

CALIFORNIA FIRE SAFE COUNCIL
COMMUNITY OUTREACH MANUAL
FIRE ALERT FLAG PROGRAM

Greater Laguna Coast Fire Safe Council

<http://www.lagunacoastfiresafecouncil.org/>

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Introduction

There is an additional program that we encourage local FSC's to consider that perfectly complements the Red Flag Patrols. We call this initiative the FIRE ALERT FLAG Program that is done in conjunction with the Red Flag Patrols. Our intent was to enlist the active involvement of local businesses and other interested parties (schools, churches, homeowner associations, etc.). The Greater Laguna Coast Fire Safe Council has provided attractive 3' by 5' red flags with the "Fire Alert" logo common to all the Red Flag Patrol items prominently featured. Program participants agree to display the flag during an official Red Flag Alert.

The purpose of the highly visible, bright red, Fire Alert Flag program is to first raise the general population's awareness that a high fire hazard condition exists and second to associate the participants with the practical activities of the Fire Safe Council. It is our intent that on Red Flag days, it will be difficult for the average motorist or pedestrian to fail to notice the number of bright red flags along the highways and to thus be more aware that they should be more careful with any activity that could start a fire.

Program Development

In order to get a community awareness program developed it is necessary to solicit the involvement and cooperation of local businesses and other local organizations. It is necessary to make contact with the owners or managers of each business or organization initially to explain the purpose of the Red Alert Flag program. This interaction is best accomplished by personally visiting the business or organization versus trying to establish the relationship over the telephone. If the business or organization does not agree to their involvement at the initial meeting then follow-up contacts or phone calls may be necessary. It is important to be communicating with an individual within the business or organization that has decision-making capabilities regarding their involvement.

An organization's involvement in the Red Alert Flag program is best sold as needing very little of their time and that their participation will have some positive publicity benefits. They get to feel a part of the community and help alert their fellow citizens that there is high fire hazard condition in effect.

The following information should be provided to the business or organization:

- The Red Flag will be supplied to the business by the Fire Safety Council.
- They will need to display the Red Flag in a prominent location when instructed.
- The Red Flag will need to be removed at the end of Red Flag Alert.

In order for the program to be successful the following should be verified:

- A contact(s) at the business or organization that will be aware of the involvement in the Red Alert Flag Program at all times.

- The business or organization has the means to display the flag in a prominent location. This may include a sturdy flag holder or some type hanging devices, such as hooks since the flags are large and the windy conditions will move them around quite a bit. Of course, large flags are needed in order to provide the best visibility and awareness.
- The business or organization is in a prominent and strategic location to provide maximum exposure to the community and anyone passing through the community or to the pedestrian traffic.

Implementation

Once established, the implementation of this program is relatively easy, requiring two phone calls to each participating organization. When a Red Flag Alert has gone into effect each business is notified to begin displaying the flag. They are contacted a second time when the alert has been cancelled and ask to take the flag down. If the alert is expected to extend into the next day they are encouraged to leave the flags out overnight, unless they are concerned with vandalism. The days and hours that a businesses is open will determine how long they will leave the flag out, especially if a weekend is involved.

Going into the second season with this program we are still looking for ways to refine it and make it easier for both the businesses and coordinators. We will be setting up a mass fax list that should be a more efficient way of contacting the businesses.

Program Costs

The direct costs of this program include the costs of the actual Fire Alert Flag, the flagpoles (that some participants may need to be an active participant), the initial artwork associated with the Fire Alert logo and set-up fee.

Since the Greater Laguna Coast Fire Safe Council has already incurred the expenses associated with the artwork, any other Fire Safe Council wishing to use this design is welcome to do so. Contact information can also be arranged with the local supplier to make purchases. Costs might vary slightly based on quantities involved.

The Greater Laguna Coast Fire Safe Council made a purchase of 100 Fire Alert flags, 50 flagpoles (25 of two different diameter poles), artwork design and artwork set-up. Although we have over 30 flags deployed currently, we hope to include more organizations for the next fire season and would ultimately like to have all 100 flags deployed for the next fire season. This will only increase the visibility and improve the program goal of increased community and visitor Fire Safety awareness and vigilance.

Equipment	Cost
100 Fire Alert Flags	\$3000
50 Flagpoles	\$ 250.
Fire Alert Artwork Design	\$ 150.
Fire Alert Artwork Set-Up	\$ 150.
Total Cost	\$3550

Results

The Fire Alert Flag Program was also a huge success. There were highly visible flags along the highways, in front of stores, on flagpoles around town. The flags met our objectives in terms of providing a visual reminder that the conditions around the area were extremely hazardous and fire danger was critically high.

As with the Red Flag Patrol, there were stories and even photographs in the local papers about the Fire Alert Flag Program. People noticed the flags and there were even inquiries from other businesses wanting a flag to fly. The success of the program was due to the efforts to sign up a critical mass of businesses and then to follow through with these places when the time of the alert actually came. Again, this program is logical and provides the individual business a way to demonstrate solidarity with their community and really help in an unsettling situation.

The Red Flag's relatively large size (3' by 5') contributed to the overall success of the awareness program since the wind usually provided sufficient strength to maintain the flags in the full open position.

Estimated Potential Exposure / Red Alert Awareness

With nearly 30 business or organizations involved with flying the Red Alert Flags in strategic locations along the only three possible entrances or exits to Laguna Beach it is estimated that the overall awareness and exposure to the Red Flag Alert conditions was significant. The traffic volume on the only three entrances and exits to Laguna Beach are as follows:

Road Name	Actual Average Daily Traffic Volume
Laguna Canyon Road	20,500
Coast Highway South of Laguna Canyon Road	45,000
Coast Highway North of Laguna Canyon Road	50,000
Total Traffic Volume	115,500

It is estimated that at a minimum each vehicle would potentially see 4 Red Flags during their journey. With the aggregate traffic volume being 115,500 vehicles per day. Therefore, the overall exposure is estimated to be 462,000 potential Red Alert Flag sightings per day. These figures are conservative, since the actual number of potential Red Alert Flag sightings, could, and most likely are higher than four per vehicle. The numbers are significant since the overall population of Laguna Beach is approximately

25,000. This would indicate that we are not only achieving significant awareness within the local community but with individuals that are passing through or visiting our community.

Lessons Learned

The following are some information that we derived from our program that may be considered to further assure the success of a community awareness program similar to the Red Alert Flag program implemented here in Laguna Beach:

- It takes persistence to make contact with the strategic business or organizations that you would like involved in the Red Alert Flag program. Many times it will take multiple attempts to get in contact with the decision making individual or to ultimately get the commitment.
- It is essential to have a proper contact(s) at each organization to assure that they are aware of the Red Alert Flag program and can properly perform their portion of the involvement.
- It is necessary for the business to have the means for flying the Red Alert Flag. It may be necessary to consider supplying a sturdy flag base to the business that are interested in being involved, but that do not have the proper means to fly a flag of this type. This would also assist when the business or organizations are leasing the space and are reluctant or prohibit from attaching anything to the outside of the building.
- The strategic location of the business or organization is critical in order to achieve the greatest overall heightened awareness goals of the Red Alert Flag program.

Red Alert Flag (3'X5')

