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New mileage markers relieve the mystery of driving on Pinehurst Road

By Nick Marnell



More readable and highly reflective Photo Nick Marnell

Boulevard.

In order to allow quicker access to the area for emergency vehicles, and to help drivers navigate a remote and tortuous road, mileposts along the six miles of Pinehurst Road in Contra Costa County have been upgraded thanks to the efforts of the Canyon community, the county and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

According to Canyon resident Jonathan Goodwin, people would wreck their cars or bicycles on Pinehurst and not have any idea where they were. What do they tell the 911 operator? And how would the dispatchers convey accurate location information to emergency responders? "A call would come in, emergency vehicles would get to the Pinehurst and Redwood Road intersection, and the ambulance would turn left and the engine would go right. A lot of time was wasted," Goodwin said.

Community residents said that it was time to upgrade the Pinehurst markers which, according to MOFD emergency preparedness coordinator Dennis Rein, were useless because no one could understand what they meant. So with the cooperation of county and fire district officials, easily visible and understood mileposts were installed in early January. The markers are spaced one-tenth of a mile apart along Pinehurst for one mile from the Alameda County line to Canyon Road, then for five miles through Canyon to the city of Oakland at Skyline

"Even in this age of technology, it's difficult to navigate through Canyon," said Mike Giles of the Contra Costa County Public Works Department, who agreed that the older posts were hard for motorists to understand as the signs were used mainly to mark drainage inlets and shoulder dropoffs. "We used the highest and most reflective film available. The new signs will stand out in the fog and the smoke." Giles said that the day the workers were installing the mileposts, a tree fell across Pinehurst Road and the crew used the new markers in giving directions to the East Bay Municipal Utility District to come and remove it.

MOFD responds to emergency calls in Canyon but the calls are dispatched by the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. "The location of each of these new mile markers has recently been shared with the Contra Costa Regional Fire Communications Center so they will be available for quick reference to assist callers," said William Pigeon, ConFire assistant chief, communications division.

The milepost upgrade is not the only project the Canyon community has recently spearheaded to aid first responders. In 2018, residents put up street signs, and many homes now include house numbers. "Meeting folks at the Canyon post office was not the best way to respond to emergencies," Rein said.

Rein applauded the Canyon residents for taking additional steps to protect themselves from wildfires, including organizing community brush-cutting days and hiring a goat herd to graze away hazardous fuels.

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