



DRY CREEK-LOKOYA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

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A 501(c)3 Non-Profit Corporation Tax ID #68-0383597

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CHIEF 16's CORNER

An Open Letter To My Neighbors

This past October, beginning October 8, 2017, was a tragic event for everyone in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Here at home, in the hills of the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company (DCL), it was all hands on deck to try and stop an unstoppable fire. We have never seen 70 mph winds in the valley.

Many neighbors have asked me, "Where was the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company to help save my house or help me evacuate. Valid questions especially coming from such tragic events.

The Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company is part of Napa County Fire Department (NCFD) and we are Station 16. As such, our fire engines are owned by Napa County Fire and we are dispatched by NCFD. On Sunday, October 8, E216 was staffed and sent to the Atlas Fire. The DCL crew on board assisted with evacuations until E216 broke down some time Monday or Tuesday and was sent to the shop for repairs.

Dry Creek-Lokoya Assistant Chief Madison was on board E213 also on the Atlas Fire and, thus, not available for our area.

I was on board P16 with another firefighter and was sent to the Partrick Fire until late Tuesday evening. We assisted on Partrick Rd., Dealy Ln., Haire Ln., and Hwy 121/12. We were then sent to the top of Redwood Rd. where E213 and P16 saved the Archer Taylor Preserve house and two houses on the Kubler property. Unfortunately, we were not able to save the Kubler barn. We were trapped at the top of Redwood Rd. by fire below us and were eventually able to leave late Wednesday evening. It was only then, late Wednesday evening, that I was able to return to the Dry Creek-Lokoya area to see what I could do in our area to work on saving my neighbors' homes. I first went up to upper Dry Creek Rd. and Wall Rd. where I had to cut up and remove the trees that had fallen across the road. It was obvious that the fire had already blown through upper Dry Creek and Wall Rd. as I found many homes lost. There were no fire resources on upper Dry Creek or Wall Rd. I then went up Mt. Veeder Rd. to see what I could work on but the fire had also blown through Mt. Veeder with more homes lost. Again, there were no fire resources except me in P16. I finally went back to lower Dry Creek where the fire had not crossed the road but was heading down Mt. Veeder towards the houses on lower Dry Creek. All this time I had been requesting fire resources but was constantly turned down and was told there were no resources available.

The fire first reached three houses in the 5600 block of Dry Creek. I asked for re sources over the radio. I was told again to call the branch director. I had to go back to my residence where I still had cell service

An Open Letter To My Neighbors

(continued)

to make the call and was told again that there were no fire resources available. It was only then that two Lake County engines responded to my radio request along with the task force leader and four, CalFire employees in a utility truck. With those two engines and P16 we were able to save four houses but lost one across Dry Creek.

The CalFire employees pointed out to dispatch that if the fire jumped Dry Creek, it would next heads towards the Vet's Home. This brought a phone call from the Napa County Fire Chief, Barry Biermann, telling me that come Friday morning I would have all the resources I needed to keep the fire from jumping Dry Creek Rd. It was only then that we had enough resources in our area to do any work. Fortunately (unfortunately for the owners) we lost only two more houses on lower Dry Creek Rd.

Question is, why tell this story? I want my neighbors to understand how we were dispatched and why we were not, initially, in the Dry Creek-Lokoya response area and what we did accomplish. Also, it is the job of the Napa County Sheriff's Department to evacuate homes when threatened and not the fire company. We could not be everywhere. The larger question to ask is where were the available engines that could have come to our area? When the Nuns Fire reached Lokoya Rd., a neighbor called 911 to report the fire but they were told that Sonoma County was responsible for Lokoya Rd. It is very true that with the numerous fires in Napa Valley resources were spread very thin. But none were assigned to our area? Just a question that needs to be clarified.

On a day-to-day NORMAL basis, your local volunteer fire company is still providing coverage to its neighbors for medical aids, traffic accidents, and fires and we will continue to do so. The unusual wind event on October 8 was not normal and we could not provide our normal duties. For that, I apologize but with an understanding that it was beyond out control.

I'd be happy to continue the conversation on a personal level if you so desire. My email is chief16@me.com. Please contact me there and we may set up a meeting.

Volunteer Chief Gary Green

ANNUAL COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE **BREAKFAST MEETING** **SUNDAY, MAY 6, 8:00-10:30**

As a reminder, please join us for this neighborhood meeting where you can meet your neighbors, have a great pancake breakfast, hear important information from guest speakers, and plan for a Safe Fire Season! The Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department and the Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council will serve pancakes from 8:00-9:00. Shortly following there will be presentations by other organizations including:

*Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company
Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council
Natural Resources Defense Council
CalFire/Napa County Fire Department
Home Winemakers Classic*

Update on the Communication Issues found during the October Fires

Bring the entire family for pictures with the fire engines, the firefighters, and free fire hats for the kids! Literature and other important information will be available during the event for you to take home and put to good use. So, please join us at anytime between 8:00 and 10:30 at the main Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department, 5900 Dry Creek Rd.

The Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council Begins to Focus on Project Effectiveness

Joseph Nordlinger, MVFSC Chair

In the aftermath of the October fires that affected our area, the Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council (MVFSC) has begun a comprehensive After Action Review of some of our completed projects to better understand their relative effectiveness against the dynamic wildland fire event that unfolded over those nine days. The MVFSC projects that we will evaluate are The Cove, Lokoya Perimeter, Old Ridge Road, Wall Road, Limited Access Road (LAR) 1 and LAR 7. The two LARs are private driveways that connect Dry Creek Road with the Old Ridge Road.

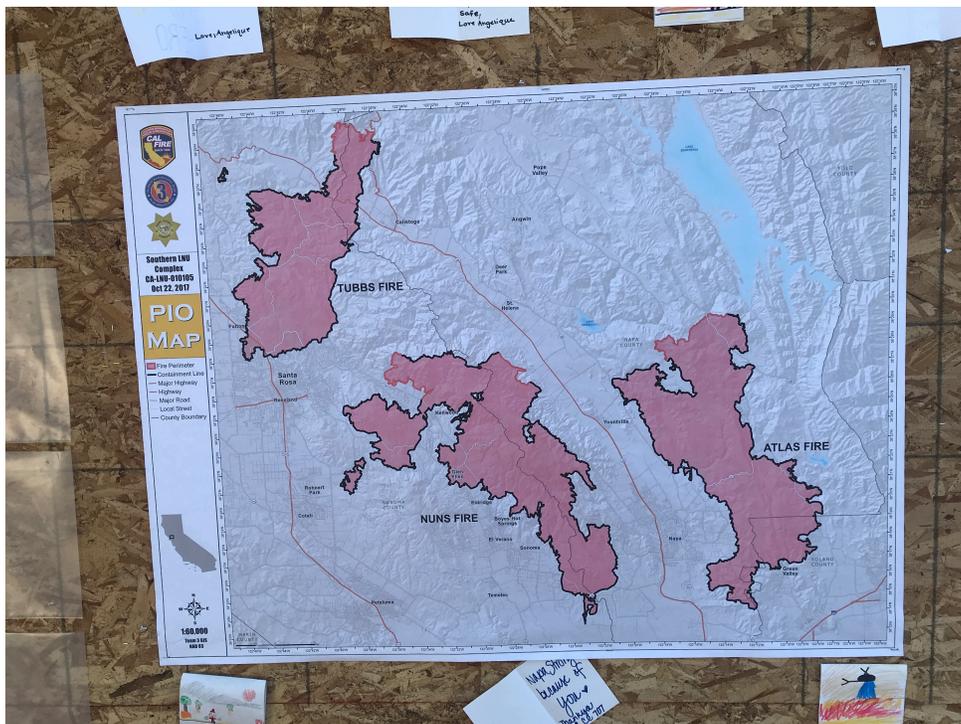
The primary objective of our shaded fuel break projects is to reduce fuel loads along roads to ensure lifesaving access and egress in the event of a wildland fire. We want to make sure that residents can escape and that first responders can get in. Of course, no fuel reduction project can anticipate all of the potential variables and circumstances of a wildland fire event and the After Action Review process will allow us to understand from an objective standpoint what worked and what didn't in order to further refine our approach.

Initial indications are that the project at the Cove was not utilized because there were no civilians at the site but the fuel break was no match for the fire. The Lokoya Perimeter fuel break did slow the fire's progress for timely egress of residents. The Old Ridge Road did dramatically slow the progress of the fire from the western slope to the eastern slope and the two Limited Access roads were very useful in both slowing the progress of the fire and providing access for key resources to combat the fire. And even though our project on Wall Road was only partially completed, it did facilitate safe egress.

It is clear that our projects had mixed outcomes, based on many variables that were specific to circumstances at the time. The fire conditions were extraordinary and resources were severely limited. As we proceed with our After Action Review, we hope to better understand what we can do differently to achieve a better outcome in the case of another fire that we hope will never happen.

Note from editor: The MVFSC meets every fourth Saturday. For more information, please visit the MVFSC website at (new website):

www.mtveederfiresafe.com



MEET YOUR FIREFIGHTERS!

THE ROBERT HAGGARD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE GOES TO CAPTAIN BILL ROBERTSON



Volunteer fire chief Robert Haggard was well known to the community and to his firefighters as a no nonsense, honest, and upstanding citizen. After a long illness, chief haggard passed away. In his memory, we have established this award that is given annually to the firefighter that most exemplifies the traits of former Chief Robert Haggard. This year's award went to captain Bill Robertson. Captain Robertson has been with Dry Creek-Lokoya for 25 years and who worked directly with Chief Haggard. A well deserved award!

DCL'S NAPA COUNTY FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR, FIREFIGHTER VICTOR CRUZ



The Napa County Fire Department asks each of the nine volunteer departments to select an individual that supports NCFD and the local fire company as well. This year, Firefighter Victor Cruz was selected to represent the Dry Creek-Lokoya firefighters. Victor spent long hours on the October Napa Valley fires, providing support on various DCL engines.