



## CVFD FUELS CREW

The Chula Vista Fire Department (CVFD) is one of the first local government agencies in California to now have its own designated Fuels Crew. What is a fuels crew, you ask? Chula Vista's team, which was formed last month, is made up of 13 specially trained employees who remove vegetation such as brush or trees that could turn into hazardous fuel for a fire in open space areas surrounding homes. This proactive approach increases our readiness and safety when it comes to wildfire risk.

Chula Vista is home to over 10,000 acres of undeveloped open space. Over the years, vegetation in these areas has grown extremely dense and close to residential structures, exacerbating the wildfire threat to our communities. Many of these areas have received minimal vegetation management, but with the establishment of the CVFD Fuels Crew, the City is now able to address the fire threat in the many open spaces and canyons surrounding homes in an ongoing way. The Fuels Crew is funded by the Measure A sales tax for public safety.

Gabe Cruz is one of the new members of the Fuels Crew. He brings to the team previous experience working for the U.S. Forest Service and then as an Emergency Medical Technician with CVFD. "I enjoy the camaraderie," he said, describing the team as having a family-like feel. "I like using all my skills to complete the job."

In collaboration with the City's Public Works Department, Open Space and Parks, the Fuels Crew is selecting open spaces and canyon areas for work that pose the greatest risk to homes. Prior to performing any clearance activities, an Environmental Biologist surveys the potential area for animal habitats, endangered plant/tree species, and to ensure a healthy ecosystem is being maintained.



On a recent day last month, a neighbor named Claudia said she was thrilled to have the Fuels Crew maintain the canyon behind her home. She said the area had become so overgrown with dead trees and vegetation, that some unsheltered people were setting up camps in the area.



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Since the cleanup, Claudia said that there are no more dead leaves in her yard, there is more light coming into her home and the unsheltered individuals are gone. She was so happy with the operation, she even brought the crew snacks!

Another member of the Fuels Crew is Chula Vista native Melanie San Nicolas. She previously worked on the hand crew with the Los Angeles Fire Department and she is thrilled to get to work in her home city. "It's not a job," she said. "It's just what I love doing. It feels good to be able to do this work."

The Fuels Crew can also be activated in response to City emergencies to do work such as removing downed trees and other debris, or preparing sandbags. [Learn more about the fuels crew on the website.](#)

[For information on wildfires, visit the CVFD Ready, Set, Go! webpage.](#)