



FEMA

Building Codes Protect Homes Wildfires Warded Off

Los Angeles County, CA - For Karen Stevens, her family, and neighbors in the Southern Oaks section of Stevenson Ranch, it was a blessing that the planned development where they live has a 200-foot-wide greenbelt around it designed to ward off wildfires. "There were plenty of embers flying around," said Stevens, whose home in Santa Clarita backs up to the Santa Susana Mountains.

These same mountains were set ablaze by the Simi Fire, one of 12 wildfires that burned more than 739,000 acres in five Southern California counties in Oct. 2003. Airdrops were made on the wildfire as it came toward the Stevens' home, and firefighters surrounded the area. Firefighters were bolstered in their fight by the mitigation measures taken.

Homes in the Stevenson Ranch planned development were all built to conform to Los Angeles County building and fire codes. All developers must comply with before building permits are issued. There is a multi-hazard approach to disaster-resistant construction. Wildfire mitigation measures include double-pane heat-resistant windows, concrete-slate tile roofing materials and enclosed eaves as primary protective measures standard. There are 100-foot greenbelts planted with fire-resistant plant materials, and they have sprinkler systems. The maintenance of greenbelts is managed through the homeowners association.

To mitigate against earthquakes, homes are built on high-tension slabs and bolted onto the slabs. "Earthquake safety was important to us when we were considering buying a home here," said Todd Stevens. "Since the experience of the wildfires, we're very grateful for the wildfire protective measures that are required."

Clearly, pre-fire mitigation, which cost less money than the value of the home, has protected this family's investment.



Los Angeles County,
California



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Building Codes

Primary Funding:

Private funds