



## For Immediate Release

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## **Santa Clara County FireSafe Council launches federally funded Defensible Space Chipping Programs to help residents prepare for wildfire season**

San Jose, May 8, 2007 – The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC), a local non-profit group dedicated to preventing wildfires in Santa Clara County, has launched Defensible Space Chipping Programs to reduce hazardous fuels in selected areas of the county. These programs are funded by \$90,442 in federal grants from the USDI Bureau of Land Management. They had also recently learned that two additional federal grant applications have been chosen for future funding. If approved later this year, these \$84,656 awards will provide the money necessary to continue these new Chipping Programs next year.

“This is really exciting and very timely news,” said SCFSC president, Patrick Congdon. “Wildfire Awareness Week is May 6-12 this year and we’ve been working very hard to get our Defensible Space message out to the residents of the hillside areas around our county. This funding will support our efforts to not only educate, but to actually help residents create safer communities. It’s a sign that the federal government recognizes that Santa Clara County needs to be vigilant in order to prevent an Oakland Hills or Southern California-type disaster.”

With the start of the 2007 Wildfire Season coming soon, SCFSC is launching its pilot Chipping Programs in two areas: the East Foothills near Alum Rock Park, where last year’s “Suncrest Avenue Fire” burned a swath of grassland near some hillside homes, and to the county’s vulnerable west side in the Lexington Hills, where a 1985 fire burned over 14,000 acres and took a week to extinguish.

Residents of the Aldercroft Heights, Chemeketa and Redwood Estates neighborhoods above Los Gatos in the Santa Cruz Mountains have been working with SCFSC secretary, Rick Parfitt, to finalize their chipping plans, including drop-off locations and contractor schedules, before the hot days of summer and the wildfire season descend on the area. SCFSC is also reaching out to East Foothills and East San Jose residents, as well as communities west of Morgan Hill, San Martin and Gilroy, to offer chipping services to residents in those areas.

These federal grants, and local matching funding from area individuals, companies and organizations like Pacific Gas and Electric Company and San Jose Water Company, enable SCFSC to provide these services free-of-charge. SCFSC is also offering more extensive assistance to qualified seniors and disabled residents through its Special Needs Assistance Program or SNAP.

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). SCFSC also has a 20-page, guide for homeowners and residents available on-line or by mail. The guide, *Living With Fire in Santa Clara County*, is at [www.SCCFireSafe.org/FireSafe/LivingWithFire.htm](http://www.SCCFireSafe.org/FireSafe/LivingWithFire.htm) and is appropriate for the Wildland Urban Interface areas. It illustrates how to create Defensible Space and use fire resistant plants and roofing materials.

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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. SCFSC appreciates tax-deductible donations of any amount.

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