



MEDIA RELEASE

13-242

Date: Tuesday, August 27, 2013

District: 8- INLAND EMPIRE

Contact: Shelli Lombardo

Phone: (909) 383-4631

San Bernardino- As many as ninety percent of wild land fires in the United States are caused by humans. The remaining ten percent are started by lightning or lava. Fires caused by carelessness or arson can have tragic consequences for the public, firefighters, highway workers, wildlife, forests, streams, air quality and infrastructure.

What impacts do State highways suffer after a fire? Apart from the obvious, the need to repair the road, what can motorists expect in the immediate future? Erosion of the barren slopes caused by wet, winter weather has the ability to wreak havoc on mountain roads.

“Management concerns, after the recent fires in District 8, include consideration of the potential damage to the State highway system from rain storms until the re-growth of the adjacent vegetation,” stated Steve Pusey, Deputy Director, Maintenance, for District 8. “Significant fire events in mountainous areas have long term ramifications to mountain roads and, as a result, District 8 is already preparing for the coming winter.”

Caltrans began examining the adjacent slopes immediately following the Falls Fire, the Mountain Fire and the Sliver Fire identifying denuded areas that have the most likelihood of adversely affecting State highways 74 and 243. Winter storms can cause erosion, mudslides and debris flow on the slopes above the highways that will eventually find their way into culverts and drains along the roads. Caltrans is taking the necessary precautions to protect and maintain the drainage systems for these highways. The goal is to mitigate major damage to the roadways.

The Maintenance Department in District 8 is currently preparing for winter storms. Crews are removing loose debris and fallen trees within State right of way along the affected routes. Additional personnel will be assigned to the maintenance stations responsible for the highways within the burn areas and will provide 24/7 coverage during storm events. They will monitor slope activity, clean drains and, when necessary, utilize heavy equipment to clear the roadways.

Caltrans, District 8 Public Affairs, strongly urges drivers to visit the caltrans8.info web page and to utilize Caltrans8 social media such as twitter and Facebook to stay abreast of the road conditions on highways and interstates in District 8. Caltrans is dedicated to public service and strives for excellence and customer satisfaction.

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