

Clear the Brush – It's the Law!

By Cathy Dausman



Dry brush burns quickly in a wild land fire.

Fire protection services are urging homeowners to make one thing perfectly clear right now – defensible yard space. Drought conditions, warmer temperatures, high winds and an excess of dried vegetation have made fire seasons progressively worse over the past 50 years, said Rena Willey of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

State law defines defensible space as 100 feet, yet Diablo Fire Safe Council's Cheryl Miller said given "fuel type, fuel loads, slope or wind," even that may be insufficient. "I like to talk about defensible space as both space for a firefighter and for the home to defend itself."

Moraga-Orinda Fire District fire marshal Kathy

Leonard added, "Excessive combustible vegetation that is not abated will be declared a public nuisance and a threat to public safety."

The vegetation compliance deadline was June 15, and abatement notices were sent out beginning June 16. "Due to extreme conditions for fire this year, we are serving red notices only, requiring immediate abatement or we will have the work contracted out at the property owner's expense," Leonard emphasized.

The department's website (www.mofd.org) includes a list of contractors specializing in vegetation clearance who are also familiar with the district's requirements. For financial aid, Diablo Fire Safe offers up to \$5,000 cost-share assistance for homeowner fuel reduction efforts (see below). The third quarter application deadline is Aug. 15. "We are asking everyone to share the responsibility to keep our community safe from wildfire by maintaining their properties," Leonard said.

Direct abatement questions to MOFD Fire Prevention at (925) 258-4525, ext. 533. To request a MOFD wildfire risk assessment, call (925) 258-4525, ext. 524. Diablo Fire Safe fuel reduction cost-share assistance details are online at http://www.diablofiresafe.org/pdf/Cost_Share_2013-14_application_package.pdf.



Photos Cathy Dausman