



## La Honda Fire Brigade

# Newsletter Fall 2008

## FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT: A RECORD YEAR

By Larry Whitney

To state that this has been a busy year for your *all volunteer* Fire Brigade would be a gross understatement. Emergency responses have set new records as both our permanent population and the area's ever increasing number of visitors put greater demands on the Fire Brigade. Perhaps the most significant increase in calls has come as a result of the area's near-drought conditions. This resulted in the largest number of fire responses that any of us can remember in at least the last decade. Fortunately we were able to keep all of these fires small and there were no lives lost and no serious injuries.

Regretfully, vehicle and motorcycle accidents continued to take their toll.



*Fires of every nature increased in 2008. Here, La Honda fire fighters suppress a vehicle fire on Hwy. 84 east of La Honda.*

Numerous people have perished on our area's roadways this year. Making this even sadder is that in at least two cases the individuals who died were innocent and merely at the wrong place at the wrong

time. The number of local young people involved in significant motor vehicle accidents has also increased. This should be of concern to every parent and the community.

Being a La Honda fire fighter is a serious business. Many of the people we aid are at perhaps the worst point they may ever be in their lives. When our fire fighters leave the station they bring years of training and experience to resolve the incident, no matter what its nature may be. Through your financial support they are also bringing

some of the best equipment available. Our fire fighters work under some of the toughest conditions this county has, but you can expect our response to be prompt

*(Continued on page 2)*

## 10 great reasons to support your Brigade

1. The La Honda Volunteer Fire Department is the first fire agency responding into the communities of *La Honda, Loma Mar, Middleton Tract and San Gregorio*.
2. La Honda Fire's "First Due Area" spans 54 square miles, as much as Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Atherton combined.
3. La Honda Fire's "Second Due Area," to which about half the calls go out, covers 134 square miles that include, e.g., *Pescadero and the South Coast*.
4. The La Honda Brigade has 14 well-trained fire fighters.
5. New recruits receive over 200 hrs. of training before they start to respond to emergencies.
6. Average number of fire fighters responding to a call: 4.7. Four fire fighters are required to be present before a burning building can be en-

tered. County Fire Engines only have 3 fire fighters and therefore two engines would have to arrive before a burning building could be entered.

7. Average response time for Rescue-57: 1 minute 38 seconds (Rescue 57 is the first La Honda unit to respond to most emergencies).
8. Medical emergencies comprise nearly 80% of all calls.
9. Over 85% of La Honda fire fighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians or better.
10. LHFB operates the only water tender on the entire Coastside.

The La Honda Fire Brigade relies on your support to provide such excellent service. Oh, and did we mention that the cost of your fire insurance is reduced by having a Fire Department in La Honda? Visit [www.lahondafire.org](http://www.lahondafire.org) for more information (see p. 2 for what you can find there).

### Upcoming events:

#### **Holiday Faire Sunday, December 7**

This year the La Honda Holiday Faire will be held on **Sunday, December the 7th in the La Honda Fire Station from 10 am until 4 pm**. We have some wonderful new and returning vendors with a variety of different crafts. Come by for your holiday shopping or just pick up something for yourself. You can purchase your holiday poinsettias donated by local growers at the faire. There will be a raffle for one of Denis Shaw's beautiful handmade teddy bears. The La Honda Fire Brigade T-shirts and wine glasses will be available for sale. The new South Coast Directory will be unveiled and for sale at the faire. If you like to sing carols contact us at [holidayfaire@lahondafire.org](mailto:holidayfaire@lahondafire.org) and join in on the fun. Come over to the fire station to enjoy the festivities to shop and visit with your neighbors.

#### **Cioppino Dinner 2009**

Look for the announcement in February.

## Fire Department Personnel

### Officers

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

### Fire fighters

- Chris Conner – Station 55
- Rory Doolin
- Jeff Dominici
- Matt Hanlon – Station 58
- Paul Long
- Charles Marx
- Peter Panofsky
- Doug Woods
- Jim Young
- Katie Johnson

### 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  
jkral@lahondafire.org

The **LHFB community room** is available for use. For information, contact Meg DeLano (president@lahondafire.org).



*La Honda Fire works to control a wild land fire with Cal-Fire Helicopter 106 over this year's Labor Day.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

and professional. In short, our personnel are beyond dedicated and are something every member of our community should be proud of.

Helping us deliver the service we do are a host of public and private agencies and people. This list is too great to print here. However, I feel compelled to mention and thank one group in particular: the Motorcycle Community. While it's true that motorcycle accidents make up nearly ten percent of the calls that we respond to, this is virtually the only group outside of the local community that helps pay their way. For the last four years, the **La Ducati Motorcycle Riders** have held a fund raising effort for the Brigade here in La Honda. Their past efforts have brought in more than \$22,000. These are important dollars that have helped us raise the bar in terms of the service we provide and have benefited all those we serve. This year's La Ducati Day alone, held in October, is on track to raise nearly \$8,000. John Clelland and Dr. Harry Wong, the event's key sponsors, as well as their members and volunteers, have our sincere thanks for their continued support.

Besides responding to emergencies our fire fighters take a leadership role in help-

ing prepare the community for disasters. This year, we again delivered our annual Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. We held a first ever Wildfire Community Preparedness meeting and developed an evacuation plan for Central La Honda. This plan can be viewed on our Web Site at [www.lahondafire.org](http://www.lahondafire.org). Due to the area's unprecedented early season fire conditions we brought back our Wildfire Fuels Reduction program. Information on this highly popular program can also be found on our Web Site. It continued through the summer and literally tons of dead, burnable fuels were eliminated. We also continued our commitment to making life safety inspections where children gather or are present. In the past, such inspections have been made at the two area juvenile detention complexes as well as the elementary school. This year we have concentrated on the area's youth camps.

The La Honda Fire Brigade is a 24-hour a day, 365-day a year organization that has something going on constantly. There are many ways you can help us make this community safer and we invite you to do so. All you have to do to get started is to contact us.

♦ ♦ ♦ — — — ♦ ♦ ♦  
**On-line at [www.lahondafire.org](http://www.lahondafire.org)**

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

### **CERT TRAINING 2009**

Can you ...

- take care of yourself and your family for 3 days in case of disaster?
- turn off your utilities?
- provide first aid?
- use a fire extinguisher?
- assess structural damage to your home?
- assist in search and rescue efforts?
- perform triage?

Would you like to learn these and many other skills? Sign up for CERT training at [www.lahondafire.org](http://www.lahondafire.org). The classes will be at the La Honda Fire station on *Saturdays, January 24 and 31, and February 7 and 14, from 9:30 am to 2 pm.*

### **RE/MAX Dolphin Real Estate**

#### **STEVE PERKINS & GAIL HAFELFINGER**



Steve: 650-619-8121  
Gail: 650-996-3354



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

## **Perspectives: LHFB board member Sandi Ruiz-Poss**

*Interviewed by Iris Schrijver*

**IS:** How long have you been a resident of La Honda?

**SRP:** I have lived in La Honda for 22 years, and moved here from the city to join my husband. It was a big difference from the city life that I was used to.

**IS:** Did it take you long to adjust to this rural area?

**SRP:** I think I am still adjusting! Especially the winters can be scary. One winter in an El Nino year, two trees came down right next to our house, one on each side. I called the fire brigade because I did not want to stay in the house, and they told me to stay put since there were live wires right next to the fallen trees!

**IS:** Is this how you became aware of the work of our fire fighters?

**SRP:** Yes, it made me think about the variety of tasks they perform. In addition, Jane Woods who was with the LHFB would ask me to help with the Pancake breakfast, the Cioppino dinner, mailings, and membership appreciation actions such as the distribution of LHFB magnets. Later, approximately four years ago, there was an opening of the LHFB Board of Directors, and I decided to serve in that capacity. I am in my third and last term now [one term is two years, -ed.]. I really respect and admire the fire fighters and I feel that serving the Brigade is the least I can do to support them. We really need our fire fighters and the

LHFB. The fact that they are all volunteers keeps our taxes down and saves us approximately 1.5 million dollars in expenses every year. Apart from that, we all need their services in this remote area to keep us safe.



*Sandi Ruiz-Poss and the 2008 Pancake Breakfast banner, at the fire station*

**IS:** You are widely known as the organizer of many of the LHFB events. Which ones are you typically involved with and what do you like about organizing these?

**SRP:** I just like being around people, and having fun with other people. I help with organizing the Pancake breakfast, the Cioppino dinner, the Flea market, the Christmas faire, the annual Appreciation dinner for the LHFB, and the newsletter mailings. The Christmas faire is my favorite event to organize. I love Captain Cathy's sticky cinnamon buns! I can

organize most of the rest of the faire myself so that I don't need to bother others too much. In addition it brings the holiday spirit to our town. All events, however, happen because of the help and dedication of lots of people. For example, for the Pancake Breakfast Captain Cathy does the shopping and organizes the kitchen, and the fire fighters help with setting up or cleaning up afterwards.

**IS:** What was your most rewarding event to organize?

**SRP:** The Cioppino dinner is always the most challenging event. It was started many years ago by the Glass family, and has become tradition. It also brings in funds for the LHFB and as such is very important. However, it requires the organization of food for 250 people. Advertising the event, selling tickets, securing donated raffle prizes, coordinating with local wineries for donations of wine to the dinner, and motivating people other than the fire fighters to volunteer all take considerable effort and time. The morning of the dinner I always get nervous. Then Ari Delay tells me that "this ball is rolling and nothing is going to stop it now." It is especially rewarding though, to walk into the room of the Cioppino dinner and to see how it all came together in the end and to know that I was able to contribute to the fundraising for the LHFB in a meaningful way.

**IS:** Do you ever have trouble finding volunteers to help?

**SRP:** The events always happen as planned even though they are a little bit different every single year. It can certainly be a challenge to get volunteers, and some events require a lot of phone calls or emails in advance. However, there is a small group of dedicated people who almost always show up and help, and this is very much appreciated. I have learned to accept "no" in terms of both volunteering and when people decline to donate, without taking it personally. I am just happy with what we accomplish. And: I have a lot of fun organizing and enjoying the events!

**IS:** Is there anything you need help with, perhaps from our readers?

**SRP:** Yes. We really need someone who can make big signs that can be posted along Skyline Boulevard, SR84, in Pescadero, and in Loma Mar. Our current signs are often too small, and in Woodside I recently climbed onto the roof of Robert's market to prevent the sign from flapping up in the wind! If anyone can help with these signs, then they can contact me at sandi@lahondafire.org

**IS:** Thanks Sandi. You do so much for our community and much of it is not immediately visible. I am glad we had the opportunity to do this interview!



*Tragic car and motorcycle accidents remain a part of the incidents we respond to.*

## **ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS: THINK OF FIRE SAFETY**

*By Steve Krause*

Well, it is that time of the year to light the furnace or build a fire in your fireplace or wood stove. But before you do, have you thought about what has been going on in those appliances all summer? The spiders have taken up residence in your furnace, the kids have accidentally dropped crayons or small toys into the floor grate, and the accumulation of dust that built up during the hot months can and will start a fire when the furnace is fired up for the first time. Your chimney poses the same threat of fire if it is not cleaned periodically. A heavy oily substance called creosote builds up on the walls of the chimney which can be ignited by heat, leaving you with a fire raging in your chimney. This fire could spread to the walls in your house or into the attic and go undetected for hours until it is too late.

These incidents can be prevented by taking some time before using these heating items. Before lighting your furnace, vacuum up all the dust, remove the toys, and change or clean the filter. If you have a forced air furnace, check the fan belts for cracks and replace them if needed. If there are any doubts about relighting the pilot light, call your nearest P.G & E. office.

Your chimney should be cleaned and inspected by a professional chimney sweep. These people are trained to spot and repair

cracks or leaks in your chimney flue. Also, they have the tools to remove the layers of flammable creosote. It is a good safety measure to have a spark arrestor installed to prevent sparks from landing on your roof or into dry grass. If you do experience a fire in your chimney or furnace, dial 911 and give the dispatcher your type of emergency, address and phone number.

Finally, to make your fireplace safe, you must use it correctly. First, make sure the damper is open. If in doubt, look up the chimney with a flashlight. Next, if you use a natural gas or propane gas log set, be sure to have the lighted match or wick near the gas jet before you turn on the gas. If kindling and newspaper are used, make sure the screen is in place to prevent the sparks from spitting out onto your carpet.

The holidays are just around the corner which means it is time to decorate your home with lights, candles and other decorations. Any strings of lights or electrical decorations should be inspected for loose cords, cracked insulation or broken sockets. Electrical cords servicing decorations should be of suitable gauge to prevent overloading. When leaving the house for a long period be sure to shut off the lights and decorations.

Candles are a popular decoration all year long, but these pose an extreme fire threat if not properly used. Always use nonflammable candle holders and place them where they cannot be knocked down. Keep them away from drapes and other flammables. Never use candles on or near your holiday tree.

When buying a Christmas tree, choose one that looks green and healthy. Most trees that you buy in a lot have been cut down months before and are dry and brown by the time Christmas rolls around. Take some of the needles and bend them between your thumb and forefinger. If they snap, this indicates a tree that is dry and extremely flammable. Look for needles that bend and spring back.

Cut the bottom of the trunk off and put the tree in a stand that supports the trunk in water. This will sustain the moisture content in the tree. Check the water level daily: you will be surprised how much water your tree needs.

When placing your tree in your house, choose a location away from fireplaces and other heat sources. Also, be sure that it does not block your exits out of your house.

A tree that has been treated with a flame retardant must have a tag showing that it has been treated.

I suggested a lot of ideas to help you stay fire safe during the winter, but the best way is to just use your common sense. If something doesn't look right to you, it probably isn't.