

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sunday, Sept. 24, 2017

CONTACT:

Mónica Muñoz at 619-533-3780 or munozm@sandiego.gov

San Diego Fire-Rescue Increases Staffing in Preparation for Increased Fire Activity

WEATHER FORECAST INDICATES AN INCREASE IN THE CHANCE OF WILDFIRES

San Diego – As of 8 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 25, 2017, San Diego Fire-Rescue (SDFD) will increase the number of on-duty firefighting crews, staff and fire apparatus in our city because of hot weather and minimum humidity in the teens forecasted through next weekend. Several years of drought coupled with heavy rains this past winter created significant fuel in the form of underbrush and grass. This fuel, combined with hot temperatures, and low humidity, create conditions which are conducive to easily ignited and fast burning wildfires. Wind is another element that, when coupled with these conditions, causes wildfires to spread more quickly. According to the Southern California Geographic Coordination Center, the coastal foothills of San Diego County will experience east-to-northeast winds from 15 to 25 miles per hour with gusts of up to 30 mph. These gusty offshore winds mean an elevated risk for large fires in the San Diego region Monday through Wednesday.

“Fire season is a year-round reality in our region, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildland fire,” said Fire Chief Brian Fennessy. “As history has demonstrated time and again; there is no greater threat to life and property in the City and region than wildland fire.”

Five brush engines, with a crew of four personnel each and two water tenders will be staffed between Monday and Thursday. SDFD closely monitors weather conditions and will extend the increased staffing depending upon weather changes. Brush engines are large off-road capable fire apparatus which carry between 600 and 1500 gallons of water. SDFD water tenders carry 3000 gallons of water and provide water supply to engines at vegetation fires. In addition, the Metro Zone Emergency Command & Data Center (ECDC) and Air Operations Section staffing will also be increased.

With our many canyons, San Diego has hundreds of linear miles of wildland urban interface (WUI). Each year, wildland fires consume hundreds of homes in the WUI. Studies show that as many as 80 percent of those homes could have been saved if their owners had followed a few simple fire-safe practices.

Wildland fire-related deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their home. By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildland fire, firefighters and law enforcement officers may not have time to knock on every door. And if you are told to leave, don't hesitate! This is why it's important to discuss and practice an emergency plan with your family in advance of a fire or other catastrophic event. Firefighters routinely train so that when they are called to act, they can do so quickly and efficiently. The same philosophy applies to you and your family. Practicing your emergency evacuation plan can mean the difference between life and serious injury or death.

Visit <https://www.sandiego.gov/fire/safety/tips/readyssetgo> to download your personal wildland fire action guide. The guide is available in English and Spanish and includes extensive preparedness information as well as helpful photos, recommendations and checklists.

###