecham told the County News Center. Mecham also serves as the San Diego Unit Chief for CAL FIRE. “The region is significantly more prepared at this time as part of the county initiative.”

Battalion Chief Hunt said he has deployed two teams, one in northern San Diego County and one in southern county. He said teams have mobilized during three storms so far this winter. They helped search for a man who was reported to have fallen into a flood control channel in El Cajon. Water was rushing through the channel at speeds of 12 mph to 15 mph; they never found the man and speculate he may have gotten out on his own.

They also assisted during a rescue of two teens who tried to ford Escondido Creek in Elfin Forest in their truck. The teen’s vehicle was swamped during a storm in late January, and a combined effort that included Rancho Santa Fe Fire, Encinitas Fire and CAL FIRE pulled them to safety.

Hunt said his technicians train at the Colorado River, and at a jetty in Carlsbad where water rushing into the Pacific Ocean from a coastal power station does a good imitation of a rain-swollen creek creek.

“We have cooperative agreements all over the county and will go anywhere in the county we’re needed to assist,” Hunt said.
Fire Safe Council Receives National Honor

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council has been honored with a 2016 Wildfire Mitigation Innovation Award from the national Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee in recognition of the council’s dedication to fire safety and wildfire education.

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee is sponsored by four national fire safety groups — the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the US Forest Service, the National Fire Protection Association and the National Association of State Foresters.

Established in 2014, the awards are the highest commendation for innovation and leadership displayed by individuals and organizations committed to wildfire preparedness and mitigation, according to the awards committee.

“State foresters are proud to honor the efforts of citizens working on the ground to mitigate the threat of wildfire,” said Paul DeLong, President of the National Association of State Foresters and a Wisconsin state forester. “These outstanding mitigation efforts are helping keep America’s communities safe. In 2015 more than 10 million acres of land were burned by wildfire. As more people build homes and recreate in forested areas, state foresters partner with agencies, communities, and homeowners to create fire adaptive communities that are better able to withstand this increasing threat.”
The award was given to the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council at a meeting of the Deer Springs Fire Protection District board on March 9 at the district office on Circle R Drive. Deer Springs Fire Marshal Sid Morel gave the award on behalf of the Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee.

“I became the fire marshal at Deer Springs Fire a year ago and I have been extremely impressed with the amount and quality of work the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council provides for this community,” said Morel. “They truly are an asset to the Fire Department and are deserving of this national award for excellence in Wildland Fire Mitigation.”

“It is a true honor for the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council to be presented the national Wildfire Mitigation Award,” said Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook. “This award recognizes and validates the accomplishments, hard work and passion of our volunteers to assist the Deer Springs Fire Protection District and CAL FIRE in making our community a safer place.”

The 2016 Wildfire Mitigation Innovation Award marks the second time in two years that the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council has been recognized for its work in reducing the wildfire threat. In 2014 CAL FIRE Chief Ken Pimlott honored the Fire Safe Council with a Partnership Award for its vigilance in promoting regional fire safety.

“Recognizing the comprehensive challenge posed by wildfires, these awards commend the outstanding dedication to wildfire preparedness and safety across a broad spectrum of activities and among a variety of individuals and organizations,” the Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee said in a statement. “By honoring their achievements, the award sponsors also seek to increase public recognition and awareness of the value of wildfire mitigation efforts.”

Award winners were recognized at the International Association of Fire Chiefs Wildland Urban Interface Conference in Reno, Nevada, on March 9, 2016. For the original award announcement, click here.
Experts say that the best way to limit the spread of the goldspotted oak borer is to buy or harvest firewood in the same neighborhood where you burn it. Don't transport firewood.

Fighting the Goldspotted Oak Borer

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council continues to tackle the problem of the goldspotted oak borer, a small insect that has infested oaks in the Deer Springs Fire Protection District. Last month Greg Orr of the Fire Safe Council visited with members of the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council in Idyllwild, to see how that group is tackling the oak borer problem.

The Idyllwild team has been battling a similar infestation for some time. Orr met with Ron Perry, Doris Lombard, Elliott Taylor and Edwina Scott at the Mountain Resource Center in Idyllwild, and they demonstrated how they are tracking infested trees from an overall district perspective, down to individual lots, identifying each tree with a trunk diameter greater than 12 inches. Older, more majestic oaks appear to be more susceptible to infestation than young, hardy trees, and the Idyllwild team identifies all of the larger trees, whether or not they are infested.

The team uses field kits to help identify which trees are infested, and geolocating software to plot their locations. The team took Orr out to the forest to demonstrate how they evaluate a tree for goldspotted oak borer, also known as GSOB, which can be challenging because the insects’ tiny exit holes can be difficult to detect.

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council also shared contact information for grants that they have obtained to battle the infestation. Orr was put in contact with the Idyllwild group by Kevin Turner, the University of California Riverside’s goldspotted oak borer program coordinator.

The goldspotted oak borer has hit San Diego County hard, killing an estimated 90,000 oak trees countywide. The insect is native to southeastern Arizona and experts believe it arrived in San Diego County...
by hitching a ride on a load of firewood. The insect itself is not very mobile and does not spread widely on its own. However, after arriving in a new place on a load of firewood the insect is adept at inflicting damage on newly discovered stands of oak trees.

CAL FIRE officials fear that the dead and dying trees will increase the fire danger. There is also the danger of limbs falling from dead trees and injuring people or damaging property.

Officials with the Deer Springs Fire Protection District are aware of the problem and are seeking a solution.

“What do we do with thousands and thousands of dead oak trees?” Deer Springs fire board President Robert Osby asked at a recent meeting. The district and fire safe council have teamed up to explore possible grants and ways to remove dead trees, but there is still no overall solution.

The Fire Safe Council has set up a committee to identify trees infested by the goldspotted oak borer in different parts of the fire district. Orr is directing this effort, and he can be reached at dsfscgsob@gmail.com.

The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council said they are pleased to work with Deer Springs on solving the problem, because collaborating will help make both areas safer. The Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council has offered to visit Deer Springs and share their knowledge about battling the beetle infestation.

CAL FIRE engineer/paramedic Todd Daley discussed evacuation procedures with residents during a safety training class at the Deer Springs fire station in Hidden Meadows. Assisting him were engineer/paramedic Trevor Whitehead, far left, and firefighter/paramedic Jiri Dostal.
Class Gets People Talking About Safety

About a dozen residents engaged in a lively give-and-take on what to do in an evacuation, as part of the first fire safety class conducted by the Deer Springs Fire Protection District in January. At the second session class members snuffed out fires during a session on the correct use of fire extinguishers.

The monthly sessions feature hands-on activities and a lot of conversation. The first session on evacuations prompted a discussion about how to prepare to evacuate, when to leave, where to go, and how to protect one’s property.

“It was very open, a lot of dialog,” said CAL FIRE engineer/paramedic Todd Daley, who conducted the training on evacuations.

The classes are part of a new Fire District program designed to improve fire safety for all residents. Classes are held at 3 p.m. on the last Saturday of each month at Deer Springs Fire Station No. 3 in Hidden Meadows. The April 30 class will focus on teaching your children about fire safety.

For more information, call Fire Station No. 3 at 760-751-0820.

Fire Safe Council Honors Dedicated Volunteers

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council honored three former board members at its annual membership meeting on Jan. 30. Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook recognized former Director Bob Frey with the President’s Award for 2015, for Frey’s years of active board membership. Frey was instrumental in landing thousands of dollars in grants that helped reduce the wildfire threat throughout the Deer Springs Fire Protection District.

Also honored was Georgia Herman, an original board member who served as secretary and communications officer for many years. Herman founded a program to help evacuate large animals in the event of a wildfire, and helped coordinate the Fire Safe Council’s chipping program, which ground up and removed over 51,000 cubic feet of burnable brush last year. She also was a writer and editor for the Fire Safety News. Cook honored Herman with a Fire Safe Council Service Award.

The council also honored Tom Francl, who helped found the Fire Safe Council after the devastating wildfires of 2003. Francl served on the council’s board for many years, educating Fire District residents about the wildfire threat. As a Fire Safe Council board member, Francl helped establish many of the programs and initiatives that persist today. Cook honored Francl, who has moved out of state, with a Fire Safe Council Service Award.

Besides managing its free chipping program for residents, the Fire Safe Council actively maintained several programs last year to help build awareness and reduce the wildfire threat. These included:

- Publication of eight digital editions of Fire Safety News and one Fire Safety Alert.
- Operation of the Emergency Communications System, which informs residents of possible
The Fire Safe Council is a nonprofit volunteer organization formed to educate Deer Springs fire district residents about fire safety. The council cooperates with the fire district, CAL FIRE and neighboring communities to safeguard the community in the event of a wildfire.

For more information on the Fire Safe Council and to subscribe to the digital Fire Safety News, go to www.DeerSpringsFireSafeCouncil.com. The Fire Safe Council is also interested in your participation. If you have a desire to improve the fire safety in the Deer Springs Fire Protection District, please email President Craig Cook, at dsfsc1@sbcglobal.net.

Photo Captions: Deer Springs Fire Safe Council President Craig Cook presents former council director Bob Frey with the President's Award for 2015, above left, and former council director Georgia Herman with a Service Award for 2015, above right. Former director Tom Franci was unavailable for a photo.

Deer Springs Fire District News ...

Deer Springs Fire Marshal Sid Morel and Fire Prevention Officer Miguel Garcia will attend a seminar that teaches the science behind wildland fire property loss, and how to advise property owners about effective measures to protect their homes.

The seminar is taught by wildland fire specialists who have helped develop the course, as well as related National Fire Protection Association codes and standards. These experts serve on technical committees and or have direct experience in the field.

The seminar, which will be held in Phoenix on April 14 and 15, will provide expert training that will help Morel and Garcia assess wildfire risks and develop problem-solving techniques that they will apply throughout the district, with the help of the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council. The fire prevention officers received a scholarship that pays nearly all the expenses of attending the seminar.

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CAL FIRE Engineer Ariel Sosa, who is assigned to Station No. 1 on Circle R Drive, recently helped the district land a $150,000 federal grant to purchase self-contained breathing apparatus for firefighters to use while battling structure, vehicle and debris fires. The breathing apparatus are equipped with two safety measures: voice amplifiers that enable firefighters to hear each other through the masks, and locating devices that help find firefighters in smoky environments.
The grant, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, will pay for 22 new breathing apparatus and spare bottles for each unit. The district was required to pay $7,500 to obtain $150,000, a very good deal for resident taxpayers.

The grant application was begun by engineer Jeff Foy. Sosa completed the grant application after Foy transferred to a new assignment.

**Have you heard?**

The San Diego County Sheriff’s Department is considering using drones to help with some law-enforcement situations.

Two teens tried to drive across Escondido Creek after a rainstorm on Jan. 31, and nearly paid with their lives.

The County proposes to extend fire protection and emergency services to three unincorporated locations in East County that are not served by any fire agency or district.

**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
San Diego County Sheriff, San Marcos Station: 760–510–5200
San Diego Animal Services Emergency Dispatch: 619–236–2341
Deer Springs Fire Safe Council Informational Recording: 949–472–1401

**PLEASE DONATE**

The Fire Safety News is a service of the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council, which is supported by donations from the community. All members of the Council are dedicated volunteers and are not compensated. The Council is an IRS approved 501(c)(3) community service organization, which means your contributions are tax-deductible. You can donate to the council directly through the council's website. Just click on the “DONATE” button:


Or you can mail your donation to:

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

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We received your email address when you signed up for the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council Emergency Communication System, attended a neighborhood educational seminar on fire safety, or asked the council to add you to its list.

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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.