



# Equipment Use Safety

## Are **You** doing the right thing, the wrong way?

Are you doing the right thing the wrong way -for example, trying to eliminate the fire hazards around your home and in the process starting a wildland fire? Each year CAL FIRE responds to more than 1,600 fires started by Californians using equipment the wrong way.

Whether working to create a defensible space around your home, just mowing the lawn, or pulling your dirt bike over to the side of the road, if you live in a wildland area you need to use all equipment responsibly. Lawn mowers, weed eaters, chain saws, grinders, welders, tractors, and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire. Do your part, the right way, to keep your community fire safe.

## Here's how to do it the **Right Way**:

- Do all yard maintenance that requires a gas or electrical motor before 10 a.m. **Not in the heat of the day, or when the wind is blowing!**
- Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawns. **Never** use lawn mowers in dry vegetation.
- Use a weed trimmer to cut down dry weeds and grass.
- Remove rocks in the area before you begin operating any equipment. A rock hidden in grass or weeds is enough to start a fire when struck by a metal blade.
- In wildland areas, spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline powered equipment including tractors, harvesters, chain saws, weed eaters, mowers, motorcycles, and All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).
- Keep the exhaust system, spark arresters and mower in proper working order and free of carbon buildup. Use the recommended grade of fuel and don't top off.
- Keep the engine free of oil and dust, and keep the mower free of flammable materials.
- In wildland areas, a permit may be required for grinding and welding operations, and spark shields may be required on equipment. Be sure to have 10 feet of clearance, a 46" round point shovel, and a backpump water-type fire extinguisher ready to use.
- Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can start fires you won't even see, until it's too late!  
**Don't pull off into dry grass or brush.**
- Keep a cell phone nearby and call 911 **immediately** in case of a fire.



**San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District**

**2850 Via Orange Way, Spring Valley, CA 91978**

**(619) 670-0500 [info@sanmiguelfire.org](mailto:info@sanmiguelfire.org)**

## **Standard of Abatement**

1. Trash, rubbish, debris, and other combustible materials, which create a fire or safety hazard, must be removed from the property.

2. Properties of one (1) acre or less shall be cleared in their entirety.

3. Properties larger than one (1) acre:

Shall have a minimum of fifty feet (50') of clearance from the property lines that abut improved properties.

Shall have a minimum of one hundred feet (100') of clearance from structures (both your structures and your neighbors' structures).

Note: Improved property means any property upon which there is a habitable structure for humans or animals.

4. Roadways and/or driveways shall have a minimum of ten feet (10') of clearance on each side of, and to a height of thirteen and one-half feet (13½'), above the road and/or driveway surface.

5. Sloped properties (10% grade or greater) may require greater clearance on the down slope.

6. Distances shall be measured in a horizontal plane.

7. Clearance Requirements:

- Clearance of properties shall be accomplished by methods that will not disturb native soil or rootstock. Native chaparral may be thinned as approved by the Fire District. Cuttings may be mulched and left on top of the soil to a maximum depth of six (6) inches or may be hauled to an approved County landfill site.

- Mature trees must be trimmed to six (6) feet above the ground, or as approved by the Fire District, and must be cut back at least ten (10) feet from chimneys. All leaves, bark, and other debris must be removed from the ground and roof.

- These abatement standards shall not be construed to authorize grading which does not comply with the San Diego County regulations regarding grading, clearing, and watercourses found in Division 7 of Title 8 of the San Diego County Code.

Note: Property owners who have been notified of the existence of a rare, threatened, or endangered plants on the property to be cleared must notify the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at least 10 days in advance of undertaking the vegetation clearance. If the property owner is aware of any state or federally listed species on the property, then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife should be notified prior to abatement. If a state or federal candidate or protected species is killed, injured, or captured, the property owner shall report this information to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. If you suspect you may have a species of Coastal Sage or known Gnatcatcher habitat on your property or area in question, a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be required prior to abatement.