



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Stucco Homes Survive Fires**

Newport Beach, CA – Fires in the West demonstrate the importance of building with stucco. In 1993, 2003, 2006, 2007 and again in 2009, severe fires broke out in wilderness areas but quickly spread to endanger nearby homes. Thousands of homes were destroyed in these fires, but the ones that survived against the odds were not just lucky. Many of these homes incorporated special design features that prevented the fires from destroying them. Firefighters and city officials interviewed after these disasters saw the value of stucco first-hand.

By its nature, cement-based stucco does not burn. In fact, the furniture of a house will combust from the heat of a fire before the stucco is affected. By building with stucco, the vulnerable contents and structure of a building are protected behind a 7/8” thick layer of cementitious stucco. Anything the building designer can do to remove combustible materials from the exterior of the home will increase the home’s ability to withstand a fire.

**Best Practices for Fire Prevention.** The houses that have survived the recent western fires provide some practical lessons in how to build for fire prevention. The Stucco Manufacturers Association will assist homeowners and design professionals with these details which include:

- Use 3-coat stucco as the exterior cladding.
- Use only non-combustible accents, including stone and masonry.
- For window and door trims, use foam shapes coated with mesh and cementitious foam coating materials available from SMA members.
- Use cement or clay roof tile or other non-combustible materials.

- Use tempered or dual-pane windows to knock down heat and prevent fire blow-outs to slow down the entry of the fire to the interior of the home.
- Eaves, or overhangs, are places where embers can swirl and fires can start. On enclosed eave homes, 3-coat stucco should extend from foundation to roof and coat all eaves. On open eave homes, 3-coat stucco should extend from foundation to roof and terminate at the 2x solid blocking.
- Do not put attic vents under the eaves where burning embers can blow into the attic. Cover all attic vents with wire mesh.
- Pay attention to decks as well. These can be built from non-wood composites or out of decorative concrete, tiles, or pavers. Also ensure that areas under elevated decks are enclosed with stucco to prevent ignition there.
- Build walls out of concrete block and stucco instead of wood, which can serve as a fuse to lead fire to a home.
- Clear excessive landscaping from around the home, instead using non-combustible walkways that serve as fire breaks.

When homes are built close together, take extra care to remove combustible materials to prevent the spread of fire from house to hours.

In 1957, the SMA (Stucco Manufacturers Association) formed as a non-profit trade association comprised of the major manufacturers of stucco in North America, as well as their related suppliers. Their primary focus is to educate the professionals in the building industry. Architects, specifiers, plastering contractors, building owners, interior designers, color consultants, and suppliers can benefit from the expertise of the SMA and their available resources. For more information please contact the association's Executive Director, Norma Fox, at 949.640.9902.