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## Time is running out to remove your problem vegetation

By Nick Marnell



Firefighters put out a 5-acre brush fire behind a residence on La Salle Drive in Moraga on June 8. No structures were damaged and there were no injuries. The fire may have been caused by a person using a weed eater in the tall, dry grass. "Residents are reminded not to operate power equipment in dry grass during the heat of the day. It's safest to wait for high humidity in the early morning hours to cut grass," said Dennis Rein of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. Photo MOFD

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District weed abatement deadline hits June 15, and the district plans to increase the number of property inspections the week following the compliance date.

"The board authorized me to hire four more code enforcement personnel, and we will be out in full force this year to really enforce the ordinances," said Kathy Leonard, district fire marshal.

Heavy rains this fall and winter led to an excessive growth of plants and grasses, which turned from green to brown in very short order, providing plenty of fuel for vegetation fires once the summer heat settles in. And the heat arrived early this year. In the 95-degree temperatures of June 2, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District crews put out five fires, including a 23-acre vegetation fire - and none of those fires even occurred in Lafayette, the area of the district rated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Moraga and Orinda properties also escaped without major fire damage from the early-season heat wave.

But a long, hot fire season lies ahead. MOFD stresses that all property owners share the responsibility to provide a fire safe environment and maintain their properties free of exterior fire hazards throughout the fire season.

"If properties are inspected and found to be noncompliant, our staff will follow a legal process of notices, which can result in the district contracting to have the work done and a lien placed on the property to recover our costs," the district states on its website. Violations only occur if the required work is not completed by the June 15 deadline.

"It's not fair to the majority of the folks who take care of their properties," Leonard said of those in noncompliance. "We will be out to make sure that everybody does their part."

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