HILLSIDE EVACUATION STRATEGIES DUE TO A WILDFIRE EVENT

<u>Pay attention to the weather.</u> Vegetation fires need three factors in order to become firestorm events. High temperatures: It's an unusually hot day and typically, the area has been exceedingly warm for at least two days prior to the fire occurring. <u>Low Humidity</u>: It is very dry. There is a complete absence of Bay fog or any marine influence. Winds: There is a stiff, constant and gusty wind blowing from the north or northeast direction. For people living in Madrone Canyon, this is going to be a "down slope" wind coming from the direction of King Mountain or Kent Woodlands.

If all of these factors are present, you need to realize that firestorm conditions are present. Be ready to mobilize at a moments' notice if you see or smell smoke or hear numerous sirens. Keep a radio tuned to a news channel for the day. If conditions seem terribly extreme, consider leaving the hillside area for a family outing until conditions subside.

Please keep in mind that it is very rare that all these factors come together in our area. When it does occur, it's usually for a short time frame. PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER AND YOUR SURROUNDINGS!

Make sure your home is fire safe. If you've taken the necessary precautions, your home should withstand anything but the worst-case scenario. However, significant annual effort is needed to clear vegetation from around the home. Answer these questions: Is there a path of vegetation from the yard to the house? Do I have wood siding or wood roof shingles? Is the roof clear of debris? Do I have firewood stacked against the home or under the deck? Do I live on a steep slope with an abundance of dry vegetation below the house? Are there tree limbs that contact the house or grow over the roof? If the answer is YES to any of the above, then you've got work to do.

<u>Travel Strategies.</u> There are no evacuation regulations that must be followed, here or anywhere. Only strategies and suggestions can be offered. Face it: People will leave by car. Nobody can assume that everyone is going to walk out of the canyon, although it would be great if folks could leave early by walking or even bicycle. However, this is not realistic for parents with young children, folks that are aging, or those that might have a disability or are recovering from surgery or injury.

Again, if you sense danger, immediately leave the area. Fires don't just explode out of nowhere; they evolve and grow over a period of time that is controlled by the weather factors outlined above, the abundance of dry vegetation available to burn and the degree of slope of the hillside.

On an extreme day, for the Canyon to be in the direct path of a firestorm, the fire will most likely be coming from the north, over King Mountain or from the Kent Woodlands area. If you've been paying attention to the factors that contribute to a firestorm, you should have time to leave. Keep in mind, once you leave the home you become exposed to numerous hazards, besides the fire. If you do leave, depart early before the situation becomes one where people are panicking.

Use streets that provide direct access out of the canyon. Stay off trails and don't take routes you're unfamiliar with. Besides Madrone Avenue, alternate exit routes include Orange Avenue to Hazel & Laurel to Hawthorne, or, Foley to Bridge to West. Baltimore. Become familiar with these routes.

If the fire starts in the Canyon and blocks your escape, the shelter in place option might be best if you've taken the necessary precautions to make your home fire safe. Additionally, the Fire Department should be able to control a fire under this scenario without it becoming a firestorm.

Also note that once on the Canyon floor your safety level will rise. The upper slopes are the areas where uncontrolled fires are the most extreme.

You should also understand that your escape doesn't involve traveling tremendous distances. In Southern California and in certain locations of the East Bay hills, residents need to travel - in some cases - several miles to reach safety.

A hillside evacuation component to a document entitled the *Mt Tamalpais Mutual Threat Zone* is now in process. This will provide for citizen notification and evacuation strategies for law enforcement agencies to utilize if a major fire occurs in any of the communities that border Mt. Tam.

Thanks for your attention to this issue. For further information please contact:

Robert B. Sinnott, Fire Chief City of Larkspur Fire Department 420 Magnolia Ave. Larkspur, CA 94939 415/927-5014 (desk phone) rsinnott@larkspurfire.net