



La Honda Fire Brigade

Newsletter Winter 2009

FIRE CHIEF'S COLUMN

By Larry Whitney

Perhaps it is the slowdown in the economy, or maybe people are just being more cautious, but the numbers of serious incidents and of emergency calls in general have fallen from last year's record levels. For many reasons, we are all appreciative of this fact. However, it does not mean that the Brigade's firefighters have been idle. Currently, we have several initiatives underway that help position us to better serve you now and in the future.

We have recently been awarded a FEMA "SAFER" Grant. This \$49,350 grant will help fund a new firefighter recruitment and retention program, will improve our community outreach, and will remove some of the barriers to new people joining our department as fire-

fighters. You will be hearing and seeing much more about this exciting program in the near future.

It is a simple fact that the hardest working piece of fire apparatus on the whole South Coast is Rescue 57 based out of our La Honda Fire Station. This Rescue's initial attack area covers more miles of road and area than any other fire unit. It is as likely to be at a vehicle accident at Hwy 35 and Alpine Road as it is to be on a cliff rescue near Año Nuevo or responding to a medical call in La Honda or Loma Mar. This unit's equipment-carrying capability has long ago ceased to meet our needs, and the vehicle is showing its age. In late 2008, we started the process of replacing it. We put together a funding plan that —

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La Honda Holiday Fair: Sunday, December 13 from 10 am until 4 pm. The fire station will be filled with the wonderful aroma of cinnamon sticky buns baked by Captain Cathy, and by the joyous voices of local carolers. Our vendors must hand-make their own crafts - no trashy stuff here. There will be knitting, crocheting, quilting, cloth bags, jewelry, pottery, wood items, note cards, honey, beeswax products, soaps, lotions, candles and of course - being La Honda - tie dye clothing and banana slugs. This is the place to purchase beautiful, locally-grown poinsettias. For our raffle, Denis Shaw will donate one of his beautiful handmade teddy bears. Come join your friends and neighbors in the fire station, while shopping for one of a kind holiday gifts and maybe something for yourself.

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

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Serving the community and
all volunteer since 1953

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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

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

Newsletter

- Karel Schrijver

How to reach us

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chief@lahondafire.org

Steve Krause, Board President
president@lahondafire.org

Joe Kral, NEST coordinator
747-9693
jkral@lahondafire.org

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

involves a number of stakeholders, combining dollars from the Community, the Brigade, the Mid-peninsula Open Space District, and from the County of San Mateo. In mid-September an order was placed for a replacement rescue. We expect this new unit to arrive in early 2010. The new Rescue will retain many of the features of our current unit, including being 4-wheel drive, while having more crew and equipment space, and more power to tow our Rescue Trailer. It will also be one of

only two Fire Department units in the whole county that can safely transport a patient in the event that an ambulance is unavailable or cannot get into the area where patient might be.

The La Honda Fire Brigade is proud of all of its accomplishments including the above, but the thing we are most proud of is our people. It is their spirit and determination that makes us what we are and helps safeguard the area's residents and visitors. There are many ways in which you too can help. Please go to www.lahondafire.org to find out how.

Lastly, on behalf of our entire organization, we wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

South Coast
CERT
COMMUNITY EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM

Brigade and other local firefighters do a great job of handling day to day emergencies. But when a

large-scale disaster strikes there simply will not be enough emergency workers for every need. That's when local residents may have to step up and work to protect themselves, their families and their neighbors. Our CERT classes can teach you what to do. To enroll or for information go to: www.lahondafire.org
2010 CERT Class Schedule and Times

Saturday Jan. 23, 2010—10 am to 3 pm

- ◆ Potential disasters and emergencies
- ◆ Emergency preparedness
- ◆ ICS 100
- ◆ Disaster psychology

Saturday Jan 30, 2010—10 am to 3 pm

- ◆ Disaster medical operations - 1
- ◆ Search and rescue

Saturday Feb. 6, 2010—10 am to 3 pm

- ◆ Disaster medical operations - 2



In 2009 the Brigade expanded its Large Animal Rescue capability. Several of our Firefighters are now State Certified Large Animal Rescue Technicians. Here Capt. Cathy Whitney directs the rescue of a horse that had fallen into a ravine.

- ◆ Multi-casualty incidents
Saturday Feb. 13, 2010—10 am to 3 pm
- ◆ Fire chemistry/ fire extinguisher
- ◆ Utility control
- ◆ Hazardous materials placarding
- ◆ Rescue methods
- ◆ Terrorism and homeland defense
Saturday Feb. 27, 2010—10 am to 4 pm
- ◆ Hands-on exercise

A rescue

The following is an excerpt from a Thank You note the Brigade recently received. At approximately 11 pm, Rescue 57 was dispatched to a report of a tree coming down onto a camp site injuring 8 people at Portola State Park. Rescue 57 was the first public safety unit to arrive at the scene. What our crew found was a single patient, a three year old who had received severe head injuries as a result of a tree crashing onto the family's tent while they were asleep:

"Thank you so much for all you did to help save our daughter's life.... Those minutes we spent not knowing if our daughter would survive were the worst we could imagine. I don't know what would have happened if there was no volunteer unit in La Honda. The work you do is so important to families like ours...."

On-line at 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 firefighter information.

Perspectives: firefighter Peter Panofsky

Interviewed by Iris Schrijver

IS: Peter, how did you become involved with the La Honda Fire Brigade?

PP: I was working as an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] for an ambulance company in Santa Barbara, when I decided to move back to La Honda, where I grew up, in 2003. I wanted to pursue nursing or paramedic school and enrolled in the College of San Mateo for paramedic training. I also became interested in helping out at the LHFB, and fully expected that I would start there by being asked to sweep the floors! But instead Chief Whitney explained to me what the fire department was all about, how I would become part of the team, and made it clear how much work it was going to be. I was enrolled into what we call “the Academy” soon thereafter.

This is the training to become a fire fighter, offered at several regional fire stations. It consists of different modules such as a three-week wildland fire class, a four-week structure fire module, and many others.

IS: Was the work as much as you anticipated?

PP: It was even more! In addition to my training at the Academy and the local training I received at our own station, we also do a fair amount of public service such as the pancake breakfast and motorcycle safety day. There also is a lot of maintenance work of the building and of the equipment at the station. But it is well worth it. Fortunately, my boss understands when fire fighting duty calls!

IS: What keeps this work as a fire fighter interesting for you?

PP: We daily deal with situations that are out of the ordinary for other people and we encounter the full range, from severe conditions to very minor ones. One of my most memorable calls was a car accident on SR 84 between the station and Skylonda. The car had gone off the road and the unconscious driver was trapped. The car doors could not be opened because they were pinned between the embankment and a tree. We

received the call and went out in our rescue vehicle as per standard dispatch policy, but were only later updated that the engine of the car was, in fact, on fire. The rescue vehicle carries no water. Ari De-



Peter Panofsky in action

lay (Assistant Chief) and I arrived on the scene, put on our protective gear and breathing apparatus, and were able to break open the sunroof. As the flames were emerging through the vents on the dashboard, we were able to pull the driver to safety and he fully recovered from the accident. Had we been there just a few minutes later, this story could have had a very different ending. At the other end of the spectrum I recall a call by a local woman who had come to the station because she needed a pair of tweezers, to remove a piece of uncooked spaghetti from under her fingernail. She made her call from the emergency phone outside of our building, thereby triggering a full medical emergency response. Before she knew it, she was completely surrounded by sirens and fire engines. And all that consternation just for a small piece of pasta!

IS: Those are amazing stories! Never a boring moment... Has this work changed your perspective on life?

PP: Definitely. You just don't sweat the small stuff. For me personally, it has also resulted in some lifestyle changes. I thought that the accidents we encounter would not influence me, but when we had a particularly busy summer in 2004 with

multiple particularly jarring motorcycle fatalities along SR 84, I decided to stop riding my motorcycles. Riding fast is a lot of fun, but you just don't know what is around the next corner and these accidents happen quickly, impacting the lives of the riders and other road users in an instance. In addition, speeding can lead to a felony

conviction, and as my career became more important to me, I decided that these risks were not worth it.

IS: Are you planning on making this your career, and would you then have to leave the area?

PP: Everyone finds their own personal motivation to do this work, and those who find personal meaning in it, are typically the ones who stay. The LHFB is all volunteer. Some of our fire fighters just do this to help friends, neighbors and the visitors to our area. Others, in addition to their work at the LHFB, also do this as a paid profession in Pacifica, Half Moon Bay, or for a few weeks seasonally in,

for example, Mendocino. I would like to do that too. You don't have to leave the area to become a professional fire fighter.

IS: Does the LHFB still need more members or volunteers?

PP: Definitely. Everyone should consider becoming a member. Sooner or later something will happen to you, your family, or others you know. We show up for every situation indiscriminately, but we do need the resources to do this and we need community support. We also need more volunteers, and we draw on all levels of experience. The skills I learned are important for my work as a fire fighter but have also been very useful in other situations, especially the hands-on practice with tools and equipment. Anyone who is interested should just come down to the station. Talk to Chief Whitney and visit some trainings to see what it is like. Just give it a try. The training is excellent and makes sure that we are able to do our work safely. Volunteers are really important. We may have all the hose, water, and equipment in the world, but if we wouldn't have a crew of dedicated people then these doors would be closed.

IS: Thank you, Peter, for sharing these interesting stories and for all you do for our community!

SOUTHCOAST HAM RADIO CLUB SETS UP EMERGENCY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS DURING STORM

By Laurie McLean

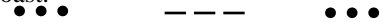
The SC4-ARC amateur ham radio club used the recent mid-October storm, the worst October storm since 1962, as a practice drill for emergency communications. Fire Chief Larry Whitney said he was "very pleased" with the results--especially the intelligence gathering from the neighborhoods scattered throughout our rural coastal area.

Club member Jack Eddy set up the La Honda Emergency Office of Communications at the La Honda Fire Station and he, Peter Chupity and Linda Bennett worked four-hour shifts throughout the day uncovering a down tree with power and phone lines blocking Alpine Road plus several other emergencies. They also conducted hourly ham radio check-ins with the SC4-

ARC members, sharing reports of rain gauge amounts (6-8 inches), power outages and other situations.

"While this was a planned drill, it had all the hallmarks of a true emergency communications scenario," Eddy said. "I encourage anyone in the South San Mateo Coastal area who is interested in learning about GPS, ham radio, disaster communications and more to come to a monthly meeting and learn how to protect your home, family and neighborhood during a disaster."

For further information about SC4-ARC go to their website, www.sc4arc.org, or email Jack Eddy at jackheddy@yahoo.com. The group offers training, weekly call-ins, monthly meetings, the annual field day event and as needed field exercises. All are welcome to come learn, have fun and join the amateur ham radio community of the South Coast.



Year after year the motorcycle community helps support the La Honda Fire Brigade. This year was no exception with the La Ductia Riders returning in early October. Events such as these help raise critical dollars that are used in all areas of our program.

THINK OF FIRE SAFETY—ALSO IN WINTER

By Steve Krause, LHFB Board President

Well, this rainy season started off with a bang on October 13th with the high winds and the 6.4 inches of rain that I measured at my house. The La Honda area during the winter months brings a lot of possible scenarios. We never know if we are going to have a very wet winter like the El Nino year of 97/98 or the drought years that we have been experiencing the last few years. They both bring unique problems to the area that some of us have experienced and some have not.

First, the El Niño year of 97/98 brought to the area about 66 inches of rain, 6 of which came down on February 2nd of that year. This caused major mudslides, trees down, power lines down and creeks that overflowed their banks. Some homeowners had water running through their houses, trees lying on their roofs, houses moving because of the mud. In my case, I had a 1200 cubic feet of mud let loose behind my house which stopped at my front door, but pushed my barn off its foundation and broke all my water lines from my tanks. Was I prepared for this? No, I was not. I was a firefighter for over 34 years and never had to deal with a disaster at my own home. The electrical power was off

for eleven days and the phone for fourteen. I was lucky that I did have some supplies on hand such as a generator, food supplies, and tools but not enough stuff to sustain the entire time.

So it might be time to see what food supplies you have on hand. Do you have enough fuel for your generator to run for an extended time? How about extra tarps, rope, stakes, an extra chainsaw blade, or even sandbags? You can never have too many supplies on hand. It is good to have at least three to five days of supplies so you can be self-sufficient.

The drought years cause other issues to consider. We prepare our property and houses for the summer fire season, but we slack off during the winter months. Do we stack fire wood on or under our porch during the winter to stoke the woodstove? Are the gutters getting clogged up by all the leaves and debris that fell out of the trees? We only think that these are problems during the summer but if we don't have a wet winter, something as small as a spark from your chimney can start a fire in your gutters which in turn can spread to your attic.

Don't forget to check your furnace for summer dust build up, clean your chimney to rid it of the buildup of creosote and make sure that you have a good spark arrestor installed.

Be sure to treat all downed power lines as live lines, call your nearest PG&E office if you are having trouble lighting your pilot light, and remember to replace the battery in your smoke detector.

When buying a tree this Christmas, choose one that looks green and healthy. Take some of the needles and bend them between your thumb and forefinger. Do they snap? If so, this indicates a tree that is dry and extremely flammable. Look for needles that bend and spring back.

We all live out in this area because of its rural setting and peacefulness. Stay safe during the winter by taking the extra time to get your supplies together and look around your house and property to see if you are ready for winter.

Don't ever hesitate to call 911 for help. They are the only agency open 24/7.

Keep you and your family safe this winter and have a great holiday season.