BE FIRE AWARE - BE FIRE PREPARED

# FIREWATCH

Summer 2019

# Resolve to be Ready – It's Time to Update Your Plan!

At the beginning of the new year, we put out a call to action asking you to Resolve to be Ready. We asked that each member of your family develop and practice readiness habits that will help everyone survive a disaster, while there is time to think through the risks in your home and community, any special accessibility considerations your loved ones may have, and then prepare, plan and practice the preparedness actions needed to give you the best chance to survive the risks that face our community. It's been seven months since that call to action… we spent a record winter preparing for that next atmospheric river to bury us in snow… driving around with a car packed with warm clothes, spare boots, an avalanche shovel, and whatever else we might need to get through a storm. Fire season is upon us now, and as you packed away the snow gear you were driving around with, we hope you replaced those items with your summer go-kit. It's time to sit down with your loved ones, update your plan, update your contact information with your local notification system (and with Liberty Utilities), refresh the supplies in your go-kit, and practice that plan with your family, pets and neighbors.

# Fire Weather, Red Flag Warnings and Evacuation Preparedness

A Red Flag Warning means high fire danger with increased probability of a quickly spreading vegetation fire in the area within 24 hours. Each of us must be mindful of our actions in relation to the probability of a wildfire. Early notification is critical to responding agencies - report problems as soon as you are made aware of them.

The National Weather Service (NWS) issues Red Flag Warnings & Fire Weather Watches to alert the public about the onset, or possible onset, of critical fire weather and fuel moisture conditions that could lead to catastrophic wildfire activity. This may be due to low relative humidity, strong winds, dry fuels, or any combination thereof. A Fire Weather Watch is issued when the above conditions are expected to be met during the next 24 to 48 hours. A Red Flag Warning is issued when the above conditions are expected to be met within the next 24 hours. A Red Flag Warning with the addition of "PDS" means a Particularly Dangerous Situation is predicted. To understand the severity of this warning, it comes from tornado warnings to advise the public of severe, life-threatening weather events. Fire weather conditions have the potential to be that dire. Be cautious in your activities to ensure you don't do anything that could cause a spark, and take the warning as an opportunity to be fully prepared to evacuate, as Red Flag Weather days are the days with the potential for "disaster fires."

# *Evacuation Planning VS. "Waiting it Out on The Lake"*

*Definition of Evacuate: To remove someone from a place of danger to a safer place.*

During fire weather, wind conditions are high and the lake is not a safe area of refuge. The National Weather Service models project 3-4-foot waves on a normal Red Flag Day. On days rated as a "Particularly Dangerous Situation" they expect we could easily see waves of 5-6-feet or higher. Taking a canoe to the lake to "wait it out" instead of taking the opportunity to evacuate is not an advisable plan. Canoes tend to turn crossways to the wind and waves, then they tip and take on water. Cold shock response, hypothermia, hyperventilation and drowning are just a few of the risks to consider. The air quality near a catastrophic wildfire is not safe, and visibility is reduced due to smoke so thick it can block out the sun. If the fire is close and there is a strong enough in-draft, anyone on the water could get pulled back toward the flame front. A person on the water will also likely experience large embers raining down on them with no protection.

When a Red Flag Watch or Warning is issued, treat it with the seriousness of a tornado or hurricane warning. Prepare for power outages. Make sure your car is prepared, your go-kit is current and ready, and talk over your plan with your family and neighbors. Be prepared to evacuate the area by making sure you have a full tank of gas, and park your car facing out to help you leave quickly if necessary. Stow away flammable items around the home such as cushions, furniture and propane barbeques. When you leave, drive with your headlights "on" (not on auto) so that your tail lights are also visible through the smoke.

The "disaster fires" that we have seen in recent years were all during Red Flag weather conditions. Take heed when these warnings are issued, and know that you should be especially prepared to evacuate for at least 3-5 days, and evacuate early. For tips on preparing for wildfire, visit www.readyforwildfire.org. Follow the National Weather Service in Reno at www.weather.gov/rev/ for current weather conditions.

## Are You Registered to Receive Emergency Notifications?

Wondering how you may be alerted during an emergency? El Dorado County Code Red uses a state-of-the-art community notification system to alert residents about emergency situations and critical community alerts. This system enables authorities to provide registered residents with critical information quickly in a variety of situations such as; severe weather, bio-terrorism alerts, missing persons and evacuations. For the many residents no longer using landlines, registering their contact information at *www.ready.edso.org* may be the only way for emergency officials to reach them.

It is also important to update your contact information with Liberty Utilities at *www.libertyutilities.com* in order to receive notifications about the de-energization of power during times of critical fire weather.

*Follow Meeks Bay Fire on Facebook, and Twitter for local updates.*

**Nextdoor**

North Tahoe Fire is now able to communicate with Meeks Bay Fire residents via Nextdoor!

Free curbside chipping is available for residents within the Meeks Bay Fire service area. Be sure to sign up now to qualify! Chips will be left at the residence. The chipping schedule and chipping application are available online at www.ntfire.net.

Do you have adequate Defensible Space around your home? Have you taken the proper actions to prepare your home for the threat of an ember shower? Contact us to come out and provide a free Defensible Space Inspection of your property! Apply now at www.ntfire.net to prepare your home for wildfire.

# Homeowner Insurance & Non-Renewals

## The Slow-Moving Crisis

Have you or someone in your neighborhood received a notice of non-renewal from your insurance carrier? If so, you are not alone.

Residential insurance is becoming harder to find. If you've been affected by a non-renewal, please go to www.ntfire.net and complete the Insurance Survey. And most importantly, contact the **California Department of Insurance at 800-927-4357** to open a case in order to help the state track these actions.

# What Are the Rules for Campfires?

Keeping our community, forests and neighborhoods safe from wildfires is of paramount importance to the fire districts at Lake Tahoe. During "Red Flag Warnings," which are determined by the National Weather Service as periods of High Fire Danger, the Fire Chief may issue a declaration prohibiting all burning of solid fuels while the Red Flag Warning is in effect.

Cal Fire has suspended burning permits and other uses of open fire on all California Department of Forestry lands for the summer.

During fire season, some outdoor burning is allowed if it meets the requirements listed here.

When not under a red flag restriction, a campfire may be allowed if in accordance with these rules.

- A properly screened woodburning outdoor fireplace or chiminea, LPG or LNG portable outdoor fireplace or barbecue
- Total fire area cannot exceed 3 feet in diameter
- The fire cannot exceed 2 feet in height
- The fire must be 15 feet or more from a structure or any combustible material
- Renters must have written permission from the owner and have the letter in their possession, along with a Campfire Permit issued by Cal Fire.
- A sober adult must be in attendance at all times
- A shovel and working hose must be next to the fire

# Meeks Bay Fire BOD Announcements

We are halfway through the year, and already we have said farewell to two of our long-term Board Members as they celebrate their retirement! Nick Kromydas has been serving the Meeks Bay community as a Director for over 32 years, and Bruce Massie has served for 21 years. Join us in thanking them for their commitment, and wishing them well on their future endeavors!

Ellie Beals, a ten-year member of the Tahoe Cedars Property Owners' Association, has been appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Director Kromydas. Korie Kromydas, daughter of retiring Director Kromydas and a current Board Director for SnowFest, was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Bruce Massie.

The Meeks Bay Fire Board of Directors welcomes the attendance of community members, including anyone interested in possible future Board service.

Meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month at 3:30pm at Station 61, 8041 Highway 89 (Emerald Bay Road), Meeks Bay.

**Meeks Bay Fire Protection District**
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# *Is My Campfire Safe?*

*Some outdoor burning is allowed if it meets the requirements – See Inside...*

# *Alternative Governance and Standards of Cover Studies*

In 2014, Meeks Bay Fire (MBFPD) and North Tahoe Fire (NTFPD) joined together via an intergovernmental agreement, and now work as one. NTFPD and MBFPD Boards of Directors provide policy oversight. In 2017, ESCI conducted an analysis on governance and operation of North Tahoe Fire and Meeks Bay Fire. As a part of their analysis, in 2018 a survey was mailed to 2,000 homes in the two districts. Over 680 responses were received, just over half from Meeks Bay residents, providing information and opinions on key issues from the community. The ESCI report recommended legal unification of the two districts to eliminate duplication of governance and to further enhance the economy of scale. This recommendation was favored by over 90% of community members who responded to the survey. The recommendation is to reorganize by annexing MBFPD into NTFPD.

The Board of Directors of Meeks Bay Fire has made no decisions regarding the possible dissolution of the District and inclusion in the North Tahoe Fire Protection District. Further input from property owners and residents is much welcomed.

Board President Ed Miller has stated, “Our voters formed this District almost fifty years ago, and have been supportive with passage of tax increases and assessments over the decades. That said, our first responsibility is the best method with which to provide protection of their lives and property. Their personal input is vital to our Board prior to any decisions being made regarding reorganization.”

The Districts will be meeting with the public in the near future to discuss benefits of reorganization and to address questions. It is estimated that the efficiencies gained through following the recommendation will allow for the creation of additional firefighter positions on the West Shore. If the desire of the public is to move forward with the legal unification, there is a legislative path to be followed. Each county in the state is required to have a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to provide oversight for the boundary changes of local agencies. One of the Commission’s tools is the ability to amend the boundaries of a district to effect better service provision.