

Message from the Winchester Hills Fire Chief

Friends and neighbors, as you know it's been a wet spring! As I look around Winchester, and my own property, it is clear to me that I need your help. The moisture this year has caused the grass to grow especially long. I am concerned.

As I have looked around at the surrounding areas (for most of us our back yards) the grass is 2'-3' deep. My fear is that, if (and when) it dries out this year we could have an extreme fire hazard. This year, if it dries out, could shape up to be like 2005. For those of you who were NOT here in 2005, a fire started south of Diamond Valley and overnight burned down through the rocks and grass on the white cliffs to threaten Winchester Hills. We were fortunate in that, the wind did not blow and The Ledges Golf Course, which was just being constructed, loaned us heavy equipment. A road grader and bull dozer were used to cut fire breaks around the north and east sides of Winchester. Long story short, the fire breaks and lack of wind allowed us to light "back fires" starting at the fire breaks, and burn back to the active fire increasing our safety zone. This combined with the weather holding, resulted in no significant property damage in Winchester Hills.

This year the grass is twice as long as it was in 2005. If a wind driven wildland fire starts and enters the boundary of Winchester Hills, there will be little the fire department (or anyone else) can do to stop it. As always, we will do our best to fight any fire in Winchester. However, without mitigating efforts by you on your property, it may be your property that is threatened or lost.

We all need to take this very seriously. Please survey your property and do the following:

- Establish fire breaks (down to mineral soil) between your homes and the wildland that surrounds them.
- Limb up trees, to a minimum of 3'-5' above the ground.
- Clean out and remove all bushes, grass, pine needles, etc. from underneath trees.
- The standard recommendation is that you establish 30' of clearance between your house, trees and brush. (I know this is not always possible

but if we make an effort to limb up and clean up, to give as much space as is possible to protect your home)

- Trim down grasses and remove trimmings from around your property. (as always this is just fuel for a fire)
- Clear areas from around your out buildings, campers, trailers and vehicles parked on your property.

In the event that a fire does happen, your property maintenance - fire mitigation efforts - will help everyone and give the firemen a better chance to protect your homes and property.

Thank you in advance for your efforts.

Don Christensen