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October 16, 2008

Caltrans District 8
Dr. Raymond W. Wolfe
464 West 4th Street, 12th Floor
San Bernardino, CA 92401

Dear Dr. Wolfe,

We are writing this letter to request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss and hopefully resolve issues related to the dead and dying landscape shrubbery along the I-215 corridor through the City of San Bernardino.

On Monday, October 13, we experienced a series of vegetation fires that originated along the freeway and spread rapidly due to the Santa Ana winds and the dry vegetation. The fires did significant damage to structures and property adjacent to the freeway extending from north of Baseline to south of Rialto Avenue. The intensity of the fire was amplified tremendously by the dry condition of the mature vegetation along the freeway that has not been irrigated or maintained for over a year now. This 40+ year old vegetation ignited and burned in the same way that the dry chaparral in our foothills burns, casting embers long distances and creating flame lengths exceeding 50 feet. In addition, the palm trees with their dead fronds carried fire and dropped burning material for hundreds of yards downwind.

While we experienced a fire that did a great deal of damage we were very fortunate that it did not result in any serious injury or loss of life to our citizens. The amount of blinding smoke that was created by the burning vegetation along the freeway and the panic that ensued could have resulted in a much deadlier situation. There were even instances where motorists abandoned their vehicles on the freeway and fled on foot.

We believe that it is imperative that we meet to discuss the issue and come up with a plan to mitigate the danger created by the remaining dry landscape vegetation that exists along the I-215 freeway in our city. We look forward to working with you and will assist with any resources that we have at our disposal to help resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Morris
Mayor

Michael J. Conrad
Fire Chief