

Barricade Fire Gel on the Mountain - The Palomar Experience

Location:

- San Diego County, California
- Community of Palomar Mountain
- Palomar Mountain State Park

Wildfire Protection Team:

- Fire Chief George E. Lucia Sr.
- Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire Department
- Community Emergency Response Team Volunteers
- Bill Leininger, CERT Leader

The Challenge:

- Santa Ana winds propel wildfires into many parts of San Diego County.
- Devastation will be heavy.
- Property losses will be high.
- One community is ready, and this is their story.



With support from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, Chief Lucia supplied his Fire Department with Barricade Fire Gel, and trained his team in the use of the new fire suppressant/retardant. More Barricade was stored at strategic locations around the neighborhoods.

CERT Leader Leininger coordinated the volunteer effort to prepare for the possibility of wildfire. They spent weekends training for what they hoped would never happen anywhere near their homes.

This mountain-top community had no recorded fire in over one hundred years and had been severely affected by the bark beetle due to dry drought conditions. The thick brush and dead standing timber, combined with only 2 small winding roads down the mountain as an escape route, heightened the fear.

Leininger directed a careful study of the mountainous terrain, the dry trees and grasses common in this area, prevailing wind direction and likely fire pathways. He organized Barricade training sessions, with the help of Dan Gouldner, Product Specialist from Barricade International in Florida.

One hot October night, the inevitable happened. Santa Ana winds whipped up 5 raging wildfires in Southern California and a two-week nightmare began.

The Palomar CERT teams did not hesitate.

They mobilized at 3 AM, to treat homes and historic structures with Barricade. When the fire struck, San Diego County had no resources left to share. The small mountain community guided by their Volunteer Fire Department and 3 Cleveland National Forest Type 3 engines, held the line for more than 24 hours.

Over the next two weeks, the CERT team volunteers were instrumental in the community-wide effort, helping with evacuation procedures, communications and supply logistics.

Chief Lucia's Palomar Mountain Volunteer Fire and Rescue crews worked tirelessly to protect their community, grateful for the work that the CERT teams did, which allowed firefighters to attack the fires head-on, with fewer concerns about structure protection.



Not a single death, injury or home was lost on the mountain as 50,000 acres burned!

Historic structures in the state park were saved, homes were saved, and even the evacuated fire station was saved with the help of Barricade. Their success is the result of cooperation between the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Fire Safe Council, the Cleveland National Forest, Cal Fire, California State Parks, the County of San Diego, Barricade International and the Community Emergency Response Teams. This story of cooperation is a model for other Community Wildfire Protection Plans.