



NEWS RELEASE

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March 18, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To view the video of our crews working on this project, click [here](#)

Subject: OCFA Illustrates How Drought Conditions Have an Impact on Wildfire Preparedness

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Cowan / Lemon Heights, CA – OCFA came out to showcase how partnerships and hard work can create a safer community. OCFA's Hand Crew cleared more than 75 eucalyptus and 80 palm trees along with 8,000 cubic yards of hazardous vegetation in an effort to provide clearance in a fire prone neighborhood in the Cowan/Lemon Heights area. Past fire history shows widespread damage and destruction due to wind driven fires in that area including the Green River Fire in 1948 that blackened 47,000 acres and consumed 22 homes; the Stewart Fire in 1958 that burned 66,400 acres and destroyed 16 homes; and, the Paseo Grande Fire in 1967 that burned more than 49,000 acres with 66 homes lost. The last large fire, the Santiago Fire back in 2007, scorched more than 28,400 acres and destroyed 15 homes and is considered the largest fire in Orange County in the past 40 years.

The Cowan/Lemon Heights area is our ["Oakland Hills,"](#) and is at significant risk because of its close proximity to the wildland, dense population, and limited access/evacuation routes. OCFA has been proactively working in this area for the past two years to inform and ready the community. They created the North Tustin Fire Safe Council including residents, community leaders, and businesses to better coordinate preparedness in this area.

OCFA received approximately \$150,000 of grant money to perform hazardous fuel removal work in the Peters Canyon/Cowan Heights area. The grant funding is from the US Forest Service and is being administered through the Fire Safe California Grants Clearinghouse. OC Parks Restoration Ecologist, Jennifer Naegele, worked with OCFA to remove non-natives from Bent Tree Park and Peters Canyon Regional Park. Non-native plants removed by OCFA in this project included palm, pepper and Eucalyptus trees, Pampas grass, and castor bean. This project helps return Peters Canyon Regional Park to its native state for park visitors and wildlife to enjoy.

The lack of water and rain is making the hillsides very dry and volatile; by working with OC Parks and Supervisor Spitzer's office we can create communities that are proactive and seek out various ways to keep them prepared and safe. It is the resident's responsibility to be prepared by hardening their home with fire resistant building materials, maintaining 100-feet of defensible space, and being prepared with emergency supplies and evacuation routes. For more extensive wildfire preparedness information, visit www.readyssetgoc.org.

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