

DATE ISSUED: September 6, 2005

REPORT NO. 05-183

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council

SUBJECT: Rancho Penasquitos fire

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL.

On September 5, Labor Day, at 12:56 p.m., a fire of undetermined origin started in a canyon area behind Mount Carmel High School. Driven by winds of 10-15 miles per hour, air temperatures near 90 degrees and low humidity, the blaze quickly spread in an easterly and northeasterly direction through rugged brush-covered hillsides and canyons. It was headed in the direction of numerous subdivisions of thousands of homes in the Rancho Penasquitos in an area west of Carmel Mountain Road and south of Rancho Penasquitos Drive.

The first SDFD Incident Commander at the scene immediately called for two Strike Teams (10 apparatus; 42 personnel), in addition to air support from Copter 1. Additional air support was also requested from CDF and the U.S. Forest Service. In total, five helicopters and five air tankers responded to the fire, with CDF serving as the "air traffic controller."

There was excellent coordination between SDFD, the San Diego Police Department, San Diego City Schools and the Red Cross, which resulted in the orderly evacuation of more than 200 homes, with evacuation centers and staging area set up at two schools.

Because of other fires burning in the Riverside and Los Angeles areas where structures were also threatened, additional air resources were unavailable.

A total of 350 firefighters from San Diego and other county fire agencies responded to the fire. Because this was the only wildfire burning in San Diego County, adequate personnel and resources were provided.

The fire was forty-percent contained by 6:40 p.m. and evacuated residents were allowed back in their homes at 7:45 p.m. Firefighters were on the scene throughout the night. The fire was ninety-percent contained by this morning. Two-hundred personnel will be on the lines through today. Full control is expected by 8 p.m. tonight.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by:

Jeff Bowman
Fire Chief

P. Lamont Ewell
City Manager