



## For Immediate Release

**Contacts: Santa Clara County FireSafe Council**

Jenn Viane Riese, [JennVR@SCCFireSafe.org](mailto:JennVR@SCCFireSafe.org), (408) 975-9591

Shannon Dinis, [Shannond.SCCFireSafe@gmail.com](mailto:Shannond.SCCFireSafe@gmail.com), (408) 975-9591

## **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Receives Hazardous Fuel Reduction Grant for South Santa Clara County from USDA Forest Service for Defensible Space Chipping Programs**

**Morgan Hill, March 6, 2009** – The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC), a local non-profit organization dedicated to preventing wildfires in Santa Clara County, is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a grant for \$37,971 from the USDA Forest Service to help residents build Defensible Space around their homes. This grant will allow the organization to expand its current programs in the high fire risk areas of Morgan Hill, San Martin, Gilroy and south San Jose. The funding will be used for the SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs and critically needed Community Outreach and Education efforts.

In 2008, the SCFSC Hazardous Fuel Reduction Chipping Program has successfully protected over 2,100 homes, 6,300 people and over \$2.1 billion in property values in Santa Clara County. SCFSC has been expanding its Chipping Programs into the high fire risk areas west of Morgan Hill, Gilroy and San Martin. This new grant funding will allow SCFSC to respond to the increased interest in Defensible Space Chipping Programs resulting from the volatile wildfire season of 2008.

“The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council’s Defensible Space Chipping Programs are an important, underused resource to prevent wildfires,” says SCFSC President Jerry Serpa, “We are encouraged that, in the aftermath of this year’s wildfire season, residents have taken advantage of these free programs to help protect their homes and hope they will continue to do so with this new grant funding.”

Considering the severe wildfire season this year and the close proximity of the Summit Fire to many Santa Clara County residences, the need for these programs is clear. The risk for loss of life and structure is very high in these populated areas, and the SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs are designed to minimize this risk. SCFSC expects to complete 30 Defensible Space Chipping projects over the one year period of this grant. Homeowners will clear Defensible Space around permanent structures and the SCFSC will hire a contractor to chip the vegetation into mulch that homeowners can use. In addition, this grant will fund at least five Special Needs Assistance Programs where SCFSC will coordinate both the clearing and chipping for qualified low income seniors or disabled residents. Through Federal Grants and local matching funds, SCFSC is able to provide these services to the community free of charge. SCFSC appreciates tax-deductible donations of any amount to help sustain these programs into the future.

To learn more about these free Chipping Programs, or the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, visit the SCFSC Website at [www.SCCFireSafe.org](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org). The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is “Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires.” The council meets at 2:00 PM on the second Tuesday of each month. Interested organizations and individuals are welcome to attend! For more information and meeting locations, see [www.SCCFireSafe.org](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org), e-mail [info@SCCFireSafe.org](mailto:info@SCCFireSafe.org) or call (408) 975-9591.

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