

Fire and Forest
Roof Replacement Going Well

by Mike Esnard

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News about the Fire Safe Council's reroofing program has appeared in this column before, but now that it is in full swing I think it is worth going over in more detail. What with the Affordable Care Act web site working so poorly, I thought it a good time to talk about a government program that works well.

The purpose of the program is to reduce fire risk in our community by replacing wood shake or shingle roofs, which are easily ignited by embers in a fire, with Class A fire resistant roofs.

The money comes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through the California Office of Emergency Services, and is administered by the County of Riverside Office of Emergency Services (OES). The way it works is that a homeowner on our approved list is given the go-ahead by our Executive Director, Edwina Scott, to get bids on replacing their wooden roof. The homeowner then solicits bids from at least three different roofing contractors (C-39). A list of approved contractors who want to participate in the program is provided for their convenience. These written bids are then given by the homeowner to our project managers, Pat Boss and Don Patterson, along with their choice of one of the contractors for the job.

The bids are reviewed by our bid committee of Chris Kramer, Vice President, and myself to bring another set of eyes on the process. (This procedure of review by a bid committee is something we learned to do on abatement work.) The homeowner is not required to accept the lowest bid, but they have to pay the difference if they don't.

When approved, the owner can formally contract with the contractor, who can then begin the job. When the roof is replaced and the work is complete

it is inspected by the county, and with their sign off, the homeowner pays the contractor the balance owed.

Our project managers take pictures of the new roof, give the file to Edwina, who prepares a package which goes to the county. The county reviews the documentation, and when they are satisfied that it is in order, they authorize payment. A check is then sent to the homeowner for 75% of the cost, with a job cap (maximum) of \$8400, making a typical check \$6300.

We have a list of 120 homes we hope to do on this grant, and have completed 7 of them thus far. An initial go-ahead was given to 30 homeowners, and a second go-ahead was given this past week to 22 more. We are hopeful that with good weather we can replace all the roofs by fall of 2014.

Like any grant of this nature, the paperwork and record keeping is extensive. The paperwork just to create the homeowner list was demanding. Recently, the bids were not as complete as needed in some cases, but with good communication between contractors and project managers, the paper is now flowing smoothly. We have at this point five contractors who have joined the process, and they have been very cooperative in meeting government guidelines.

Someone from the community stopped Edwina to comment approvingly on one of the first houses to be finished, saying that the new roof not only made the neighborhood safer but looked much better. We hope to be hearing many more of those comments as this project continues.