



NEWS RELEASE

CAL FIRE / RIVERSIDE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Equipment-Caused Wildland Fires Keep Riverside County Firefighters Busy

Over the past two weeks, CAL FIRE/Riverside County Firefighters have responded to several equipment-caused grass fires; including the “Pedley” fire in Glen Avon that burned over 800 acres and prompted precautionary evacuation of a 126-unit mobile home park. Numerous structures were also threatened during the “McKinley” fire in the Home Gardens area, which burned over 1,000 acres. Both of these fires and several other smaller wildland fires in recent weeks were caused by mowing equipment.

The result of last winter’s rainfall and this season’s warmer spring temperatures have produced tall grasses and vegetation that will continue to dry out as summer nears; ultimately becoming a fire hazard.

CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department urges residents to use the proper equipment the right way at the right time when clearing grass and vegetation. Lawnmowers, weed-eaters, trimmers, chainsaws, grinders, welders and tractors, when not used properly or too late in the day, adds *significant* risk to starting an equipment-caused fire. The following safety tips when clearing are in place for your safety and should be applied at *all* times:

- Get an early start! Clearing grass and vegetation should be started before 10:00 a.m.. After 10:00 a.m., temperatures rise, humidity drops and winds increase. It is NOT worth taking the risk of starting a fire!
- Mowers are designed to cut green lawns and grasses. NEVER use mowers in dry vegetation.
- Prior to mowing or disking, walk the area and remove rocks and debris before using mowers or clearing tools/equipment.
- A rock or large debris hidden in tall grass could ignite a fire if struck by a metal blade. If the area is too rocky, do NOT use metal bladed equipment to clear dry vegetation.
- Spark arrestors are required on ALL portable, gasoline-powered equipment; including tractors, harvesters, chainsaws, weed-eaters, mowers, motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles.
- Keep exhaust systems, spark arresters and mowers in proper working order and free from carbon build-up. Use recommended fuels and do not “top off” fuel tanks.
- Keep motorized equipment engines free of oil and dust.
- Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can easily start fires that you may not see until it’s too late! Do not pull off of roadways into tall, dry grass.
- When operating a tractor, always look behind you to make sure the blade has not struck a rock or object that may ignite a fire. Keep a cell phone, water, a shovel and a fire extinguisher with you in the event a fire starts. If a fire starts, call 9-1-1 immediately!
- When clearing vacant parcels, create a firebreak by clearing the perimeter of the lot first and work toward the middle.



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Following these simple guidelines will help to prevent a costly and potentially devastating wildfire. Other safety precautions may be necessary when clearing grass and vegetation based upon location, fire hazard severity, weather and the type of equipment being used to clear property.

“It is *everyone’s* responsibility to provide defensible space and eliminate hazards on their property,” said CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Chief John R. Hawkins, “we just want it done *safely* and the *right* way.”

Additional information regarding safe equipment use is available on the Riverside County Fire Department website at www.rvcfire.org.

The “Ready, Set, GO!” Personal Wildfire Action Plan was recently implemented by CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department to assist residents in creating their own “defensible space” and “hardening” their homes as a safeguard against wildfires. Please visit our interactive website at www.readyforwildfire.org to begin *YOUR* wildfire action plan today!

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