

July 15, 2002

Dear Editor:

RE: FIRE SEASON 2002 – SAFETY MESSAGE

The 2002 fire season, predicted to be the worst in recent years, has already proved to be very active. The Los Angeles County Fire Department would like to share a few words about safety.

Our first priority is your personal safety followed closely by concern for your homes and property. If your residence is or will soon be threatened by fire, you can expect local law enforcement, sheriff deputies or California Highway Patrol officers, to advise you to do one of the following: voluntarily evacuate, shelter in place in your home, or that there is a mandatory evacuation.

In the case of a mandatory evacuation, we are expecting intense, erratic, unpredictable fire behavior that will place your lives in jeopardy. The officer or deputy sheriff will direct and route you to safety. Please follow the route to avoid conflict with fire apparatus.

In the case of a “voluntary” evacuation you can expect the fire department to arrive well in advance of the fire with resources capable of meeting the immediate threat. Fire intensity will be predictable and we fully expect to successfully defend your properties. You can help by clearing the street. Place your cars in the garage or on the driveway, close all your doors and windows, and take shelter in your home.

If an officer or deputy sheriff directs you to shelter in place, please place your cars in the garage and take shelter in your home. This situation usually takes place at the start of the incident creating an immediate threat to life and property. If you attempt to evacuate you may be placing yourself in harms way or block the route that the fire apparatus are using.

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A quick word about the electrical transmission lines and towers. When the smoke from the burning brush reaches the right density you can expect the high voltage lines to arc through the carbon in the smoke to the ground. With up to a million volts in these transmission lines, you will see an arc similar to a lightning strike. The minimum safe distance is 200 yards. Please be careful where you park, bike, or walk when fire conditions are present.

In all cases each fire apparatus has a company officer (orange helmet) that will give you advice should you become confused about the right course of action. I thank you for taking the time to read this and share it with your friends and family. It is our goal to keep you, your property and homes safe during this fire season.

Sincerely,

Larry Hambleton
Assistant Fire Chief
L.A. County Fire Department