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Smoke a reminder to plan ahead

By Cathy Dausman



A smoky sky blankets Moraga in the late afternoon on Nov. 9. Photo Sarah Christensen

Here are some ways to plan ahead:

First, consult Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team website for a checklist of "to do's" in case an evacuation is ordered: <http://lamorindacert.org/documents/Evacuation%20Tips.pdf?x18924>.

Make your smart phones smarter. Sign up for Nixle alerts at www.nixle.com from local law enforcement agencies, and monitor county-issued warnings about shelter in place or evacuations by subscribing to Contra Costa County's Community Warning System at <https://cwsalerts.com/registration/>. When it comes to evacuation orders, this tool, says Rein, is "a home run."

Red flags are flying at local fire stations, and you can add another layer of safety to your home with weather alert radio tied into area red flag warnings.

Rein recommends a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration all-hazard public alert radio, which uses a 90-decibel siren (slightly less noise than a jet aircraft one mile out). It works on battery backup in event of power failure. One version available for sale online can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y8ye873z>.

Cal Fire's Incident Information page (http://www.fire.ca.gov/current_incidents) provides timely details on major incidents including each fire's location, acreage burned and percent of containment.

To borrow a phrase from the International Association of Fire Chiefs, employ a "Ready, Set - Go!" mentality. Be ready with preparedness understanding, be set with situational awareness when fire threatens and act early (go) when fire starts.

"Leave early" (when fire threatens)," says Rein. "Don't wait to be told to go, just go!"

Related stories:

<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1120/Be-fire-evacuation-ready-Lamorinda.html>

<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1214/Wildfire-evacuation-talk-fills-Orinda-auditorium.html>

Life, they say, is what happens when you're making other plans.

But life in California - here and now - is defined by a new norm: year-round wildfires of unprecedented ferocity. "The weather has changed," says Moraga-Orinda Fire District emergency preparedness coordinator Dennis Rein. "Having a major wildfire in mid-November is the new norm." Just ask residents in Butte County. Or Solano. Ventura. Mendocino.

Last year devastation hit the North Bay, while 27 years ago, Alameda County fought a firestorm whose effects still resonate within the community.

With fires again making headlines relatively close to home, Rein can only hope this will motivate Lamorindans to plan for the worst, yet hope for the best.



Photo Cathy Dausman

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