

# Desert Dispatch

Saturday, August 3, 2002

Serving the communities of Barstow, Daggett, Fort Irwin, Hinkley, Lenwood, Newberry Springs, Yermo

## Firefighting made simple

### MCLB firefighters test fire-retardant gel made from chemicals in diapers

By **DERCUM OVER**  
Staff Writer

BARSTOW — Disposable diapers have an inherent design function that may become indispensable to some homeowners long after all their children are in long pants.

The absorbent substance that does the heavy lifting in the lining of the diapers is now being used to protect structures from wildfires.

Firefighters at the Marine Corps Logistics Base tested the new fire-prevention material Friday. They said it promises to provide good protection for a much longer time to home owners whose houses are threatened by wildfires.

"I'm sold," Assistant Fire Chief Steve Muldare said, after watching the gel resist direct contact with flame for about 10 minutes. "If I lived in the woods, I'd buy it."

The sticky water-absorbent gel can be sprayed with a garden hose onto any structure in danger of burning. The mixture, which looks like cold cream or artificial dessert topping, adheres to every surface without running off, and it will cling there for hours.

Firefighters at the base had heard of the product, so they got hold of some to see how well it worked, Chief Robert Wyman said. The product might be applicable for his department in the Mojave River bottom or near the Tees and Trees Golf Clubhouse where foliage can create a fire hazard, he said.

The men tested the new product, named Barricade, against a flame retardant they currently use called Knockdown in a controlled burn of two structures. The shed on the left was coated with gel, and the shed on the right with Knockdown.

After two minutes the shed on the right was burning openly, and the shed on the



Dercum Over/Staff Photographer

Firefighter Greg Breiner of the Marine Corps Logistics Base Fire Department stands watch over a test of a new flame-retardant product Friday.

### For information ...

To learn more about Barricade gel, go to the Web site at [www.barricadegel.com](http://www.barricadegel.com).

For information on use of the product call Nathan Beber, the technical representative for the MCLB Fire Department, at 985-9820.

left had not yet started to smoke.

The parameters of this test were extreme, Firefighter Nathan Beber said. Wildland fires move through a neighborhood quickly, fanned by the 40 to 60 mph winds. Houses tend to catch fire from falling embers on a wood shingle roof or from radiant heat.

"The gel protects against radiant heat, too," he said.

Spraying it on windows would protect the interior of

a house from igniting due to heat passing through the window glass.

The advantage to firefighters during a fast-moving fire in a neighborhood is twofold: The gel offers better resistance to fire, and its longevity frees them up to go and coat other houses with the stuff, Beber said.

"The Knockdown — we had to baby-sit it," he said.

Beber has worked on structure-protection teams



Dercum Over/Staff Photographer

The gel was sprayed on the shed on the left, and the right-hand shed was covered with a fire-retardant material currently in use. After three minutes the left-hand shed is still not burnt, while the other shed burns.