

# CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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## **Fire Marshal to Improve Building Safety Standards Assembly Bill Grants New Authority**

**Sacramento** – California State Fire Marshal John Tennant announced today that he will soon begin the process to improve standards for construction materials and building methods to provide a higher level of fire protection for structures that could be exposed to wildfire. Assembly Bill 1216, recently signed into law by Governor Davis enables the State Fire Marshal to develop building construction standards for homes and other structures that are built in wildfire-prone areas in order to make the buildings more fire-resistant.

Since 1992, wildfires have caused more than \$175 million in reported natural resource and property damage, and have resulted in hundreds of injuries and more than 50 deaths in California. In 2002, wildfires burned more than 480,000 acres and 1,248 structures in California, causing six deaths. California contains many areas that are at high risk of wildfires. Hundreds of new homes are constructed in these areas every year.

AB 1216, was supported by a wide range of organizations, including the California Fire Chiefs Association, Sierra Club, The Personal Insurance Federation of California, California Professional Firefighters and Pacific Gas & Electric.

The added authority provided in AB 1216 will allow the California State Fire Marshal to increase safety measures which will reduce the spread of fire to and from structures, save lives, minimize property loss, protect the environment, promote fire fighter safety, and reduce state firefighting costs. The building standards will affect exterior walls, attic eave vents, windows, and structure projections including porches, decks, balconies and eaves.

“We in the California fire service have studied the effects of development in the wildland interface for many years,” said California State Fire Marshal John Tennant. “This important legislation reflects the knowledge and experience that has proven that we need defensible spaces as well as defensible structures if we are to safely and economically develop in the wildland interface.”

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