



SRCA Newsletter Article June 2010



Firebreaks in SR

Since 2004 the Scripps Ranch Fire Safe Council (SRFSC) has helped provide firebreaks for 23 neighborhoods and 1,200 homes.

A common question is, "What guidelines are applied when creating firebreaks?" The answer: "It depends." To better understand, it helps to have some background. In 1997 county, state, and federal agencies came to an agreement on what constituted a safe firebreak along a "Wildland/Urban Interface," or WUI. The agreement stated that all flammable vegetation within 100 feet of a structure should be removed.

The city of San Diego established different firebreak guidelines, including removing dead growth and spacing the canopies of remaining vegetation. The guidelines were hard to apply in communities such as Scripps Ranch that are dominated by large mature trees.

The SRFSC participated as part of the Scripps Ranch team that worked with the city fire chief to achieve a definition and guideline for "Eucalyptus Woodland" areas such as Scripps Ranch. This guideline shifted focus from canopy spacing to the removal of higher risk ground and ladder fuel, the vegetation that can potentially lead ground fires upward toward the crowns of large trees.

The guideline ultimately agreed to by the fire chief will establish protection for thriving eucalyptus trees with trunk diameters greater than three inches at about four-and-a-half feet above ground level. For more about the SRFSC, please visit [www.srfiresafecouncil.org].