



FEMA

Poway Home Spared by the Witch Fire

Poway, CA - Ken and Bonnie Constable will never forget the terror they experienced the morning of October 23, 2007, when a wind driven wildfire came up to their front yard. Remarkably, their home was spared, and even though they lost a well house, a water tank, and many trees, there were no major damages to the house itself.

The Constables received the reverse 911 call to evacuate the morning of October 22 before the fire had reached their area. By that night, they could see the fire coming over the hills, so Bonnie took the dogs and left to stay with her mother in the southern section of Poway.

Ken decided to stay and was awakened in the middle of the night by one of his neighbors, warning him that the fire had reached the west and south side of his property. Ken, his sons, friends, and some men in the neighborhood helped firefighters combat the fire as much as they could. They were successful in keeping it from all of the homes on their street.

The Constables have lived in their home in Poway for almost 30 years. They bought the home three years after it was built and have done many improvements over the years to make it safer. The 2,800-square-foot home, which is solar-powered, has a stucco exterior and a Class A fire-resistant (clay tile) roof.

Some of the improvements include an asphalt driveway in front of the house, concrete slab on the sides, and a pool area in the back separate the house from fruit trees and grassy areas, creating a defensible space. A defensible space around a home provides firefighters enough space to work, and it also prevents fire from transferring from one fuel source to another.

One of the main reasons why the Constables' home did not burn was due to the fact that they removed weeds from their property, considerably reducing ground fuel. This prevented the fire from propagating too fast. Ice plant at edges of their property also proved to be efficient in stopping the fire, according to Ken Constable.

Additional future mitigation measures include removing flammable trees and installing a pump for the swimming pool enabling them to use the 27,000 gallons of water for firefighting and to enclose the eaves on all sides of the house. They are committed to doing what they can to make their home safer.



San Diego County,
California



Quick Facts

Year:
1993

Sector:
Private

Cost:
Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:
Building Codes

Primary Funding:
Homeowner