



Logtown Fire Safe Council

P.O. Box 1601
El Dorado, CA 95623



Notes of the August 9th 2014 Meeting

Station 44

Diamond Springs-El Dorado Fire Protection District

Introduction and Sign-In: Pat Dwyer convened the meeting at 9:03. Board Members Present: Ken Hasse, John Lindberg and Marilyn Olson-Petersen. Pat introduced Battalion Chief Mike Webb, Cal Fire, Battalion Chief Ken Earle, Diamond Springs-El Dorado and Battalion Chief Dave Woods. Last March the Council hosted a Fire Incident “Exercise” and we invited our state/local fire and “related” agencies to share with us what really happens when we have a wildland fire in our area and what are some of the key actions that we as property owners can take to keep us and our property safe. It was an excellent session and we now have Mike, Ken and Dave here today to brief us on a “Real” fire incident – the Sand Fire.

Order of Business: Pat had a few items he wanted to share before we got into the Sand Fire Presentation. A Fund Raiser for Sand Fire Residents is being organized by the community. The date: Friday, August 22 in the evening from 5 to 7pm. at the El Dorado County Fair Grounds. The goal is to raise funds for the victims most in need. Tickets are \$10/person or \$25/Family. It will be Pasta on the Lawn. Pat advised we have about \$5500.00 in our Logtown Treasury and he would like a motion to donate \$500.00 to the Fund Raiser. These are our monies that we have raised through Hot Dog Social events etc. John made the motion and Ken seconded. Motion Passed. Ken stated he was 100% in support of the motion but felt if significant funds and effort had been spent on prevention, these tragic losses would have been minimized.

Neighborhood Coordinators: Pat announced that Karen Rogers volunteered to be Neighborhood Coordinator for the “Yellow Zone” (replacing Rod). Coordinators are instrumental in making our Phone Tree System work. They contact neighbors in the zone and manage the phone tree for that area – keeping it up to date and advising new residents of our Fire Safe Council. Thank you Karen for getting involved.

Logtown “Text” Alert Sign-Ups: Ken advised that 110 out of 400 residents have signed up. The Council encourages you to sign up. The “Text” Alert seems to be an effective, popular communication tool. Quick easy access to wherever you are located. Ken only needs your “cell phone number” and “service provider” to get you into the system – this is private information and only used in an “emergency” situation. We are not abandoning the phone/email” alerts; the different approaches complement one another. Some of you mentioned you did not get an alert from the “County” during the Sand Fire. That is good because if you did it would either be a “Pre-Evacuation” Alert or an “Evacuation Notice”. Our “Logtown” Alert System is an informal one to let you know something is happening in our neighborhood. The Government agencies (County Sheriff, Fire Department) are the “official” agencies that will tell us whether we need to “Prepare” to evacuate or “Evacuate”. Cal Fire’s “READY, SET, GO” Brochures are in the back (and on-line) to assist you in preparing for a wildland fire.

Scanners: It has come to our attention that “Smart Phones” have an application to receive scanner information: 5-0 Radio is one good app. Ken Earle advised that El Dorado County

Watch offers a rapid fire of information but he cautions/suggests that you validate that information. "Broadcastify.com is an additional site that attendees said were helpful on fire updates and helped residents connect/help one another; i.e. an example offering their address to board animals that need to be evacuated. More than 1000 horses were relocated and 500 residents offered up their homes to evacuees. We are fortunate to live in such an amazing neighborhood. LogtownNextdoor.com also a useful site to help connect residents and match "needs".

Sand Fire Special Report:

Battalion Chief Mike Webb began an overview of the July 25 Sand Fire. It started at 4:30 at Gold Beach and headed east up the river drainage of Consumes River and Spanish Creek. A vehicle driving in tall dry grass in the area appears to be the cause; this is still under investigation. The Fire was resistant to control efforts early on. Temperature 102, Humidity 10%, SW Winds at 8-15. Fire risk that day was above the 95 percentile due to temperature, terrain, fuel type, wind, and dry conditions. Mike complimented El Dorado County for its aggressive approach wherein regardless of jurisdiction they call in resources to hit fires hard and keep them small. This one stop shop coordination has made it possible for our fire management teams in the county to keep our local fires small. Dave Woods was first on scene making the initial assessment/deployment of equipment/crew/action plan. Mike joined shortly thereafter. This is the first time in 50 years that they ordered an Incident Management Team; this allowed them to focus on fighting the fire. The Management Team takes over the general operations of support, finance and planning. We were very fortunate that there were no other fires at that time demanding resources. There was rapid growth and the fire exceeded local resources. At the scene Dave ordered additional resources (Air: 2 air tankers; Land: 25 Engines, 4 dozers and 10 hand crews and within 1 to 1 1/2 hours more resources were ordered: 5 Strike Teams, 10 strike crews, 9-10 Tankers and 4-5 Helicopters. Also got a DC 10 on the scene. By Sunday there were 2000 active personnel with 50% containment. Monday there was 65 % containment. At that time they started assessing whether some areas were safe to return to and began demobilizing and making re-assessments; other fires were requesting resources. They ramped up fast and reduced crews/equipment just as fast. Over all losses: 19 residences, 47 outbuildings, 29 vehicles and 4240 acres burned. Mike was pleased to report that there were only 2 injuries and they were minor.

Mike walked us through each day of the fire noting the conditions/resources deployed. There were several agencies involved- we had excellent high level coordination. We can be thankful and proud of the delivery of services provided. Pat and all the attendees applauded Mike, Ken, Dave and their support teams for doing an excellent level of service.

Mike advised the 100 foot defensible space requirement around structures is a "starting" point. Slope and vegetation are major factors determining whether more clearance should be done. You do not need to cut down all your trees but focus on space between trees and break up the tree canopy to reduce spread. There is a formula for slope clearance. Cal Fire's (READY, SET, GO) Brochures have these details and other steps to take to best harden your property. Roughly if structure is on 10% slope = 100 ft. clearance; 20% slope = 200 ft. clearance; 30% slope = 300 ft. clearance. Also distance between trees:10% slope 10 ft. between trees; 20% slope 20 ft. between trees and 30% slope 30 ft. between trees.

Public Comments: Ray Nutting (El Dorado County Supervisor) complimented Cal Fire noting they are the best fire fighters in the world but he raised the issue of the need to manage the "overburdened landscape". He would like to see them become the best "fuel identifiers" and get

crews (inmates etc.) on the ground to reduce those loads. He would like to see more done up-front with “fuel reduction” and asked about the use of SRA Fee for this purpose. By reducing the fuel load we reduce fire risk. Mike responded he agreed with the need to reduce the fuel load but noted funding has been an issue. The recent discussions on the use of the SRA Fee may address some of that need. Ray would like a fiscal analysis of the Sand Fire. It is likely that an analysis of the cost to fight a fire and the cost to do advance fuel reduction is probably on a ratio of 10 to 1- hence it is economical for government to invest up-front rather than pay the cost of suppression and loss after the fire occurs. It has been his experience that wildlife also benefits from fuel reduction and help forage the land.

Ken E pointed out that just this morning they were unable to find an address where a fire had been reported – they drove past it; wasting valuable time for them and the affected home owner. “Street Address Signs” need to be readily visible from both sides for fire and medical emergencies.

Mike shared there is no other area in California that has the magnitude of the fire hazard that our area, Northern California has. There was extreme fire danger on Friday. The Delta Winds aggravated the situation by not settling down in the evening; by Sunday they went back to their normal routine and quieting down at night.

On Saturday a new fire started; El Portal (Yosemite) and they were requesting resources. Mike explained a Command Center is set up to make these triage allocation decisions. A new fire usually has precedence - consistent with “hit them hard, keep them small”. So decisions were made as to what needed to go to El Portal.

Smoke columns with intense energy were visible for miles - vegetation in the river valley fueled those plumes. The Mandatory Evacuation Areas were Sand Ridge proper, Fairplay, River Pine and Swansborough. Evacuation “Alerts” were given in nearby areas. A Shelter was set up at Placerville Fair Grounds and later moved to Ponderosa High School.

Use of larger airplanes for water/retardant have increased over the years to where it is standard equipment. There are 2 DC 10s in CA ready for use. Their size enables them to carry more retardant and make more rounds before refueling/reloading. Mike showed how they plot/update the fire’s activity and determine their containment lines as they strategize the use of resources. He complimented all the affiliated agencies that provide support for the fire teams, evacuate residents, rescue animals, provide shelter services, control traffic and assess whether it is safe (water/gas/power lines/downed trees) to return to the area. Cal Fire wants to get you back into your home as soon as it is safe. Mike commented that Sand Ridge Road needs to be “improved” and he will take that recommendation to the County.

Ken E emphasized that a home might have decent defensible space but because of location (toward the top of a hill for example) if they have not cleared downhill the house becomes a “target” when a wall of fire of 150-200 feet comes up the ravine. The perimeter area is not enough. Most of us came to the foothills because of the rolling hills and oak forested environment. As home owners it is our responsibility to take measures to protect our home.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:15. The remainder of the AGENDA will be taken up at the September 13 Meeting

Signed: Marilyn Olson-Petersen

Logtown Fire Safe Council: Pat Dwyer, President (622-7121) Ken Hasse, Treasurer (620-7220),
Marilyn Olson-Petersen, Vice-Chair/Secretary (620-2461), Rod Repschlaeger (621-3219 and
John Lindberg (303-3672)