



# FEMA

## *Veteran Firefighter Uses Mitigation to Protect His Home*

**Fallbrook, CA** - As a veteran firefighter, Gary Bottenfield understands the nature of fires and knows how to be prepared. Bottenfield has lived in Fallbrook for 32 years with his wife, Lana, where they have survived three major fires.

As the Rice Fire made its way toward Interstate 15 and jumped across Pala Mesa Resort Golf Course, the Bottenfields knew their house was in great danger. They received the reverse 911 call on Monday afternoon and took shelter at their daughter's home in Temecula. Even though it was painful to leave their home, as law-abiding citizens they understood the importance of listening to the authorities and following mandatory evacuation orders.

When Bottenfield returned home on Wednesday afternoon, he found the house intact even though his next door neighbor's house and two other homes within view were completely gone. He later learned that once his neighbor realized his home was already a total loss, he worked relentlessly with the firefighters to keep the flames from getting any further.

When asked why he believed his house survived the Rice Fire, Bottenfield replied: "The fact that I mowed my weeds saved my house. One of my neighbors and I share a mower and we tear the blades up every year." Said Bottenfield, "We make sure we always mow everything down to the dirt."

Something as simple as mowing the weeds was a lifesaver for the Bottenfields; but that is not the only mitigation safety measure they have. Their 2,677-square-foot stucco home has a concrete tile roof, boxed stucco eaves, fire sprinklers inside the house and attic, smoke detectors in virtually every room, double-pane glass windows, and a carefully planned defensible space on the 2.7-acre home site.

The cost for using boxed stucco eaves instead of the regular wood ones that were in the original construction plans was approximately \$1,500 extra. The cost for having sprinklers installed inside the house was \$3,500. Money well-spent, according to Bottenfield. The replacement value of his home has almost doubled from the \$350,000 he spent years ago, so Bottenfield was happy to spend a little extra to make his home safer and stronger.



San Diego County, California



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Private**

Cost:

**\$5,000.00 (Estimated)**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Building Codes**

Primary Funding:

**Homeowner**