

CHRONOLOGY OF RELOCATION PROGRAM ACTIVITIES - continued

- The relocation program was a major agenda item at the monthly Community Involvement Workshop and the quarterly Technical Review Committee meeting.
- Relocation Office set up, with staff person on site 10 AM – 5 PM Monday – Friday, except holidays. Other times available by appointment. People who walked in between 8 AM-10, or between 4-5 PM, were signed up for the relocation program by Community Relations staff.
- Sign-up workshops held in Spreckels and Seaside. Less than 10 applicants in Spreckels, but nearly 50 people signed up during the Seaside workshop.

August

- Information provided for a news story about relocation in the Seaside Post.
- Presentation to American Lung Association staff.
- Phone calls to community groups, school districts, and health facilities offering to provide information about the relocation program.
- Mailing sent to elected officials announcing the beginning of “burn season.” (Copy of mailing shown below).
- Coordination with Monterey County Public Health Officer regarding notice to be given to the medical/health community.
- Full-page or half-page advertisements placed in Monterey Herald, Monterey County Post, Coast Weekly, Salinas Californian, and El Sol (Spanish-language). Advertisements announced that “burn season” had started and a prescribed burn could occur anytime (advertisement shown below). The availability of the relocation program is described in the advertisement. Advertisements appeared one time only in each newspaper.

MAILING TO ELECTED OFFICIALS (AUGUST 2004)



Aren't prescribed burns bad for the environment?

The habitat on the former Fort Ord is adapted to fire. As a result, it is actually rejuvenated by fire. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (which protects endangered species) supports prescribed burns for this habitat.

How is the fire controlled?

The Army has cleared a 45-foot wide firebreak around the area to be burned. Before the setting the fire, the fire control team will treat a strip 100 feet wide outwards from the containment roads to increase the effectiveness of the firebreak. The fire will be fought from the air, using helicopters and air tankers. The fire management plan has been reviewed by a number of state and local fire departments to make sure it is adequate to control the fire. These fire departments can be called upon to help if there are any problems.



Need more information
or want to apply for relocation?
Contact us at: (831) 393-9691 or 1-800-852-9699,
or check the web site at
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U.S. Army Fort Ord BRAC Office



The Army plans to conduct a prescribed burn at the former Fort Ord sometime before the end of the year. The prescribed burn will be a carefully controlled fire that will be set under ideal weather conditions to both burn off vegetation and minimize smoke impacts. The burn will last just one day, with the possibility of a smaller fire the second day to be sure all the vegetation is burned off. The total area that will be burned is 490 acres.

The Army must burn off the vegetation so that workers can safely locate and remove dangerous ordnance and explosives left over from when Fort Ord was a training facility. Workers need to see the ground where they are working because some of the ordnance and explosives could explode if it were bumped or disturbed in any way. The Army is cleaning up the ordnance and explosives to protect public safety and allow the land to be used. More than 80 percent of the land being cleared will be used for open space and recreation.

Here are answers to questions that are frequently asked about the prescribed burn:

When will the fire occur?

The "burn season" has begun. The fire could occur anytime between now and the end of the year.

What determines when the fire will be started?

Weather conditions. The Army wants to reduce the amount of smoke. So the Army will pick a day when weather conditions will allow smoke to rise high into the upper atmosphere, away from people. In the Monterey area, these atmospheric conditions occur only a few days a year, mostly in the fall.



How much warning will we receive?

The Army will put ads in the paper and issue press releases to the media **three days** before it plans to start a fire. If the Army were to give an announcement earlier than three days, there would be a lot of "false alarms." It is hard to predict the ideal weather conditions more than a few days in advance.

How is the prescribed burn different from the wildfire at Fort Ord several weeks ago?

The wildfire last month started as an accident on leased property no longer under Army management. The wildfire burned during poor weather conditions that kept the smoke close to the ground and populated areas. The wildfire burned for several days because it was not set in a controlled manner. The prescribed burn will be set under carefully selected weather conditions, which will direct most of the smoke away from populated areas. The burn will involve considerably less acreage than the wildfire and will only last a few hours over one to two days.

Will there be as much smoke during the prescribed burn as there was during the recent accidental fire?

There will be less smoke during the prescribed burn—probably considerably less smoke—because the fire will be set when the weather conditions allow the smoke to blow away at higher altitudes, and the fire will burn a much shorter time.



What if I am sensitive to smoke?

If you know you have a respiratory condition or any other condition that makes you sensitive to smoke, you may want to stay indoors, avoid vigorous exercise, and make sure you have your prescriptions on hand during the fire. If you wish, the Army will also relocate you outside of Monterey County for three nights. To discuss relocation, call (831) 393-9691 or 1-800-852-9699. If you want to enroll, enroll NOW. The Army can provide pre-paid rooms and meal vouchers, but only if you register at least 48 hours before the fire. Or you can make your own arrangements and file for reimbursement, subject to federal limits. It's okay to register now, and then decide later whether you want to actually relocate.

How can I tell if I need to relocate?

Dr. Linda Velasquez, the County's Acting Public Health Officer says: "The amount of smoke that results from properly conducted prescribed burns should not pose a health risk to healthy people. If there is any discomfort, it should be temporary and minimal, like the effects of sitting around a campfire. But people with existing breathing conditions—such as, asthma or emphysema—may want to take reasonable precautions, like staying indoors; or they might consider relocating during the fire."



Did the recent accidental fire cause lots of people to go to emergency rooms for treatment?

The Monterey County Health Department made a quick check of all the hospitals in Monterey and Salinas during last month's fire. Two people came to emergency rooms with respiratory problems that could have been brought on by exposure to smoke, but the actual cause was not determined. They were treated and released.

Will the fire set off explosives?

The fire will set off some explosives, just as the wildfire did last month. However, most of the popping noises during previous prescribed burns and wildfires were from blank small arms ammunition and burning vegetation. Safety measures will be in place to protect the public and workers from ordnance that may detonate during the burn.



Will the detonation of explosives put contamination into the air?

Explosives that may be set off by the fire will put very small amounts of contaminant material into the air. However, the amounts are so small that Federal and state environmental regulators agree that a fire at the former Fort Ord is essentially no different than a fire anywhere else with similar vegetation.

Will the fire put poison oak in the air?

Yes, but only very small amounts, so small that there have been no reported cases of poison oak during past fires. Did you or anyone you know catch poison oak during the fire last month? You should be even less exposed during the prescribed burn.

Did You Have Health Problems During Last Month's Fire?

If you had no health problems during last month's fire, you are unlikely to have any health problems during the prescribed burn. There should be less smoke during the prescribed burn.

FULL OR HALF-PAGE ADVERTISEMENT PLACED
IN NEWSPAPERS BY ARMY (AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2004)



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September

- Presentation to Monterey County Farm Bureau Board of Directors.
- Fact sheet on prescribed burn provided to CSUMB for posting on their web site.
- Symposium conducted for CSUMB students, co-sponsored by ATSDR and CSUMB Environmental Sciences Department.
- Presentation to Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) Board of Directors.
- Relocation database revised for easier access and sorting of information.
- Weekly advertisements placed in legal notice section of the Monterey Herald and Salinas Californian announcing the plan to conduct a prescribed burn and the availability of the relocation program. Weekly notices continued until the prescribed burn was conducted.

October

- Provided information to CSUMB newspaper reporter for a story in CSUMB student newspaper.
- Prescribed burn announced for October 13th. Relocates notified by e-mail or phone (auto-dialer), and announcements put on web page and hotline. Local press coverage arranged by Presidio of Monterey Public Affairs Officer (see Figure 1, next page). Relocation Office was open from 8 AM – 9 PM on October 11th, and 8 AM – 5 PM on October 12th.
- On October 12th, the prescribed burn scheduled for October 13 was postponed. Public notified of postponement on October 13th, before relocation began. Notification by e-mail or phone (auto-dialer), and announcements placed on web page and hotline.
- On October 21, a prescribed burn was announced for Oct. 24. People registered for relocation notified by e-mail or phone (auto-dialer), and announcements on web page and hotline. Presidio of Monterey Public Affairs Officer arranges for newspaper, radio and television coverage.

