

HGR Fire Evacuation Follow-up Notes

November 17, 2019 3-5 pm

Location: Carol and Chip Swanson's
4175 Harrison Grade Road

Group shared their experiences from the Kincaide Fire evacuation and the PG&E electric shutdown (PSPS). The comments fell into 5 categories: Preparation, Evacuation, Communication, PG&E and Other.

PREPAREDNESS

- Talking with POD before fire made the group ready.
- We had warning - time to prepare.
- Need horse and animal evacuation plan.
- Keep leaves off roof.
- Plan more on where to go....
 - Call & make reservations. Don't wait to the last minute.
 - Pre-select many different options
- Call propane companies about process for filling tanks when evacuated or during emergency.
- Taking camping equipment can give you a camping option if no lodging.

EVACUATION

- Noise makers - do we need them? Some use them. Personal preference
- Generators - some ran the entire time due to businesses. Contact propane company on process to get gas during emergency.
 - Working on having a voluntary presentation on generator information and best practices.
- Practice more on evacuation path out -- where to go if only a few minutes or longer. What is the safest place to go? Always will vary depending on where fire is coming from, time of day, amount of time to evacuation....
- Evacuating early worked.

- Highway 1 through Valley Ford to Petaluma had less traffic.
- Don't evacuate to Sebastopol -- too crowded. 101 too crowded.
- Keep a full tank of gas.
- Petaluma fairgrounds for evacuations -- good place
- Occidental - town seemed full of people on the first day of evacuations. Were they going to evacuate? Need to be encouraged to.
- Does watering area around the house work? Is it worth it?
 - On own well, saturate areas ahead of time but don't use all water
 - If shared systems, you could be using water needed to fight fires.
 - Turn off watering when you leave
- Use evacuation placards on doors. Tie on so they don't blow away.
- Lock your house when you evacuate.
- Gates - turn off power, unlocked. Some gates can lock in open position.
- Evacuation warnings -- early on, plenty of time to evacuate
 - It was good to have a time deadline and advanced notice
- If people don't evacuate, it moves the fire personnel into evacuation of people mode instead of fire fighting mode. Puts people and first responders in harms way.
- Freezer/Refrigerator
 - Empty ice maker
 - Take everything off the doors and pack in freezer/frig

COMMUNICATION

- Redundancy of signals, noises to alert people is best
- Sending emails back and forth was helpful and very helpful to those out of the area to keep informed.
- Notified others through email when evacuated
- Carol called everyone in her POD to check in
- Phone lines, cell lines, texts -- all vary based on electricity issues
- Local radio stations = so helpful and informed.
 - AM1350 - KSRO

- Could the county use this station more?
- Heather Lane -- no communication plan
- Did media prepare us to be ready for no electricity' more than to 'evacuate'
- Battery based radio was very helpful
- Coverage beyond local area in media was limited.
 - Nixel - worked outside the local Bay Area
- Cell tower idea - set up with separate source of energy
- Hard line telephone - AT&T -- worked in outage
- Next Door -- Cathy Lunardi kept communication current!
- Send out communication to area residents when evacuated
- CAL Fire website -- could access info outside the area

PG&E

- Local internet after electricity goes out for approximately ½ hour. Needs to improve.
- PG&E will reimburse for first outage within the next 6 months. It will show up on the bill.
- Turning off electricity, although inconvenient, probably saved fires in our area due to multiple live lines and poles down.

OTHER

- John & Pauline (Spider House) are new leads for Pod 8
 - Dupont, Tanuda
 - Fire Safe Occidental has 8 pods
- Wed/Thurs of this week - Nov. 20/21, possible PG&E shut down due to weather forecast.
- Websites for keep updated on local POD information:
 - harrisongrade.org -- local info
 - firesafeoccidental.org -- larger group
- Example of Fitch Mountain -- they have their own water systems and turned on sprinklers. When FD got there, no water.
- Insurance
 - National - no longer insuring California

- Farmers - CA based. Bundling insurance helped get house insured.
- Firplan - State Insurance up to 3 million
- Farm Bureau - offers insurance and can be an 'associate member'
- Ron's Report - Occidental Fire Chief
 - Sirent blew for 3 minutes. Pod members heard it if still in town
 - Thanked the group for voting for Measure C. Passed at 82%!!
 - Fire Station had learnings
 - 12-15 stayed at the station for the duration
 - Need to better plan for food, diesel etc to last the duration.
 - Changing from Comcast to Direct TV since all of internet & tv went down
 - PG&E shut down natural gas to with little warning. Graton and Forestville fire departments were affected. They brought in porta-showers, camping stoves etc.
 - Every fire storm modeling showed fire would have gone to the coast if not stopped in Windsor. We were in its direct path.
 - Sheriff's Offices from various locations patrolled our area for potential vandalism.
- Mailboxes - consider raising them 6 inches if on Harrison Grade Road. The new paving raised the road 6 inches and the mail lady is having trouble reaching them.
- Insurance - can be reimbursed for evacuation costs but maybe not worth it if they didn't amount to much and might open up issues with insurance company.