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# Editorials

## Fire savvy

10:00 PM PDT on Wednesday, March 14, 2007

This week's wildfires in the Anaheim Hills and near Lake Mathews prove correct the view of Riverside County Fire Chief John Hawkins: "Fire season" is now year-round. So county supervisors did well Tuesday to pass a new weed-abatement ordinance.

The county's previous ordinance required property owners to provide 30 feet of "defensible space" around their homes by clearing weeds, brush and other kindling.

But the old rules did not offer enough protection for homes or firefighters when a blaze raged out of control. Under the new rules, all county property owners -- not just residents in the fire-prone mountains -- must provide 100 feet of abatement.

The objections of some environmentalists, who complain about the county skipping a lengthy environmental review process, are overblown. As county deputy counsel Karin Watts-Bazan noted Tuesday, the new brush-clearing regulations will not harm the environment. In fact, clearing brush around homes and roads does far less damage to the environment than an inferno that consumes thousands of acres.

Fighting wildfires is easier when residents clear dangerous weeds and brush. Stepping up abatement requirements now, before the summer heat adds more fuel to fires, is vital to saving lives and property.