



La Honda Fire Brigade Newsletter November 2006

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Jeff Clarke

President - Board of Directors

Have you ever wondered what goes into running a volunteer fire brigade? Here is a glimpse into the many facets of the La Honda Fire Brigade.

The emergency response aspect includes responding to emergency calls, training, and procuring and maintaining emergency equipment and supplies. Our volunteer fire fighters respond to a wide variety of emergency calls. These include car, motorcycle and bicycle accidents, structure and wildland fires, medical aid, cliff rescues, swift water rescues, hazardous material spills and gas leaks. In order to stay sharp and up to date on the latest emergency techniques, the fire fighters spend hundreds of hours per year on training exercises and classes.

Dealing with a wide variety of emergency calls requires vehicles for transport to the emergency. For fires there are the fire trucks and the water tender. For medical calls and accidents there is the rescue unit. For calls in the back country there is the four wheel drive back country rescue vehicle. Supplies for cliff rescues include ropes and special carriages for transporting the victim. Swift water rescue requires special protective clothing to deal with the cold water. Hoses, protective clothing, oxygen units and ladders are required for fighting fires. Medical emergencies may require defibrillators, bandages, backboards, or splints.

While everyone is familiar with the emergency response component, however, there is also a business component to the Fire Brigade. This includes fund raising, recruitment, community awareness, infrastructure, and special projects. The most important part of the business side of the Brigade is the raising of funds to maintain and procure the supplies and equipment necessary to respond to emergencies. We raise money in a number of ways: Grants enable us to procure some of the more expensive items by stretching our dollars. Membership dues provide a steady and much needed source of funds. We also have a number of fund raising events throughout the year, including a flea market, the pancake breakfast, the cioppino dinner, and a holiday faire. There are several motorcycle events

that donate generously to the Fire Brigade. These include Doc Wong's Motorcycle Day, La Ducati Day and Yamaha Day. There are two rodeos each year that donate to the Brigade. In addition, we sell T-shirts, wine glasses and beer mugs.

Another aspect of the business side is community awareness and support. In the past we have provided CERT and First Aid training programs. The fire crew periodically tests fire hydrants and makes recommendations to the community on changes required. This past year, we had a brush clearing program and home protection program. The fire crew will have demonstrations and talks for the school classes. The newsletter and web site provide information about the workings of the Brigade to the community.

Of course there is the mundane business infrastructure that help keeps all of this running. The membership records must be managed, the web site needs to be updated and the corporate and legal requirements must be handled. The treasurer takes care of paying bills and keeping track of the budget. The secretary is responsible for taking minutes at the board meetings and complying with the state corporate regulations.

Finally, there are special projects that must be managed in addition to all the other activities. The current special project is the remodel of the fire station to provide a better meeting space for training, an emergency response center and a community meeting place. All of this work is done with volunteers and donations from the community. If you would like to help, please contact Larry Whitney or me at 747-0381.



Country Christmas
in the Fire House

Saturday, December 2

10 AM till 4 PM

Handmade Arts and Crafts

Carolers and Santa

Come buy gifts, treats, sweets
and locally grown poinsettias

at the La Honda Fire Station
on Hwy 84 in La Honda

CHIEF'S REPORT

By Larry Whitney - Chief



This July fire happened on Log Cabin Rd. and caused a scare for local residents.

The La Honda Fire Brigade continues to "raise the bar" in all areas of the service we provide to you. This year we instituted a number of efforts to help reduce the area's wildfire threat. Some of these efforts included: a) working closely with CDF to coordinate their inspection of the homes in our response area, b) meeting with community organizations to explain the wildfire threat and to help residents understand the recent changes in state law affecting their homes' defensible space, c) hosting a regional wildfire readiness drill in which fire fighters from throughout the south coast learned about structure protection tactics and team work, and d) bringing a new "Fuels Reduction Program" to Cuesta La Honda, along with the San Mateo County Firesafe Council and CDF/County Fire. In this highly popular program, local residents removed dead and excess brush from around their homes. The cut brush was piled in front of participating homes where it was chipped up by state crews and given back as landscape material. We hope to bring back and expand this program in 2007.

As we continually seek to deliver better service, we need to raise the capability of our station, equipment and fleet. In the last few years we have modernized most of our fire apparatus. However, portions of our fire station need to be changed to keep up with the mission of today and tomorrow. Our Board of Directors authorized an upgrade project for the fire station in 2005. This project will relocate the existing office into an unused area of the station and expand the current office to provide for a new
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Fire Department Personnel

- Larry Whitney - Chief

Officers

- Ari Delay - Assistant Chief
- Cathy Whitney - Captain

Firefighters

- Peter Dodson
- Jeff Dominici
- Matt Hanlon
- Paul Long
- Charles Marx
- Peter Panofsky
- Doug Woods
- Jim Young

Rookies

- Ryan Brinkworth
- Rory Doolin

Board Members

- Jeff Clarke - Board President
- Julie Delay - Corporate Secretary
- Ken Gottwald
- Coleen Hackett - Treasurer
- Joseph Kral
- Sandi Ruiz-Poss
- Doug Turner
- Iris Schrijver, M.D. – Vice President, Newsletter Editor

Copy editing assistance by Sally Bachman

How to reach us

P.O. Box 97
8945 La Honda Road
La Honda, CA 94020
650-747-0381
LHFB@southcoast.net
<http://www.lahondafire.org>

Contacts

Larry Whitney, Volunteer Fire Chief
747-9447 x 103
Lwhitney@flash.net

Jeff Clarke, Board President
747-0381
Email to the station

Joe Kral, NEST coordinator
747-9693
Email to the station



Janet Lawson Burr, Broker Associate
Cashin Company Realtors
Woodside, CA 94062
650.747.0800
www.JanetLawson.com

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Training Room and Emergency Operations Center. The USDA has approved a Community Improvement Loan and the project has also been approved by the County's Planning Department. We hope to go to bid for this project at the first of the new year.

A major component in improving our service has been our ability to leverage membership and fundraising dollars through the successful award of grants. These grants have come from a variety of entities and have helped us replace old equipment and expand the depth of the service we provide. This year we have been awarded grants totaling \$54,000. These grants will help us acquire firefighter safety equipment and portable radios, and fund certified training. Simply put: there is no other organization on which you rely like the Brigade, which does this much with so little. We are proud to serve this community.

Perspectives: Volunteer LHFB Captain Cathy Whitney – Interviewed by Iris Schrijver



Fire fighter Captain Cathy Whitney with granddaughter Evie.

You can expect a quick response.

When you dial 911, your call goes into the Public Safety Dispatch Center in Redwood City. Within 45 seconds of your call the Brigade is dispatched. According to the Dispatch Center's records it takes, on average, 2 minutes and 53 seconds for the Brigade's first units to start responding to you.

Dollars Saved: Following guidelines prepared by the National Volunteer Fire Council, the Brigade has estimated our organization's dollar savings to the community. These guidelines use our investment in equipment as well as personnel and compare them to what the cost to replace our service with a paid dept. would be. Our annual saving to the community is a whopping **\$1,288,454.00.**

IS: How long have you been involved with the LHFB and in what capacity?

CW: I have been a resident of La Honda for about 30 years and have been part of LHFB for more than 18 years. It all started with a 140 hour EMT (emergency medical technicians) class here in La Honda. At the time I was a stay-at-home mom, and it seemed an interesting challenge. I liked the class and decided to join the Brigade, which was led by Chief Bob Rosenberg at the time. First I was a fire fighter, a few years later I became a lieutenant, and I have been captain for the majority of my 18 years with the brigade. Larry Whitney (current LHFB Chief and Cathy's husband –ed) joined the Brigade 3 or 4 years after I did.

IS: Is it true that you go on all the calls?

CW: No, that would be impossible, but I do go on a large percentage of all calls and I have been on more than anyone has been on. I expect to reach 3000 calls by, or before, April of 2007.

IS: That's impressive! That translates to approximately 165 calls per year...How was it for you to be a woman fire fighter when you started, and does your gender make a difference today?

CW: It was difficult in the beginning, as it definitely is a male dominated field. There had been a few female fire fighters before I joined, but they were not with the Brigade for a long time. Women do face some prejudice, but everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. Women may not be as strong as men (in general) but after all there are big differences between men, as well. It is all about team work and doing the optimal job with the team. For example, in a structure fire, a very strong person may go into a building to pull people out, whereas someone

Are your house numbers easily seen?

You never know when an emergency will occur. But when one does, the fire dept.'s arrival time can make the difference between life and death, or a small house fire versus a total loss. House numbers should be at least 6 inches tall and of a contrasting color to the mounting surface. Now is the time to make sure your house numbers are highly visible and are posted in a place where they can be clearly seen.



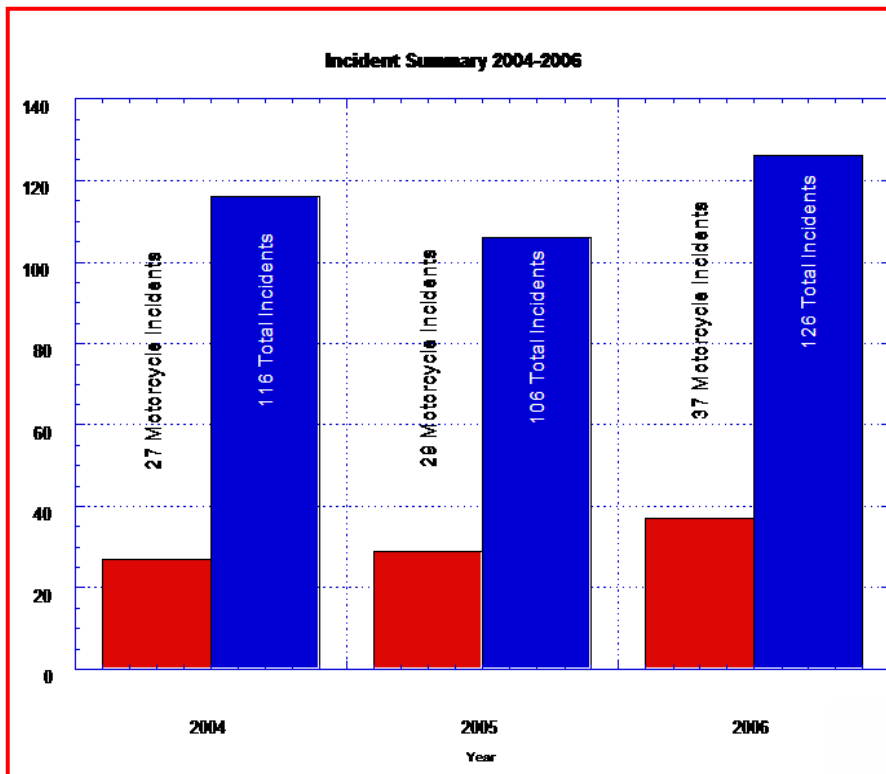
MARK GRIFFIN
PRESIDENT

G R I F F I N
P A I N T I N G I N C.

CA LICENSE NO. 599026
3580 HAVEN AVE, UNIT #2
REDWOOD CITY, CA 94063
mark@griffinpainting.com

650 368 3190
650 368 3192 FAX
650 222 8031 CELL

Motorcycle accidents remain a major portion of the Brigade's emergency responses. The picture above (right) speaks to the dangers of riding on the narrow and winding roads in our area. Below are the statistics for the summer months, 2004-2006.



else is needed to operate the engine. Now, my experience is accepted and respected, and I am able to give guidance to new fire fighters. In our volunteer fire fighting department, we are not structured in the same way as a career fire department. For example, in a career department, the chief, assistant chief, and captain, are not necessarily as "hands-on" as in the LHFB. Here, we perform and share the job as necessary.

IS: What was your most difficult call?

CW: The most difficult call was a structure fire on Seaside School road, in which two small children were killed. Most of our calls do not actually involve fire, and structure fires typically do not involve humans. This, however, was a real and rare tragedy.

IS: Cathy, your involvement in the LHFB is an enormous time commitment. What do you personally get out of this work?

CW: It really is all about helping people, and helping the community we live in. Just the occasional "thank you" and the sense of pride I get from being able to make a difference, are my reward. Many people think that we receive at least some compensation for our work, but, in fact, none of the positions in the LHFB receive any pay whatsoever, we are *all-volunteer*. You need to want to do this job, as there is no "glory" and no salary. What you receive in return is camaraderie and friendships from the people who do this task with you. And the work itself is interesting and can be very rewarding: A few months ago a 60 year old

man collapsed just in front of Pioneer Market and had a cardiac arrest. It was an opportunity for us to use the Autopulse CPR board that came into service approximately one year ago and had been used only once before. This board enables monitoring and automated heart compressions and we were able to save his life. He was flown to Stanford Hospital and when I talked to him one week later he was teaching the nurses the Cha-Cha! He truly was in the right place at the right time, and events like this are real highlights of our work.

Another highlight was going to Watsonville after the Loma Prieta earthquake, where we staffed Station #2 to provide relief for the local fire fighters.

IS: You care about animals too. Can you tell me about the dog you cared for after the Katrina disaster?

CW: Yes, that's our dog Gypsy. She is a real trooper. She survived famine, fire and flood! As a puppy, she came to the Humane Society in New Orleans after her owner starved her, then she was adopted but her new home burned down and she was housed with a family member, and a few months after that the levies broke. I was able to locate Gypsy's owner, who is still dealing with the hurricane's aftermath, and was happy to leave Gypsy with us.

John Kim
8875 La Honda Rd
P.O. Box 477
La Honda, CA 94020

PIONEER MARKET

(650) 747-0551

IS: What do you see as the biggest need of the Brigade today?

CW: We really need daytime responders, in other words, motivated people who are able to make the commitment to respond during the day because they are local. I will inevitably retire some day and we need to continue our service with a strong team.

IS: Perhaps other stay-at-home moms and dads will be inspired by your commitment!

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

Newsletter November 2006

Serving the community and
all volunteer since 1953

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**Holiday safety - *By Assistant
Chief Ari Delay***

The holiday season is a time for families to gather and celebrate our families and our faith. However, it is also a time when fire fighters see an increase in house fires, fueled primarily by holiday decorations, candles and Christmas trees. Fires caused by candles, for instance, increase four-fold during the holidays. Some 200 house fires occur each year in which Christmas trees are the initial source of ignition. House fires during the winter holiday season kill 500 and injure 2,000 people, and cause more than \$500 million in damage across the country. It's also important to know that fires caused by children increase during the holiday season. Across the nation, children cause nearly 60 house fires a day in mid-December, with another sharp increase on New Year's Day. Parents should take precautions to prevent such avoidable tragedies.

All throughout La Honda, families will soon begin decorating for the holidays. You don't have to give up your holiday decorations in the interest of safety, but there are some easy, commonsense things you can do to reduce your risk of a fire:

* Select a fresh Christmas tree that is kept in water at all times. Needles on fresh trees

should be green and should not fall off easily. Don't put your tree up too early or leave it up longer than two weeks. Dried-out Christmas trees can ignite easily and boost a fire by spreading it rapidly to nearby combustible materials.

* Place your Christmas tree in a safe place, away from heat sources such as fireplaces or heat vents.

* Maintain your holiday lights. Inspect your lights before you use them to ensure they don't have frayed wires, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets or excessive wear. Only use lighting that is listed by an approved testing laboratory and don't leave the lights on when you're not home.

* Avoid overloading electrical outlets. Don't link more than three light strands unless the directions indicate it is safe. Periodically check the wires. They should not be warm to the touch.

* Use only non-flammable decorations that are placed away from heat vents and if you're using an artificial tree, make sure that it's flame retardant.

* Avoid using candles. If you do use candles, ensure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down.

* Do not leave lit candles unattended,

never put candles on a Christmas tree and never leave the house with candles burning. Place menorahs away from vents or flammable materials.

Every year, the anticipated joy of the holiday season turns to unexpected grief and loss for families hit by residential fires. Please heed our advice and take these steps to a safe and happy holiday season.

**Buy your poinsettias from the
LHFB - *By Sandi Ruiz-Poss***

The Fire Brigade will, once again, host The La Honda Holiday Faire. We have some great new and return vendors. There will be jewelry, knitted products, tie dye, wood products, pottery, soaps, lotions, killer brownies, olive relish, peanut brittle, gingerbread cookies and more. Captain Cathy will make her fabulous sticky cinnamon buns with hot cider and chocolate. There will be a raffle with advance tickets available at the La Honda post office. We will have carolers and even a visit from Santa. The Fire Brigade will be selling beautiful, locally grown poinsettias, so do not buy your poinsettias before visiting the faire! All of this will be in the fire station on Saturday, December 2 from 10 AM till 4 PM.