

Tierrasanta Fire Safe Council
Will Conduct its First Meeting on September 27, 2006

The goal of the Tierrasanta Fire Safe Council (T-FSC), initiated by resolution of the Tierrasanta Community Council (TCC), is to increase fire safety by mobilizing volunteers to better protect homes, businesses, neighborhoods and communities. The Cedar fire was not long ago and the areas burned then have re-vegetated to a level that restores the fire risks seen before the fire. We are all concerned with the potentially devastating effects of wildfire on our families, homes, businesses and neighborhoods. We are all familiar with the areas of high vegetation on our slopes and in our canyons both in our neighborhoods and at the borders of Mission Trails Regional Park. The vegetation in these areas has grown through the years to high and in some places to extreme threat levels (See www.campbellot.com/firesafe_tierrasanta/). When we chose to live in our Tierrasanta wildland-urban interface, we accepted the risks of fire. The T-FSC volunteers work in cooperation with federal, state and local agencies that assist in community wildfire prevention, protection and preparedness. Being part of the T-FSC can help us help ourselves to learn and be proactive within our Tierrasanta neighborhood wildland interfaces to reduce the risk of another Cedar fire or worse while protecting the environment.

We are not alone. There are approximately 150 Fire Safe Councils in California, over 50 in the County of San Diego of which two are in the City of San Diego; Scripps Ranch and Talmage. In addition to forming the T-FSC, the TCC has approved the membership in the Federal Firewise Community program. As a Firewise Community, Tierrasanta will be assessed for fire hazards which will be used to help our T-FSC to prepare our Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The CWPP will identify Tierrasanta's greatest wildfire risks and the community projects that will address these risks. As members of both the FSC and Firewise Community the T-FSC has access to multiple grant opportunities for the purpose of meeting our goals and priorities defined in the CWPP. Grants will be available for both local and private properties. Another source that is promised for portions of City Council District 7 is low cost forgivable loans that will be available through the Grantville Redevelopment effort.

The TFSC is a partner with the San Diego County Fire Safe Council which is assisting us with our council formation, education, and grant development as well as being a member of the Firewise Assessment Team. Other partners include the San Diego Fire Department, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (who will lead the community assessment), Mission Trails Regional Park, City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department, Tierrasanta Community Emergency Response Team (T-CERT), Friends of Tierrasanta Canyons, Tierrasanta Maintenance Assessment District (MAD), Tierrasanta Open Space Committee (TOSC), and the San Diego River Park Coalition. As a Fire Save Council we have many other groups, businesses, and organizations as partners (See www.firesafecouncil.org/).

Just a few of the many projects the T-FSC might adopt include providing chipping services, creating fuel breaks, educating neighbors on defensible space, encouraging fire-wise landscaping, using goats for weed and brush abatement, improving signage and emergency communication systems, and developing evacuation plans. Currently the TOSC, MAD, and Friends of Tierrasanta Canyons accomplish some abatement, tree trimming and removal, and openspace trail improvements, but resources and volunteers are limited. In addition to the public safety issues, discussion may extend beyond safety, to earthquake preparedness, emergency medical response, etc.

One of the specific projects being considered are fire safe demonstration gardens designed to support homeowner fire wise awareness and as meeting places for instruction. The demonstration gardens will be in current openspace areas that would also be developed into pleasant, walkable parks with identified/annotated firewise groupings of vegetation.

Education will be included at meetings, in flyers, through websites and newspaper articles, at community events such as TierraFest. This education will consist of how to maintain the required 100 foot defensible spaces (See homeowner's checklist link at www.campbellot.com/firesafe_tierrasanta), fire proofing our homes, and vegetation management.

In addition to addressing the home environment, the T-FSC will work with our partners to address vegetation management in the open spaces, including brush thinning, pruning, and invasive species removal. Easy access must first be provided to allow work crews and volunteers into the target areas for this to be accomplished.

The success of the council depends upon the willingness and participation of the people/organizations of our community. An initial core group has been formed which includes members from the Friends of Tierrasanta Canyons, TCC, TOSC, and T-CERT. At the first community meeting we will introduce the core group and our government partners to the community and solicit volunteers to take the lead to form chapters in their Tierrasanta communities/HOAs or neighborhoods. Other volunteers will be needed to help bring together public and private organizations to discuss fire safety in our community.

The Tierrasanta Fire Safe Council will conduct its first formal community meeting on September 27, 2006 from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Tierrasanta Recreation Center complex swimming pool meeting room. The agenda with directions to the meeting will be posted through a link on the TCC website www.tierrasantacc.org. If you have any questions, suggestions or would like to be included in the T-FSC email list before the meeting please contact Lee Campbell at lee@campbellot.com.