

BULLETIN

Risk Control

ACWA/Joint Powers Insurance Authority, 5620 Birdcage Street, Suite 200, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-7632, (800) 231-5742

by John Haaf

July 2008

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS – Invest Now or Pay Later!

One of the most often overlooked “opportunities” agencies have is the chance to learn from the accidents they experience, and by doing so, prevent similar occurrences in the future. A well thought-out and executed accident investigation is not only required by the State-mandated (8 CCR 3203) Injury Illness Prevention Program (IIPP), it is a long-recognized good business practice for responding to property and liability losses as well.

While there are many methods for performing accident investigations, the ultimate purpose is to **DO SOMETHING** to prevent similar losses. This includes:

- a. Take steps to determine the causes contributing to an accident.
- b. Identify the factors that if removed or changed, would have prevented the accident.
- c. **Most important of all, take actions** to keep events like the accident from happening again.

The importance of taking corrective actions cannot be emphasized enough! This includes taking immediate action to correct hazards that contribute to losses, following-up on long-term actions that may be needed, and briefing staff on the findings of accident investigations and the status of corrective actions.

Remember, the ultimate purpose for the time and energy put into an accident investigation is to **prevent similar losses**. One of the final and most overlooked steps in the investigation process is that of changing the investigation’s focus from a narrow perspective involving a specific loss, to a broader review of how

other operations, procedures, and conditions could experience the same types of losses. Once that review occurs, actions must be taken to ensure accidents in those areas do not occur either.

The JPIA evaluates the quality of accident investigations and their results to get an indication of a member’s commitment to loss prevention. The following indicators are used in this evaluation:

- a. Are accident investigation reports sent to the JPIA whenever a workers’ compensation claim is made?
- b. Do accident investigation reports show the actions taken to prevent recurrence of the accident?
- c. Do agencies have a procedure to follow-up the corrective actions until they have been completed?

Should there be problems satisfying any of the above indicators, the JPIA Risk Management personnel can assist members to take advantage of lessons learned from accident investigations, through training and/or consultations. Agency supervisors should not, however, wait for the JPIA to point out the weaknesses in their loss prevention programs. If accident reports are not being completed for every accident, if corrective actions are not being taken and annotated, or if accident investigation reports are not being forwarded to the JPIA for review, agency practices and procedures must undergo internal changes.

Remember, accomplishing accident investigations and applying the lessons learned from them are not only a regulatory requirement; they also make good business and operations sense. Ideally, there will never be any accidents. If, however, there are accidents, can additional losses of the same kind be afforded? What are you going to do to prevent them?



A thorough accident investigation is a good “first step”. The attached “Steps for Effective Accident Investigations” can assist that process.

JPIA RISK ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

You might wonder what the JPIA Risk Management personnel do when they come to your agency. The goal of Risk Management is to identify ways to reduce the potential for property, liability, and workers’ compensation losses. This is accomplished in part by reviewing your agency’s loss prevention programs and procedures, conducting safety and operations training, and by inspecting agency facilities.

Much of what is accomplished in the facility inspection is similar to what your agency accomplishes during its “periodic” hazard assessments (safety inspections). Since Risk Management has a limited one or two day view of your agency, it is tremendously important you know about the hazards being found. With that knowledge, you can look and correct problems that may develop during the entire work year. The following are some of the hazards, procedural errors, and potential loss-producers often found during a JPIA Risk Assessment:

- a. Electric extension cords used in place of permanent wiring.
- b. Three-pronged electric plugs missing the grounding pin. Plugs with missing pins must be removed from service or repaired by a qualified electrician.
- c. The outer casings of extension cords are cut. The best practice is to remove the cord from service.
- d. The outer casing of extension cords pulled away from plugs. Once again, the plug must be removed from service or repaired by a qualified electrician.

- e. Failure to have labels for all circuit breakers in junction boxes.



Every circuit breaker in the panel should be labeled. If a breaker serves no circuit, it should be replaced by a blank, or labeled as not used.

- f. Failure to inspect fire extinguishers and emergency eyewash/showers monthly. Extinguisher pressure indicators should show good pressure (in the green). Eyewash and showers should work properly, and the water flowing from them should be clean. Monthly inspections must be documented.
- g. Failure of emergency response plans to identify facility evacuation assembly areas.

Assembly areas must be identified so personnel know where to go during a facility evacuation so they can be accounted for. Assembly areas must be located in a safe area away from vehicle traffic, overhead electrical lines, gas lines, or other hazards that can be aggravated by disaster or emergency conditions (fire, earthquake, terrorist or workplace violence threat, etc.). Evacuation drills should exercise the use of assembly areas.

RISK CONTROL MANUAL - UPDATE

The **Cellular Phone Safety Policy** and the **Defensive Driver Training** documents found in the Risk Control Manual were recently updated. Please check the JPIA’s website at www.acwajpia.com under “Resources” then “Risk Control Manual”, to print and replace older versions of these forms, to keep your Risk Control Manual up-to-date. Call the JPIA at (800) 231-5742, Ext. 3126, or e-mail to tlofing@acwajpia.com to receive copies.

WILDFIRE DEFENSIBLE SPACES

The attached “*Homeowner’s Guide to Fuel Modification*” from the San Diego County, is provided as a reminder to develop a defensible space around all facilities. Such areas greatly help protect structures and equipment from fires and provide safe zones for firefighters.

Risk Management Staff

Keith Forbes, Senior Risk Management Consultant
John Haaf, Senior Risk Management Consultant
Peter Kuchinsky II, Senior Risk Management Consultant
Lee Patton, Senior Risk Management Consultant
R. Scott Wood, Risk Management Consultant
Terry Lofing, Administrative Assistant II

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION PROCESS

STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

STEP 1: List All Known Facts:

- List the conditions and events leading to the accident.
- Arrange in chronological order.

STEP 2: Indicate The Causes Of the Accident:

- Indicate the conditions and/or actions that could have contributed directly to each fact listed.
- Factors to Consider: Environment, Design, Procedures, Human Behavior.

STEP 3: List Corrective Actions For Each Cause:

- Indicate the Immediate & Long-Term actions that can eliminate or reduce the risk of similar events.

STEP 4: Identify Root Causes Of the Accident:

- Identify (highlight, circle, asterisk, etc) the facts which, *had they not been present*, would have *kept the accident from happening*.
- These events form a chain-of-events which are the “root” of the accident.
- The causes associated with these facts are the “Primary” or “Root” Causes.

STEP 5: Select The Corrective Action(S) To Be Implemented:

- Corrective actions for the Root Causes should take priority.
- Also indicate the person responsible for ensuring each corrective action is fully implemented.

STEP 6: Indicate The Estimated Completion Date (ECD) Of Each Corrective Action:

- Indicate the date the corrective action(s) should be completed.
- Corrective actions for the Root Causes should take priority.
- If actions are not completed by the ECD, establish a new ECD.

STEP 7: Follow-Up Corrective Actions Until Completed:

- Periodically review the status of all actions that are not completed.
- Annotate the date corrective actions are completed.

Homeowner's Guide To FUEL MODIFICATION

Reducing Combustible Vegetation Around Your Home

Many parts of the unincorporated areas of San Diego County share expansive, rural settings of native vegetation. These rural areas have natural fire cycles that place residents at risk.

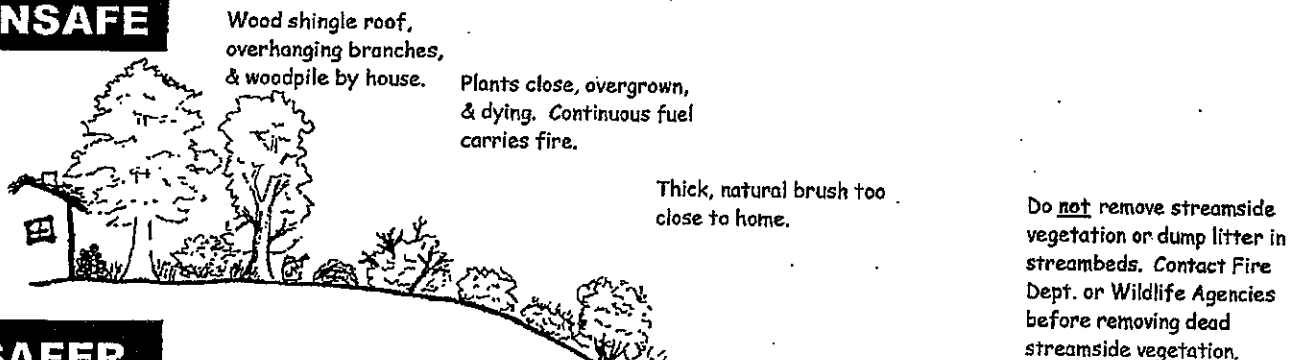
Creating a **Defensible Space** around your home will help protect your home and provide a safety zone for fire fighters. **Fuel Modification** is a key component of creating a **Defensible Space** around your home. Proper **Fuel Modification** breaks up the continuous path of fuel that could carry wildfire to your home.

3 R's of Defensible Space:

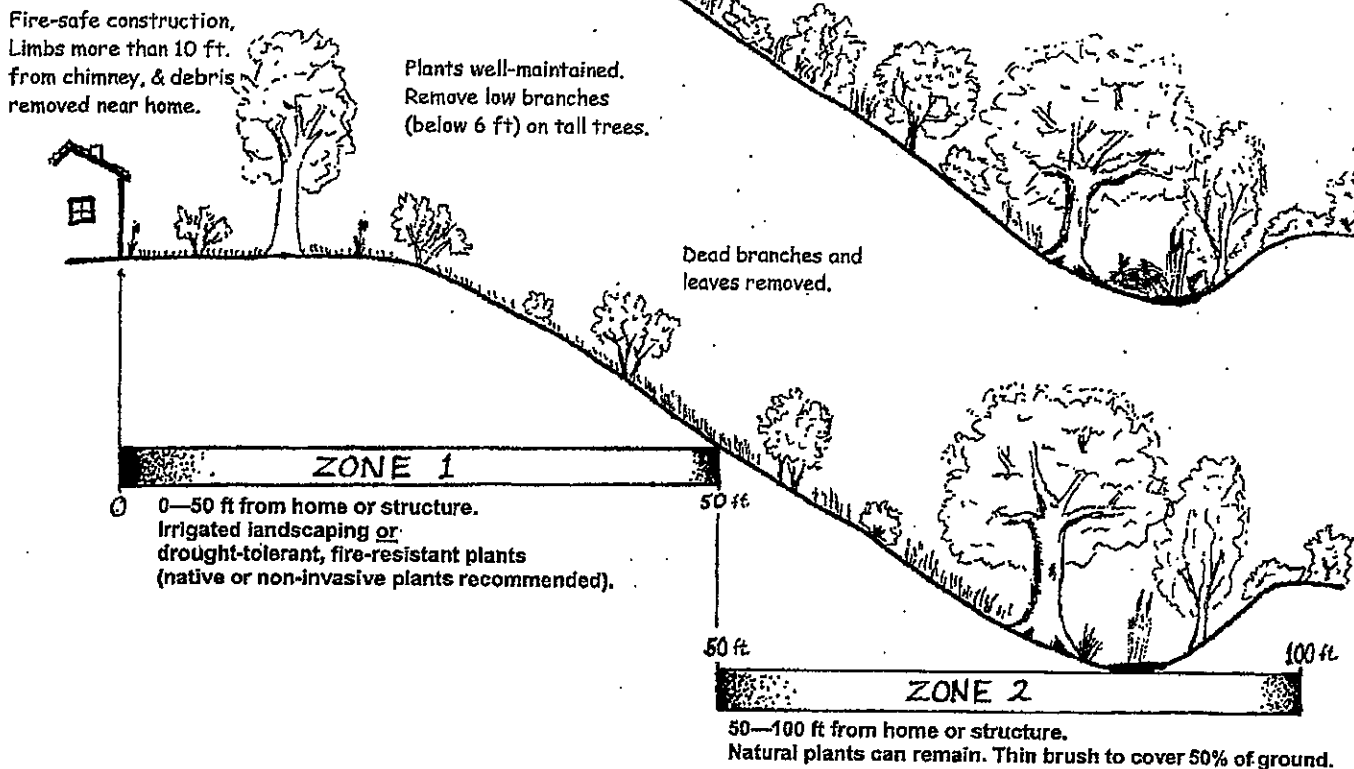
- REMOVE** dead and dying grass, shrubs, and trees.
- REDUCE** the density of vegetation — prune, mow, and thin.
- REPLACE** hazardous vegetation with less flammable plants or irrigated landscape.

Do **NOT** disc or scrape soil with machinery— this is not a grading permit.

UNSAFE



SAFER



BOTTOM LINE: Fuel Modification increases the chance that structures will survive a wildfire.

Weed/Brush Abatement Contractors Information Sheet

The following is a list of weed/brush abatement contractors that are familiar with weed abatement regulations. This list is for your convenience only and is not an endorsement by North County Fire Protection District.

Aztec Landscaping Inc.
7980 Lemon Grove Wy.
Lemon Grove, CA 91945
(800) 281-9909
www.azteclandscaping.com

California Tree Service
334 Mulberry Dr.
San Marcos, CA 92069
(760) 510-8100
nick@caltreeserve.com

Daniel Tractor Service
PO Box 51
Winchester, CA 92596
(760) 468-6299

Fallbrook Ag Pro
Gary Fisher
1167 E. Mission Rd.
Fallbrook, CA 92028
(760) 723-1541

North Tree Fire
10674 Ramirez Road
Marysville, CA. 95901
(800) 347-3688
northtreefire.com

Sierra Labor
PO Box 1537
Temecula, CA 92593
(760) 742-3258

**Banners Professional Weed
Abatement**
14785 Puma Trail
Valley Center, CA. 92082
(760)751-2777
chris@bridgetbanner.com

Cascade Brush Clearing
Richard Brown
(760) 703-6300
(800) 945-3873

Daniels Farm Service
2537 N. Stage Coach Ln.
Fallbrook, CA. 92028
(760) 731-2504
Lic# 907980

Fire Prevention Services Inc.
PO Box 1720
El Cajon, CA 92022
(619) 562-1058
dkimney@fireprevention.net

Pestmaster Services
2929-B Oceanside Blvd.
Oceanside, CA 92054
(760) 729-1315
bart@sbcglobal.net

Southwest Fire Protection
Dan Broz
PO Box 2415
Sun City, CA 92586
(951) 852-3911

Bishops Tree Service
PO Box 230020
Encinitas, CA 92023
(760) 720-9649

Dan Barnes Mowing Service
728 East Elder St.
Fallbrook, CA 92028
(760) 731-0985

East Brothers Grove Service
112 E. Aviation
Fallbrook, CA 92028
(760) 731-2013
ebgroveserv@sbcglobal.net

McHolland Services
Matt McHolland
40475 Gavilan Mtn. Rd.
Fallbrook, CA 92028
(760) 728-1780
brushbuster@juno.com

Powerland Equipment
27943 Valley Center Rd.
Valley Center, CA 92082
(760) 749-1271
malcom@powerlandequipment.com

Twenty Four Hour Fire Protection
2012 East Vista Way
Vista, CA 92084
(800) 799-5132
jeff@24fire.com

NORTH COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

315 East Ivy Street · Fallbrook, California 92028-2138 · (760) 723-2005 · Fax (760) 723-2004 · www.ncfire.org

NORTH COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Vegetation Management Standards

The North County Fire Protection District's comprehensive community-wide vegetation management and weed abatement program exists to better protect the community from the threat of wildfire. ***These regulations apply even if you own or maintain vacant land, including lands with non-maintained groves/orchards or dedicated open space easements.*** *If you own or maintain such property, you will be responsible for these clearance requirements around adjacent structures on adjoining properties as well as along roadways adjoining your property.* Enforcement of this program is pursuant to Section 3 of NCFPD Ordinance 2007-02 and San Diego County Fire Code, Appendix II-A. ***You are hereby notified that in order to reduce the danger to life and property from destructive brush fires, these codes and ordinances require the following:*** (Please refer to North County Fire's web site for recommended landscape practices). <http://www.ncfire.org>

1. Maintain 100' clearance of native and dead vegetation from structures, excluding isolated single specimens, as measured horizontally from edge of structure or to property line. Structures include residences and garages which are either attached or within 10' of residences, and buildings designed to house farm animals.
2. Maintain clearance of all native vegetation (excluding isolated single specimens) and dead vegetation along both sides of roadways and driveways, measured 20' horizontally from edge of pavement or improved roadway width.
3. Maintain a 13'6" vertical clearance of all vegetation from all roads and driveways along entire width of road/driveway.
4. Maintain horizontal clearance of all vegetation along edge of roads and driveways across entire improved width of road and/or driveway.
5. Maintain 10' clearance of combustibles (vegetation, rubbish) around propane tanks.
6. Maintain trees adjacent to or overhanging a building free of dead wood.
7. Mature trees within 100' of structures must be trimmed to 1/3 the height or 6' above the ground (whichever is greater) and 10' from chimney outlets. Palm trees must have all dead frawns removed.
8. Remove debris from under trees which exceeds 6" in depth.
9. Maintain roof of structure free of leaves, needles or other dead vegetative growth.
10. Remove garbage, refuse, trash, cuttings, trimmings, or other combustible waste material from property or along driveways or roadways.

If you own property that includes Orchards, Groves or Vineyards there are new requirements that apply to your parcels. These requirements went into effect January of 2008.

Section 604.5.3 Orchards, Groves or Vineyards

All orchards, groves, and vineyards shall be kept in a healthy state and maintained as described below. A 10-foot firebreak shall be cleared between the perimeter, orchard trees or row of grape vines and native vegetation or ornamental landscaping. Orchards shall be kept clean of dead or downed trees. Orchards and vineyards shall be free of combustible debris, dead branches and dead foliage. All dead grasses between rows of trees or vines shall be mowed or disked to bare soil. (These rules apply, no matter the lot size.)

Section 604.5.4 Eucalyptus Forests and Oak Woodlands

All forests and woodlands shall be kept in a healthy state and maintained as described below. The forest or woodlands shall be free of all dead, dying or diseased trees (excluding tree stumps no higher than six inches above the ground). Dead, dying or diseased trees shall include insect infested trees, no longer living, in the last stages of growth or infected by a pathogen of any type. If combustible vegetation is located underneath a trees drip line, the lowest branch shall be at least three times as high as the understory brush or grasses, or ten feet whichever is greater.

Landowners who are adjacent to riparian areas (wetlands), vernal pool depressions, open space easements, have the potential for rare, threatened or endangered species or have received notice from the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the occurrence of rare, threatened, or endangered species on their property in areas subject to these clearance requirements must notify both agencies in writing at least 10 days prior to vegetation clearing. The agencies will have up to 10 days following such notification to (1) determine whether the proposed clearing complies with State and/or Federal endangered species requirements and (2) to suggest voluntary, alternative abatement measures if feasible and warranted. Failure of the agencies to respond within 10 days will allow the landowner to proceed with abatement activities without further delay. Failure by landowners to provide adequate notification as described above may render landowners liable under State and Federal law.