



La Honda Fire Brigade Newsletter Summer 2009

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT: "We need firefighters"

By Larry Whitney

The La Honda Fire Brigade will never fail because of a lack of equipment or training to do our job. We will, however, fail if we cannot interest new people in joining our ranks to continue to deliver our critical service. The Brigade is not a virtual effort: it takes real people, sometimes a lot of them, to carry out its mission. Recruiting new firefighters is an ongoing effort and now the need is greater than ever as we expect a number of our most experienced personnel to retire over the next few years. So if you have ever thought, dreamed, or wondered about what it is like to be a firefighter, please accept this as our invitation to consider becoming a member of one of the most active and professional Volunteer Fire Departments in the Bay Area.

There are many rewards that a person receives, tangible and intangible, when becoming a part of our organization. The satisfaction of being in a position to help save a life, of knowing what to do when everyone else is running away, and of being associated with one of the most respected segments of America's society is immeasurable. We offer some of the best actual benefits available to any Volunteer Firefighter. These include: professional training, state of the art safety gear and firefighting equipment, workers compensation and disability insurance, line of duty death benefits, retirement stipend, response stipend, and ongoing medical monitoring. In short, we take care of every need and cost associated with being a firefighter.

(Continued on page 2)

Upcoming events for 2009:

La Ducati Day: Sunday, October 11, 2009: 10 am until 4:30 pm. A special fund raising day at the La Honda Center for the LHFB. Motorcycle Safety demonstrations, Bar-B-Q, and fun.

Events at the LHFB Fire Station:

LHFB Annual Pancake Breakfast:

Sunday, October 18: 8 am until noon.

Featuring Captain Cathy's pumpkin pancakes, buttermilk pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, juice and coffee.

La Honda Holiday Fair: Sunday, December 13 from 10 am till 4 pm.

Hand made crafts and treats from vendors from Northern California, and a raffle. Entrance is free. To rent a space to sell your "hand made" art or craft, email holidayfaire@lahondafire.org.

La Honda Fire Brigade
P.O. Box 97
La Honda, CA 94020

LHFB Newsletter Summer 2009

Serving the community and
all volunteer since 1953

NON-PROFIT
ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
LA HONDA, CA
PERMIT NO. 9

Fire Department Personnel

Officers

- Larry Whitney - Chief
- Ari Delay - Assistant Chief
- Cathy Whitney - Captain

Firefighters

Station 57:

- Rory Doolin
- Jeff Dominici
- Paul Long
- Charles Marx
- Peter Panofsky
- Doug Woods
- Katie Johnson

Station 55:

- Chris Conner

Station 58:

- Matt Hanlon

Rookie

- Jamie Briggs

Board members

- Meg DeLano – President
- Bob White – Vice President
- Julie Delay – Corporate Secretary
- Coleen Hackett – Treasurer
- Amy Johnson
- Steve Krause
- Sandi Ruiz-Poss
- Karel Schrijver

Newsletter

- Karel Schrijver

How to reach us

P.O. Box 97
8945 La Honda Road
La Honda, CA 94020
650-747-0381
info@lahondafire.org
http://www.lahondafire.org

Contacts

Larry Whitney, Volunteer Fire Chief
747-9447 x 103
chief@lahondafire.org

Meg DeLano, Board President
879-9557
president@lahondafire.org

Joe Kral, NEST coordinator
747-9693

* The LHFBC community room is available for use. Contact president@lahondafire.org.
* Look for the South Coast Community Directories at all LHFBC events.



Fire Engineers Peter Panofsky and Paul Long coordinate the transport of a patient via Air Ambulance.

(Chief's column; continued from page 1)

While this job is not for everyone, it is an absolute privilege to be part of this service. There is a reason why nationally nearly twice as many people volunteer to work as firefighters as are paid to do so. If this sounds like something you might like to know more about or would like to do, now is the time act. For more information, please see our website at www.lahondafire.org, and click on the "Be a Firefighter" tab or email me at chief@lahondafire.org.

Dialing 911: land lines versus cell phones

By Douglas Woods

Now that the La Honda area has cell phone service it is a good time to remind you how cell service works with 911. When you dial 911 on your cell phone in La Honda, the call is routed to the CHP Dispatch Center in Vallejo. You should never assume that the Dispatcher knows which County you are calling from with your cell phone, much less your exact location. You may or may not be transferred to the San Mateo County 911 Center in Redwood City.

If you are in a building with a POTS line (that's Plain Old Telephone Service), use that line, because the call is routed to Redwood City and they can see the service address in most cases. While we are on the subject, there is a trend to give up your good old POTS line at home for the cell service only. Think twice about that, because we are dependant on a single cell tower, and while it is hardened for disasters, should it fail it is goodbye to all cell

service in our area.

Whatever the route, San Mateo County 911 Communications Center ends up with the information. They plug the information into the Computer Aided Dispatch System and punch out the call to La Honda Fire via a tone activated voice pager and text messages to a second digital pager. The voice pager is tuned to the primary County Fire channel and allows us to mute the traffic on the frequency until a tone specific to La Honda unmutes and beeps VERY loudly to get our attention. The Volunteers then drive their personal cars to the fire station for assignments to a vehicle.

If you want to see where your firefighters are going or where they were, visit our website at www.lahondafire.org. Click on the "Recent Calls" button. This will give you the type of incident we are responding to, the time of dispatch, and the date.

Help us, please, by renewing your membership, and:

Volunteer help needed: we desperately need a second person to help maintain our membership data base! This is a great opportunity to learn MS Access database

skills (very useful to have on a resume!) while helping the Fire Brigade at the same time. Please contact Kathleen Dickey at 747-9510.

RE/MAX Dolphin Real Estate

STEVE PERKINS & GAIL HAFELFINGER



Steve: 650-619-8121
Gail: 650-996-5354



REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS
WHO WANT YOU SMILING AT THE CLOSE OF ESCROW!

On-line at www.lahondafire.org

- ◆ Recent LHFBC calls.
- ◆ Home safety tips.
- ◆ Hot links to fire-related sites.
- ◆ Maps.
- ◆ How to receive training: CERT, CPR.
- ◆ Membership and donation links.
- ◆ New volunteer firefighter information.

Perspectives: Loma Mar's firefighter Chris Conner

Interviewed by Iris Schrijver

IS: How did you first become a firefighter in the town of Loma Mar?

CC: I grew up here and have always lived in this area. My parents also still live in Loma Mar. In fact, my father was a firefighter in the sixties before I was born, and I have an uncle who still is a firefighter. Several people asked me to join the volunteer fire brigade in Loma Mar, but I did not think I could spare the initial time of 250 required hours, since I was working as a general contractor in the area. Eventually though, I decided to try it out and I joined the Loma Mar fire brigade in February of 1997. There were seven or eight people in the brigade then.

IS: Could you combine your job with the training and duties of a firefighter?

CC: Yes. I had free time on the weekends, when training classes were held at stations in the region. The mandatory classes were generally shared, whereas more specific training was provided at individual stations. I liked the fact that I could help out our community, I know the area well, and it keeps me busy with something worthwhile. Besides, I really like Loma Mar. It is quiet - we have a population of about 80 people - and at the same time there are plenty of activities. I have family and friends here, and it turned out that my job could be combined with my commitments as a firefighter relatively easily. I made it work.

IS: You are the only firefighter in Loma Mar. How do you cope with that?

CC: It is true. We often joke that I am

the Fire Chief of Loma Mar, but being by myself is not a desirable situation. I have been the only firefighter for the past four to five years. Of course it is impossible for me to always stay there, so at present one cannot rely on anyone responding from Loma Mar. You basically need more than one person for any response. Fortunately, the La Honda and Pescadero fire brigades, as well as Calfire on Skyline, back me up, and we work together during calls. My pager also goes off for the La Honda area, so whenever I can, I reciprocate and help out there. For my continuing training sessions I go to the La Honda station as well.

IS: Do you have enough equipment for your call volume?

CC: Loma Mar receives approximately 40 calls per year. Most of these are traffic accidents, many of which involve motorcycles, especially in the summer. Generally, these accidents involve people from out of the area. Speed almost always contributed to these accidents. Loma Mar receives medical calls too, but there are not many calls about actual fires. Loma Mar has a fire engine and basic equipment. The County does provide sufficient supplies to keep the station operational.

IS: What is your biggest need for the Loma Mar station right now?

CC: It would, of course, be great to have more people join the brigade in Loma Mar. Having only one person just isn't optimal and anyone interested should give me a call. If someone is unable to join, but would like to support the station with an automatic garage door, that would be appreciated too. Right now, it is man-

ual and every time I have to drive the fire engine out of the station, I need to push it up with a broom handle!

IS: Let's hope people will be inspired to join, or help in other ways. Another question: Loma Mar is in a densely forested

area. Do you often have wild fires or forest fires?

CC: Actually, no. Loma Mar is situated in a redwood forest, and that seems to protect. Of course, we do have house fires or fires that start in garbage bins. Last year, during the holidays, there was a house fire in the middle of the night. At first, all I could see was this black column of smoke emerging from the fog. When I arrived on the scene, all by myself, the house was already fully in-



Chris Conner at the Loma Mar station

olved. There was nothing that could be done to save this house and I hoped it was empty. The only rational thing to focus on for me and for the La Honda Fire Brigade, which arrived shortly after I did, was to protect the homes that neighbored this fire. This was hard, because there wasn't much water in the area. Fortunately, all other homes were saved and nobody was injured.

IS: Do you have a call that stands out as being the most rewarding?

CC: I usually just go with the flow, do what is necessary, and don't get too excited. However, we did have a very intense season with the rain storms of 1998. This was an El Niño year, and it illustrated that, when mother nature wants to take over, there can be considerable challenges. There was a huge amount of rain that year, and water was flowing down the roads and spouting out of places where there previously had not been any water. The region resembled a waterpark! We had major mud slides in the area, which threatened homes and people's safety. At times, the only thing you could do was to stay put. Because of the severe weather conditions, radios and walkie-talkies did not work well either, because the equipment in those days was not as good as it is today. It was a very memorable season.



On Sunday, July 26, at 9:20 pm, LHFB responded to a motor vehicle accident in the 4000 block of Hwy 84. The driver of one of the two vehicles was killed in the accident.

A 16-year old passenger escaped from the car before it became fully engulfed by fire. A third victim was extricated from the other car by the firefighters with the Jaws of Life.

Replacing Rescue 57

By Paul Long

La Honda Fire's "Rescue 57" has the largest response area of any apparatus in the San Mateo County Fire system. Its mission is to support emergencies requiring specialized rescue and medical response. It has been equipped to handle medical emergencies, water rescue, rope rescue, vehicle extrication, and hazardous materials responses. As such, Rescue 57 responds to over two-thirds of all of La Honda Fire's 911 responses.

The Rescue can seat 3 firefighters, and is also capable of carrying a patient in its rear compartment for short distances, such as transporting a patient in a litter from an accident scene to an awaiting helicopter for rapid transport to a hospital's emergency department.

From La Honda, its response area takes

it to Highway 35 and all the way to the Santa Cruz county line, as well as to the coast from Tunitas Creek to the county line, and everything in between.

Over the years since our current Rescue was put into service, its mission and the amount of equipment it carries have been continually increasing. Plus, the years of long and hard driving are taking its toll on the heavily loaded chassis. Knowing these facts, we have been working with San Mateo County Fire to specify and procure a replacement apparatus for Rescue 57. As with most large projects, we have spent a great deal of time in determining the requirements of the replacement apparatus. We wish to maintain the core competencies of the Rescue's current design, and at the same time alleviate the issues that the

current apparatus has. Areas we wish to improve include: increasing the storage capacity and chassis rating to accommodate our large amount of equipment we now carry, increasing the number of firefighters it may carry, and increasing the patient area in the rear of the apparatus to allow proper working area for both the patient and caregivers. These improvements, as well as numerous new requirements mandated by NFPA, significantly improve the safety of the firefighters.

Over the coming months we will continue to work to procure the new apparatus. With its improved features, better reliability, and increased safety, it will be an important asset serving those who live, work, and play in the South Coast.

Visit our website to see how you can help with this critical project: click on "Rescue 57 Rescue Fund"; we still need to raise \$17,000!

ENJOY THE SUMMER: THINK OF FIRE SAFETY

By Steve Krause

Well, summer is here and it is time to think about the wildfire threat in the La Honda area. We all live out here because we like the rural living, the trees, the open meadows and the natural settings. Most people would do anything to live in an area that sometimes we take for granted. So why do we take the attitude that a "wildfire will never happen in my neck of the woods".

Let's rewind to last year when a fire in Bonny Doon burned acreage, houses and caused chaos trying to relocate horses, dogs, cats and goats. That fire was pretty close to home and could very easily happen here. So if that same fire happened here would your house, property and animals be safe? Did you spend the time to create a defensible space? Did you identify at least two exit routes from your property or neighborhood? These are things to take care of now, not when a fire strikes.

During a major wildfire, it is unlikely that there will be enough firefighting resources available to defend every home. In these instances, firefighters will likely select homes they can safely and effectively protect. So, create the defensible space by pruning, mowing, weeding, removing plants, and by irrigation. If your property is surrounded by wildland grasses, and is located on flat land, your recommended defensible space distance would extend out 30 feet from your house. Depending on the

steepness of your property and the vegetation, an additional 70 feet of a "reduced fuel zone" is recommended.

Now let us consider a few other items that should be taken care of:

- ◆ Clean all debris from your roof and gutters. Even if the fire never reaches your property, fire brans could land on your roof and cause the debris in your gutters to catch fire.
- ◆ Your stacked firewood should be at least 30 feet from your house.
- ◆ Maintain access to your water supply for firefighters.
- ◆ If you are evacuating shut off your LPG or natural gas supply.

All this information is available in more detail online at www.smcfiresafe.org

Remember these safety tips:

- ◆ Treat all downed power lines as energized wires.
 - ◆ Always fuel your gas-powered tools outside away from your water heater.
 - ◆ When staining your deck or floors in your home, dispose of the staining rags in an empty metal can with a lid or soak the rags in a bucket of water.
- Remember to dial 911 for any emergency or if you are unsure about your problem. Let the professionals decide whether your issue is really a problem or not.

Have a safe summer!

CIOPPINO 2009

By Sandi Ruiz-Pass



The 2009 Bill Glass Memorial crab cioppino was a huge success. The many guests at the fire station dined on crab cioppino, salad, and garlic bread prepared by Bob Doolley and gang (Bob is the son-in-law of Bill Glass after whom this event is named). The delicious cakes donated by Moonside Bakery quickly disappeared after the steaming bowls of crab were finally emptied. Many enjoyed wines from our local wineries, as well as our cioppino special labeled wines donated by The Rorden-Graham Winery and Smith Vineyards. Steve Kessler and Cindy Kohara from the CBS Morning news were among our repeat guests to enjoy the festivities. Many talented and generous people and businesses donated items and gift certificates to the raffle and silent auction, which featured CD's from Neil Young, a collection of music CD's from local musicians, a collection of books from local authors, and a gift certificate for an oil change at a local garage. After the raffle and auction the tables were moved out and we danced the night away to tunes played by our favorite DJ, Johnny Midnight. Thank you to everyone who helped make this another successful fundraiser.