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## **COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY WORK PAYS OFF IN FACE OF FIVE FIRES**

### **Fire Safe Councils in Butte County Log \$89 Million Prevention Success**

PARADISE, Calif. (August 13, 2004) – While the Jones Valley fire burned scores of homes in Shasta County, residents of nearby Butte County fared better, thanks in part to strategic fire safety projects by Fire Safe Councils that helped firefighters prevent the Oregon fire from burning almost 200 homes worth approximately \$39 million.

Home clean-up, chipper and shaded fuel break projects have been instrumental in mitigating loss in this and four other fires since last month.

With full containment of the Oregon fire expected today, the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council is assessing the effectiveness of its dooryard education program. Funded by a National Fire Plan grant from the Bureau of Land Management and Title III funds, the Yankee Hill FSC uses citizen volunteers who go door-to-door to educate and encourage neighbors to make their yards safe from wildfire.

Just a half-mile from the fire, Carol Robird's recently cleaned-up yard became defensible space for two fire engines that set up a base to fight the flames.

"Carol's house was right in the fire's path. But she didn't panic. She felt good about being able to provide a safe zone for the fire crews. And she knew how to evacuate safely, thanks to the dooryard education we'd done with her," said Valerie Glass, of the Yankee Hill Fire Safe Council.

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Fire crews on another part of the fire found a clear path along Red Tape Road, which had lived up to its name until 10 days ago when homeowners used the Butte County Fire Safe Council's chipping program to complete removal and chipping of heavy brush to make the road passable for fire engines.

The chipper program is funded by a \$79,670 grant from California Fire Safe Council and BLM, by Title III funds, by the local air quality management district and through the support of residents. It and other projects are also in partnership with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection/Butte County Fire Department.

Elsewhere in the County, the West Branch Shaded Fuel Break helped save homes, a hospital and a retirement center valued at approximately \$50 million, according to Brenda Rightmyer, Executive Director of the Butte County Fire Safe Council.

The shaded fuel break was created using BLM National Fire Plan grants. Earlier this month, two fires burned in the fuel break, while another burned just 50 feet away. Firefighters used the fuel break as the access point and extinguished them while they were what firefighters referred to as "spots."

The fuel break also provided a safe zone last month when firefighters made quick work of the Dean Place fire.

"I got a call from the Battalion Chief as he was standing in the fuel break admiring it. That's the kind of call that makes your day. Unfortunately, fire prevention programs like our chipper project are in jeopardy due to lack of funding" said Rightmyer.

"As we see National Fire Plan funding for these projects cut, Fire Safe Councils are always asked to show a fire we've prevented. I think we just did," said Bruce Turbeville, Chairman of the California FSC.

The California FSC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership and support that mobilizes all Californians to make their homes, communities and environment safe from wildfire. The California FSC plans to give almost \$5 million in National Fire Plan grants from California Fire Alliance member agencies, the BLM, US Forest Service, National Park Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to California communities in 2004 and 2005.

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