In a collaborative effort of the Cypress Fire Protection District, Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District, and CAL FIRE, fire crews have been conducting a fuels reduction project to improve forest health and reduce hazardous fire fuels by removing brush and dead or dying trees. Prescribed burns, pile burning, and leaving chipped vegetation onsite are traditional vegetation handling options, but recent accumulations of drought-stricken dead and dying trees has made disposal of the material difficult. Grinding logs or hauling them to a green waste disposal site is expensive, and burning piles of logs creates smoke and puts a lot of particulates into the atmosphere.

The use of an air curtain incinerator provides for improved fuels management, safer wildfire mitigation efforts, and less pollution. Air Curtain Incinerators or “Curtain Burners” are self-contained, and their vegetation mitigation process is relatively simple.

The curtain burner is started with fine flammable vegetation and a liquid accelerant,
In 1993, a group of concerned county residents recognized the need for better fire protection at the mouth of the Carmel River Valley. The group, led by St. E. P. Tyner, believed better and more cost effective fire services could be delivered with local control. They petitioned the Board of Supervisors to dissolve two small County Service Areas, No. 39 (Del Monte Fairways, Josselyn Canyon and Aguajito), and No. 43 (Carmel Unincorporated), and create a new larger special district. The Board members Pennycook, Shipnuck, Perkins, Karas and Strasser-Kauffman unanimously voted to approve the petition and the Cypress Fire Protection District was created.

In the years that followed, taxes were assessed by the District, bonds were issued, land was donated for the fire station, better fire equipment was purchased and fire protection improved. The District contracted with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to provide staffing for the station under their Cooperative Fire Protection Program.

Over time, the District has grown in population, and the fire services have kept pace. There are now three fire stations. Rio Road Station houses a fire engine and water tender, Carmel Hill Station is home to a fire engine and two CAL FIRE wildland fire engines, and Monterey Headquarters Station has a medic squad. The engines and squad are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with one of the firefighters trained as a Paramedic. The District participates in a joint ocean rescue program with Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District and the Pebble Beach Community Services District Fire Department, safeguarding the people who work and play on the area beaches. The three Districts also participate together in a fire fuel reduction program that is a model for California.
Is 100 Feet Enough?

Defensible space is the room between your home and the wildland area that, under normal conditions, creates a buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildfire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame impingement or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential for structure survivability during wildfire conditions and for the protection of firefighters defending it.

Long ago, The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection determined through a series of devastating fires that if homeowners in the wildland areas maintained 30 feet of clearance around their homes, firefighters could do a better job of defending them. Years later, that distance was determined to be inadequate by the Department due to increased fire behavior in the drought ravaged wildland areas, and it was increased to 100 feet. Today, lessons learned in the extreme fire behavior of the Detwiler, Tubbs, and Thomas fires seem to indicate that even 100 feet may not be adequate.

Today, fires burn more intensely because years of drought have produced record low fuel moistures, temperatures are higher, and we are getting more frequent wind events. So if you live in an area where there are accumulations of unburned vegetation, continuity of fuels, vegetation that would produce a significant amount of embers during a fire (like eucalyptus trees), wind events are common, and your home is on a slope, then 100 feet is probably not enough.

New Fire Captain in Fire Protection

Cypress Fire Protection District is pleased to announce the assignment of Colette O’Conner to the Fire Protection and Planning Bureau. Colette brings a great deal of experience into the Bureau, having started with CAL FIRE (CDF) right after graduation from high school. She has worked as a Firefighter, Engineer, and Captain in wildland and contract fire protection and has also held the Training Captain position. Her previous assignments were in Tuolumne-Calaveras and San Mateo-Santa Cruz. Colette will be responsible for doing commercial inspections, plan review and defensible space inspections. “I’m happy”, she said, “to be joining the staff and working on the prevention side of fire fighting.”

Emergency Assistance List: Help Us Help You

Do you think you might need some assistance to evacuate in the event of an emergency? If you are non-ambulatory, have limited mobility, special medical needs, or do not drive a vehicle, then you should be on our Emergency Assistance List. The Firefighters will either help you, or arrange for assistance, to ensure you get the help that you need.

To register, you may contact Fire Captain John Spooner at 831 624-2374, or visit our website at http://www.CypressFire.org/contact. All emergency contact information is kept confidential and is only used by Fire Department staff to assist you in the event of an emergency. Help us help you.

Defensible Space Inspections

Inspectors began checking the 100 feet of defensible space around your home beginning Tuesday, May 1, 2018. They will be looking for things that would reduce the survivability of your home in a wildland fire, such as leaf or needle litter on your roof, tree branches overhanging chimneys, fire wood stacked against the house, and overgrown vegetation around your home. Remember, defensible space is required by law. If you have any questions, stop by the station and get a copy of Homeowners Checklist: How to Make Your Home Fire Safe, contact Fire Captain Kim Bernheisel at 831 601-7628, or visit www.fire.ca.gov.
Emergency Notification

The CodeRED emergency notification system serves as the backbone of the Cypress Fire Protection District’s emergency planning and communications outreach to residents, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members, and staff. The system sends telephone calls, text messages, emails, and posts to social media channels to inform residents and better protect life and property. It can be used to send out emergency notifications to residents living on a single road in the District. To be sure to get your emergency notifications, you should sign up for the CodeRED services each year. Visit www.CarmelHighlandsFire.org and click on the CodeRED logo to enroll your contact information including telephone and cell phone numbers, and email addresses. No one should automatically assume they are in the emergency contact database.

Another emergency notification system is Alert Monterey, which is used by Monterey County. It is used to notify large areas of the county of major disasters. It uses an initial database of residential and business telephone numbers that are gathered from public domain sources, and it also requires residents to provide telephone and cell phone numbers and email addresses to ensure the best chance of delivering an emergency notification. You can register online at www.AlertMontereyCounty.org. No one should automatically assume they are in the emergency contact database and, in an emergency, you will want to be contacted.

Additionally, during an emergency, you should tune your radio to a local station to receive important information such as whether to evacuate, which evacuation routes to use, and where evacuation shelters are located.

If you have questions or are having difficulty enrolling visit our website at www.CypressFire.org or call the Cypress Fire Protection District CodeRED Coordinator, John Spooner, at 831 624-2374.