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WILDFIRE AWARENESS WEEK TO LAUNCH FIRE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR NAPA RESIDENTS

NAPA, CA, May 9, 2005 – The Napa County Board of Supervisors will pay tribute to the County's professional firefighters and natural resource managers by proclaiming May 9-16 as Wildfire Awareness Week.

Diane Dillon, Chair of the Board of Supervisors, will introduce an official proclamation on Tuesday, May 10, at the regular session of the County Board of Supervisors. "We are joining counties throughout the state in acknowledging the start of wildfire season," said Dillon. "This proclamation is our way of alerting the citizens of Napa County that because of the amount of rain this winter and spring, it's especially important that we remind folks that now is the time to take preventative action. All you have to do is look around at the tall grass and lush green hills to realize this will be an early fire season."

A special feature of this year's Wildfire Awareness Week is the launch on Friday, May 13, at the Napa-Solano Home & Garden Show, of *Napa Firewise*. *Napa Firewise* is a community-based fire awareness program designed by city and county fire professionals to educate the residents of Napa County on the dangers wildland fire poses to them and their community. The program also provides specific steps each person can take to protect themselves, their family and their neighbors in the event a wildland fire occurs.

The Napa Firewise program is patterned after the national Firewise Communities program (www.firewise.org) that has roots in a national fire prevention effort begun in the early '90s by the National Fire Protection Association.

"*Napa Firewise* is good for the people of Napa County as well as the environment," says Tim Borman, Fire Chief for the City of Napa. "The program includes components of fire prevention, risk management, water conservation and vegetation management. There is something for everyone in this program."

"Collaboration is a key ingredient of the *Napa Firewise* program," says Ernie Loveless, Napa County Fire Chief. "Our program has become a model for collaboration at all

levels. It's an integrated mix of city and county agencies, professional trade organizations, volunteer agencies and citizens. Because fire does not recognize political boundaries, the message of the benefits of resource and information sharing comes through loud and clear."

Kate Dargan, Napa County Fire Marshal, and Darren Drake, Fire Marshal for the City of Napa, head up the *Napa Firewise* program.

"When you remember the devastating fires that ravaged the Oakland Hills in 1991 and San Diego County in 2003, it's easy to see how that could happen here," says Dargan."

"Education is our firefighting tool of choice," says Darren Drake. "Our communication outreach will target the residents of high-risk fire areas such as Angwin, Berryessa Highlands and Estates, Montecito Heights, Dry Creek, Browns Valley and other fire-sensitive areas where homes intermix with wildland vegetation."

One of the key ingredients of the *Napa Firewise* program is the concept of "defensible space." Sometimes referred to as "survival space," defensible space is an area approximately 30 to 100 feet in diameter around a home or structure where combustible fuels such as grass and brush have been removed or reduced to create an area where firefighters can safely defend the building.

In addition to reaching out to the community with Firewise educational meetings, *Napa Firewise* will be offering a free wood chipping program in selected neighborhoods in high-risk fire areas. Details of the program can be found on the *Napa Firewise* website, "Events" page, at www.co.napa.ca.us.

The community is invited to visit the *Napa Firewise* information booth at the Napa-Solano Home & Garden show at the Napa Valley Exposition Center on May 13 to 15. Information about the show can be found online at www.napahomeshow.com.

For additional information on the *Napa Firewise* program, visit www.co.napa.ca.us and click on the *Napa Firewise* logo, or call 707-967-1426. *Napa Firewise* is funded in part by a grant from the Western States Wildland Urban Interface Project.

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