



For Immediate Release

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Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Receives Grant for South Santa Clara County from USDA Forest Service for Defensible Space Chipping Programs

Morgan Hill, November 30, 2009 – The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC), a local non-profit organization dedicated to protecting homes and communities from wildfires in Santa Clara County, is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a grant for \$59,273 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 around 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 2007 and 2008, the SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs successfully protected 3,500 homes, 10,550 people, and \$3.5 Billion in property values in Santa Clara County. Accomplishments in 2009 to date include protecting over 2,700 homes, 8,000 people and \$2.6 billion in property values. SCFSC has been expanding its Chipping Programs into the high fire risk areas surrounding 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 several fires near our county and the increased fire hazard that has resulted from three consecutive drought years.

“The 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 in 2008 and the close proximity of the Summit, Lockheed and Loma Fires to many Santa Clara County residences this year, the need for these programs is clear. The risk for loss of life and structures is very high in these populated areas, and the SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs are designed to minimize this risk. SCFSC expects to complete 23 Defensible Space Chipping projects during this grant period. 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 three Special Needs Assistance Programs where SCFSC will pay for 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 and expand these programs.

To learn more about these free Chipping Programs, or the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, visit the SCFSC Website at 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, e-mail info@SCCFireSafe.org or call (408) 975-9591.

Funding provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council and by matching funding from companies and individual contributors. Funding for other programs provided by National Fire Plans grants from USDI Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council and by grants and donations from local agencies, companies, foundations, organizations and individual donors. The views and conclusions contained in this press release are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, local government or fire agencies, or the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute an endorsement by the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council or the U.S. Government.

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