

Fire Awareness 101

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Plan Ahead for Emergency Escapes

“Evacuation is dangerous,” said Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein. He cited the 25 deaths caused by the 1991 Oakland/Berkeley Hills fire, and the life-threatening evacuations experienced by Denver residents during the Lower North Fork fire in March to make his point.

Given just minutes to flee your Lamorinda home, what would you do? What would you bring?

First, know that every evacuation will be different “dependent on many factors, such as type of event, prevailing conditions, size of area to be evacuated and time factors,” said Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe. The key to a successful evacuation is to plan ahead. “You’re only as good as the plans you have in place,” agreed Lafayette’s George Figone, of the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission.

LEPC is re-writing an older city-wide evacuation plan that should be complete by the end of summer. But initial planning “is up to the residents themselves and should apply to any emergency – wildfire evacuation, earthquake, etc.,” Figone said.

Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team program manager Duncan Seibert suggests residents have two out-of-state contacts to notify in event of an evacuation. Call them before you leave, Seibert said, and call them again when you have relocated. In addition to all-weather clothing and toiletries, evacuees should carry a first aid kit, including medications and prescriptions, baby and pet necessities (including immunization records).

Bring a flashlight, radio and batteries, cell phone or two-way radio, extra batteries, car and house keys, and proof of residency. Carry cash in small bills and change, and keep your car filled with gas. Load a flashdrive with vital documents, and send a copy to your out of state contacts, Seibert said.

Rein recommended the three-pronged approach of wild fire prevention, planning and action found in the YouTube video “Ready, Set, Go!” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feMlaars9kc>). He also suggested signing up for text or email messages at the county’s Community Warning System: www.cococws.us/getCurrentAlerts.action.

“You can’t plan for every event, but you can get some generalities [in place],” echoed Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen. Take the time to run basic “battle drills,” and “spend five minutes thinking about if you got the call,” he urged.

“If you think you should go, go!” said Rein. “And leave early.”

- Cathy Dausman



Online Emergency Preparedness Resources

Today’s electronic media makes it easier than ever to receive timely community warnings of dangers and disasters, both natural and man-made. Residents can subscribe to their city’s Nixle, Twitter or Facebook accounts, and assuming wireless coverage is available, monitor them regularly. Emergency preparedness resources online include:

General emergency preparedness:

www.lamorindacert.org

Fire/wildfire:

- www.readyforwildfire.org
- www.wildlandfirersg.org/
- www.mofd.org/services/emergency-preparedness

Emergency communications (amateur radio) training:

- groupspaces.com/K6ORI/

Town or city-wide electronic notifications:

- moraga-police-department@emails.nixle.com
- lafayette-police-department@emails.nixle.com
- <http://tinyurl.com/l4yjpd>

Contra Costa County Community Warning System (CWS)

www.cococws.us/getCurrentAlerts.action

Twitter accounts:

- https://twitter.com/Moraga_OrindaFD
- <https://twitter.com/CityofOrinda>
- <https://twitter.com/lovelafayette>