

## **COOK & SCHMID CONDUCT SURVEY TO MEASURE SUCCESS OF SAFETY CAMPAIGN**

More residents and property owners in the San Bernardino County Mountains have taken action to protect their homes and businesses from wildfire than two years ago. This has been confirmed by a follow-up survey conducted at the conclusion of the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce's (MAST) two-year public outreach campaign. Cook & Schmid ([www.cookandschmid.com](http://www.cookandschmid.com)), a San Diego public relations firm, designed and implemented the program to educate mountain residents about the removal of dead and dying trees as well as thinning green fuel on the residents' properties to prevent against additional catastrophic wildfires.

The results of the 2008 survey found that respondents reported greater awareness of wildfire prevention measures, were more prepared for a natural disaster, and had taken more steps to prevent the spread of wildfires and potential danger to their property. The survey also found that awareness and knowledge about fire safety measures increased significantly since San Bernardino County and the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce launched the public outreach campaign.

"We were very pleased to see these results," said Jon Schmid, Partner at Cook & Schmid. "Overturning the idea that more trees in a forest meant that it was a healthier forest was challenging though the outcome speaks to the residents' understanding of the bigger picture."

Due to years of fire suppression, the forest had become overstocked, with some 100 to 200 trees per acre, where a healthy forest has 40 to 60 trees per acre. Thinning live trees is a key component of MAST's healthy forest initiative.

For the 2008 study, a total of 506 residents, 127 non-resident property owners, and 109 local area business property owners/managers were randomly surveyed during October. In terms of documented behavior change, the survey found that 96 percent of residents had taken steps to protect their homes from wildfire.

Moreover, the survey tabulated a 9.2 percent drop in residents who had not taken steps to reduce fire risk because they didn't know what to do.