



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- Santa Barbara County Live Fuel Moisture Levels -

SANTA BARBARA, Ca. November 4, 2013 – Live fuel moisture (LFM) is important for assessing fire danger. LFM is defined as the percentage of water content to dry matter content in live vegetation. Sixty percent is considered critical.

Santa Barbara County average LFM is at 62%, with some areas below critical.

The direct measurement of LFM is done by collecting fresh field samples of Chamise, drying them until all moisture is evaporated, and calculating the water content difference between fresh and dry samples. Field-sampled LFM are gathered at five locations throughout Santa Barbara County. They include Tepesquet, Harris Grade, Cachuma, Refugio and W. Gaviota. In extreme conditions, rapid dry down can happen in days, for example during Santa Ana winds affecting southern California.

Recent rains did not have an effect on the LFM's. Levels are still at or below critical levels. A fuel or topography driven fire is possible nearly every day. On November 13, 2008, Sundowner winds fanned the Tea Fire. The Tea Fire burned 1940 acres and destroyed 210 homes in the foothills above Montecito. The potential and susceptibility to large wildfires still exists this time of the year.

The Santa Barbara County Fire Department urges people to use caution in the coming months.

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