

# THE CACHAGUA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015



## From the Chief:

As we struggle to recover from the devastation of the Tassajara Fire, I think it makes sense to continue with our theme of being safe from all emergencies. I have discussed some ideas in the last two issues of the newsletter to help keep us safe from wildfires. In the Second Quarter Newsletter, I talked about defensible space around our homes. This is how we help keep our homes safer in the event a fire is burning close enough to affect our homes. In the Third Quarter Newsletter, I explained the policy on the fireworks ban in the District. This is a measure to help prevent the start of a wildland or structure fire. So defensible space is a measure to protect and the fireworks ban is a measure to prevent. But, what if there is an emergency anyway? In the Third Quarter Newsletter I talked about the value of marking our homes with large, visible-at-night numbers. This will allow the Cachagua firefighters to find your home under all emergency scenarios. So what else can we do to be ready and to respond to the emergencies we may confront?



Chief Gregg Curry

**Take Pictures:** Get the family camera, the phone—whatever device you have that takes pictures—and use it. Go through the rooms of your home and garage and take pictures of the contents of the rooms. If a particular cabinet has special things inside, then open the doors and take the picture. If

you have outbuildings, corrals, sheds, etc. of value, make sure you have a photo of the structure and its contents. Make sure you backup these pictures to a second device: flash drive, computer, external drive, cloud, etc. These pictures must survive a fire so make sure they are someplace you can get them if everything else is gone. These photos will be critical when you work with your insurance company to get compensation for your loss.

**Prepare an Emergency Kit:** These are the things you will take with you if you have to leave your home with less than 5 minutes of warning. I fully realize this is a rare situation but a raging wildfire or flooding river could produce this kind of scenario. The key issue is survival now and later. This kit needs to contain a flashlight, matches or another way to make a fire, a notebook with key passwords and phone numbers, address book, and information on medications. It should also contain emergency clothing to stay warm and copies of critical keys to safety deposit boxes, house, vehicles, etc. This is a grab-and-run kit.

**Make a List of What You Want to Take and Its Location:** This is a list of all the things you want to take if you have time. This should be a list you can go through in 30 minutes or less. The list can contain items like passports, credit cards, trust documents, cash, last year's tax return, current year tax documents, computers and power supplies, financial records, guns and ammunition, valuable jewelry, car keys, house keys, duffle bag to hold clothing, cell

phones and chargers, photo albums, etc. The important idea is to think of those things that you do not want to lose. Then add their location to the list. This can be things like “third drawer in the bedroom filing cabinet”. We know it is impractical to have many of these items already packed and ready to go because we need them available during normal day-to-day living. But, if we plan ahead so we know exactly where everything is – we can avoid wasting time trying to remember the important things. Don’t forget the special requirements that come with animals and pets!

### Timeline for the Tassajara Fire



**19 September:** Fire starts around 3 pm east of Trampa Canyon. It is later believed that the fire started with a suicide. The fire jumps Tassajara Rd. to the east and Cachagua Rd. to the south. Cachagua Fire and Cal Fire respond with a full wildland response. Tankers and helicopters are requested and soon in the air. Residents are encouraged to be prepared for evacuation. The DC-10 tanker and helicopters arrive on scene and begin attacking fire. Fire continues to spread and Cachagua Fire is fully engaged with 3 engines, 2 command vehicles, 1 personal vehicle, 2 dozers, 2 water tenders and 16 personnel. After initial response, the department is reorganized and integrated with Cal Fire into a strike team with the mission of structure protection. Structure protection

includes one residence on Tassajara Rd., 4 on Buckeye, and 2 on Poppy Tree as well as a large water tank on Poppy Tree. Overnight, a line is cut from Poppy Tree to Cachagua Rd. in preparation for a successful backfire operation early the next day.

**20 September:** In the early morning, mandatory evacuation orders are issued for Tassajara Rd. between Carmel Valley Rd. and Cachagua Rd. The fire continues to spread while more and more resources are dedicated to the response. The Cal Fire contribution grows to 5 tankers, 2 helicopters, 35 engines, 7 crews, 3 dozers, 7 water tenders, and about 260 fire personnel. Late in the day some residents are allowed into the evacuated area with escorts. The fire continues to burn and grow. Weather conditions remain hot and dry with the winds light but steady to the east and south. Cachagua Fire spends the day with structure protection and fire suppression. Most volunteers are released at 3 pm for some much needed rest.



**21 September:** Status reports put the fire at 1086 acres burned and 30% contained. Cal Fire resources continue to grow. Road closures remain in effect but are opened in the afternoon. Cachagua Fire continues to contribute with 2 command vehicles, 1 engine, 2 water tenders and 9 personnel. The remainder of the department is on

standby for other demands in the fire district area. At the end of the day, the fire is 50% contained with fire personnel now at 656.



**22 September:** Fire is 65% contained at the start of the day. Inspection crews are active in the fire area looking for all consequences of the fire: power, water, septic, etc. Total fire personnel now stand at 754. The final Cachagua Fire volunteers are released from active response work so they can be available for other emergencies in the fire district.



**23 September:** Fire is 81% contained and personnel peak at 761. A community

meeting is held at the Cachagua General Store in the evening, allowing several county organizations an opportunity to let the community know what they will be doing to help victims of the fire.

**24 September:** All roads are opened and traffic flows again. The fire is 94% contained.

**25 September:** Fire containment is moved to 96% then 98%.



**26 September:** Fire is 100% contained. Life tries to return to normal in Cachagua. Everyone remains saddened for those who lost their homes to this unexpected and unnecessary tragedy. Lightning is one thing; intentional fire making is something else.

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