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New Building Codes Reflect Recent Fire Destruction

By: Parimal M. Rohit

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New standards for Stevenson Ranch will dictate which construction materials builders may use.

New homes and buildings built in Stevenson Ranch are now subject to more stringent building code standards. The state will be enforcing these new codes Jan. 1, 2008. Local responsibility for code enforcement will be in effect July 1, 2008.

The new building code standards are part of a remapping program by the state of California and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The updated building codes, which apply to areas where California is responsible for wildland fire protection, include provisions for ignition-resistant construction standards where urban and wildland areas meet. Building officials can use the updated fire hazard severity zones to determine appropriate construction materials for new buildings in wildland urban zones. Under the new standards, new buildings must include tile or

asphalt roofs, dual-paned windows with one pane made of tempered glass, installation of ignition resistant-decking, replacement of vents, and closing off of all spaces underneath buildings.

Stevenson Ranch is an area that falls under the wildland urban zones, where the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is financially responsible for wildland fire protection and prepares Very High Fire Hazard Severity recommendations for local areas that share responsibility with the department. Local responsibility varies according to location. For Stevenson Ranch, the county Fire Department in the Santa Clarita Valley assists the state with local responsibility.

Stevenson Ranch residents have already taken steps to incorporate precautions, such as installing fire-resistant concrete roof tiles, double-paned heat-resistant windows and enclosed eaves. According to the department, several residents in Stevenson Ranch made fire-resistant

changes to their property in time for last month's wildfires.

New homes and buildings will be required to meet the new building code standards under the remapped fire hazard severity zones. However, owners are not legally required to make changes to existing buildings.

"These maps were originally created in the 1980s. We are remapping it because mapping science has created new information that was not previously available, which will allow us to be better prepared for fires," said June Iljana, spokeswoman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The remapping effort incorporates improved wildland fire behavior science, data sets and understanding of structure ignition mechanisms during wildfires.

For more information about whether your home or office is in a fire hazard severity zone, please visit

www.fire.ca.gov/wildland.php
p, and click on the “2007 Fire
Hazard Severity Zone Maps”
logo on the right side. If you
do not have web access, you
may call the Santa Clarita Fire
Department at (661) 259-2111
for more information.