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**Moraga Orinda
Fire District**

Board of Directors Meetings

Meetings of the MOFD Board of Directors are open to the public and take place on the third Wednesday of each month in the Board Room, Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.

Next meeting(s):

March 16th, 7:00pm

Regular Board of Directors Meeting, Station 41 (1280 Moraga Way, Moraga), (go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

MOFD Board Approves New Communication System, Emergency Services Cost Recovery Policy

By Lucy Amaral



MOFD firefighters prepare to extricate a driver who was trapped in a burning vehicle after crashing into a tree on Highway 24 on Wednesday, February 23. According to Fire Marshal Mike Mentink, some Good Samaritans tackled the fire with extinguishers and tried to free the victim. "Moraga-Orinda Fire District would like to thank all the people that stopped to help put out the fire. Your involvement helped save the driver's life," said Mentink. Photo courtesy MOFD

At the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors Meeting held February 16, the Board approved a motion to join a new communications system authority as well as consented to establishing a cost recovery structure for fire-based emergency services.

In the staff report from MOFD to

the Board, many of the emergency service providers in Contra Costa County and Alameda County use dissimilar communication devices and varying signals, and often it is difficult to communicate between agencies. The report added that there has also been an ongoing effort to develop a standard for uniform digi-

tal two-way radio for public safety organizations.

The East Bay Regional Communications System Authority (EBRCSA) was created as a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to develop and operate an interoperable radio communications system. Using several federal and local grants, EBRCSA has developed the infrastructure for Contra Costa and Alameda County to move toward this uniform system. Currently 29 cities and five special districts (now including MOFD) are member agencies.

According to MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley, the District has delayed updating its current radio system in anticipation of purchasing a system that would be interoperable with other agencies. As MOFD's equipment is becoming obsolete, the Board opted to approve becoming a member of EBRCSA. The new communications system is scheduled to be up and running by January 1, 2013.

The Board also approved a schedule of fees and collection policy for recovering the costs related to fire-based emergency services such

as motor vehicle accidents, collisions, vehicle fires, extrication and hazardous materials spills.

According to MOFD, everyone who owns and operates a vehicle in the United States is required to carry, at the minimum, liability insurance. The California Vehicle Code allows fire departments to recover costs associated with responding to motor vehicle accidents. Contracting with cost-recovery provider Fire Recovery USA, MOFD would bill reimbursable claims with the at-fault driver's insurance company. If the driver does not have insurance, the recovery service would bill the driver directly.

Depending on the type of services provided by MOFD, the at-fault driver's insurance company would receive an invoice for items such as personnel, equipment materials and rental costs; any items MOFD deems necessary for the response. Fees can range from \$435 for hazardous materials assessment and scene stabilization to \$5,900 and above for an advanced response which would require a hazmat certified team, a decontamination center, disposal and environmental clean-up.

MOFD's Rehab 41 Helps Keep Firefighters on the Job

By Lucy Amaral



Photo provided

This past February, Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) firefighters were at an accident scene for more than ten hours straight when a suspected car thief crashed a pick-up truck into an electrical pole on Camino Pablo in Orinda. Also on the scene was "Rehab 41," MOFD's self-contained medical/rehabilitation unit designed to help keep firefighters hydrated, rested and able to continue their work.

"Firefighters will spend large amounts of energy, body heat and fluids in order to cool the body," says MOFD Battalion Chief Darrell Lee. "The problem is we wear firefighter's clothing that doesn't allow the body to cool or evaporate sweat. During emergencies,

wildland fires and structure fires, we are prone to heat exhaustion or heat stroke." Rehab 41 allows MOFD firefighters and any on-scene emergency personnel to find a quiet spot to rest and rehydrate before going back into the fray.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), requires that emergency personnel receive rapid treatment, re-hydration and medical monitoring during emergency operations or training exercises.

For some Districts this can simply mean portable fans and an ice chest full of waters. In a District with remote locations and the threat of sustained wildland fires a real possibility, MOFD developed the idea of a comprehensive unit to

best serve their emergency personnel. With that in mind, the District spent the last eight years outfitting a retired ambulance, starting with the basics of water and medical equipment, then slowly adding additional items such as pop-up canopies, misters with fans, coolers, chairs, coffee pots and even blenders for fruit smoothies. Today, Rehab 41 is the only self-sufficient medical/rehabilitation unit in Contra Costa County.

For years, Rehab 41 was staffed by MOFD's paid reserves. According to Lee, these reserves held this support role during local emergencies as MOFD responded to working fires, second alarms or wildland fires. Because of budget cuts, the reserve program was eliminated last year and Lee suggested using its existing all-volunteer group, the Communication/Logistics Support Team, to man Rehab 41.

These volunteers were then trained to drive the ambulance, learned the medical/rehab protocol, and, during incidents, would remain with the unit until released by the incident commander. While medical supplies are part of Rehab 41's supply list, only EMT's or other medically-trained personnel would utilize them, not volunteers.

Rehab 41 volunteer Marty Heyman says that this unit is called into action about six times a year. Volunteers are contacted

by the District and, while there is no official 'on call' list, finding members to staff the truck is never an issue. "All of our volunteers are in the Lamorinda area so we can get to the station quickly," says Heyman, adding that volunteers range from retirees to presidents of software companies: "This team is made up of committed community volunteers who get a tremendous amount of satisfaction helping MOFD."

"The MOFD Communications/Logistics Volunteer Group is a very important component of our overall emergency response program," said MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley. "The expertise and dedication they bring to the table enhances our ability to provide the expected service levels that our communities deserve."

Rehab 41, which is housed at MOFD's station 41 in Moraga, has also been utilized by various agencies throughout the county for both training activities and emergency response. Lee said that during the fatal accident on Camino Pablo, Rehab 41 was a vital support system. "This was an incident that had 80 people working for over ten hours," he said. "Rehab support was able to provide water, coffee, food and a rest place for emergency workers. Fire, police, public works and PG&E all used the area to take a break during the accident."

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