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Authorities: Lack of defensible space helped spread fire that burned six Reno homes

AUGUST 19, 2008

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The lack of defensible space contributed to the spread of fire that destroyed six homes Monday on Ridgecrest Drive in north Reno, the Reno Fire Department said Tuesday.

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Reno Fire Marshal Bill Burney also said Monday's fire was "eerily similar" to one in the same block in 2004 in which four homes were destroyed and another damaged.

"What is really frustrating is to have a second devastating fire occur in the same area under basically the same conditions despite the amount of information that has been made available over the years through public education programs that promote defensible space," Burney said in a statement released by the fire department.

Burney said people living in or adjacent to wildland areas can learn about defensible space measures for their homes by visiting the Living

With Fire Web site at www.livingwithfire.info . It provides information on defensible space distances depending on the location of a home.

Burney said defensible space measures are relatively simple and easy should at least include:

Creating a defensible space around structures, including fences and decks, of at least 30 feet by clearing away dead and dying vegetation (more may be necessary for homes located on hillsides), and limbing trees up 10 feet to 12 feet from the ground.

Using fire-resistant vegetation in landscaping, and fire-resistant and non-combustible building materials in construction.

Clearing vegetation from underneath deck areas and keeping storage including woodpiles from underneath those decks.

Monday's blaze started in a brush area near the bottom of the slope behind the homes on Ridgecrest Drive, the fire department said. The fire reacted to slope and winds and rapidly burned uphill through the brush and extending to the homes. The wood shake shingle roof of a duplex on nearby Scottsdale Road was also damaged by fire that apparently started from an ember carried by the winds from the fire on Ridgecrest Drive. The brush fire burned approximately 1 acre to 2 acres on the north side of the homes.

Investigators today are continuing to look into the cause of the 2:42 p.m. fire that started in a brush area at the base of the hillside below the homes and caused an estimated \$2 million in damages. Investigators also



People shift through the remains Tuesday of the Ridgecrest Drive fire that destroyed six homes.

(Marilyn Newton/RGJ)

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seek information on the identification of juveniles witnesses say they saw run from the area about the time of the fire.

Investigators urge anyone with information concerning the Ridgecrest Drive fire to contact Secret Witness at 322-4900 where information can be provided anonymously, or the Reno Fire Department at 334-2300.

Although no serious injuries were reported during the fire, two firefighters were treated at the scene for heat exhaustion, and another was taken to a nearby hospital for evaluation after being overcome from smoke inhalation. More than 50 Reno firefighters and support personnel responded to the fire with six structure engines, two ladder trucks, four wildland fire engines, a rescue unit and air support vehicle and including two battalion chiefs, two safety officers, and fire investigators. The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District sent a handcrew to assist with the wildland fire, and two structure fire engines to assist with backfill of fire stations, and the U.S. Forest Service sent two wildland engines to assist with the brush fire.

In Your Voice

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[lisamcb1](#) wrote:

Replying to [13579](#):

Not really thinking about them guys.

And what about all those people who build multi-million dollar homes in the path of hurricanes or in flood plains? The governor of those states declare a disaster and the feds comes in with low interest loans and/or grants and they rebuild even bigger. And we are the ones paying for a select few millionaires to have a beachfront homes. Underinsure and when the storm hits collect federal aid and have a loan interest that's less than the national average.

08/19/2008 2:32:36 p.m.

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[13579](#) wrote:

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08/19/2008 2:18:02 p.m.

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[lisamcb1](#) wrote:

Replying to [whatsupreno](#):

I agree, THIS is what I was getting at it is not a renters responsibility unless it is agreed upon. It is the homeowners responsibility. I dont even know if they were renters, but I do know a couple of friends that live nearby and they are renters....so one can assume. AND if they didnt have renters insurance we shouldnt just dismiss them as "ashes". I for one will help with what I can.....clothing is all I can help with but its a start.

If the homeowner had something in the rental agreement that the renter had to clear the brush for shame on the renter but if not for shame on the homeowner for not keeping their property protected and their renters protected.

08/19/2008 2:04:33 p.m.

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[syrin](#) wrote:



I would say a thrown tabaco might be a cause???
08/19/2008 1:56:26 p.m.

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[whatsupreno](#) wrote:

If the homeowner had something in the rental agreement that the renter had to clear the brush for shame on the renter but if not for shame on the homeowner for not keeping their property protected and their renters protected.
08/19/2008 1:55:49 p.m.



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