

Spring 2007

HUNTINGTON LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Letter from the Chief—Brother Chris

An Early Fire Season

Greetings to all from the Lake! I have been working my way around the lake the last couple of weeks and I have a few observations. First we had a very dry winter and as a result, our grounds and foliage around the lake are already dry!. Fire season is upon us already and we all need to take appropriate preventive measures and be diligent about the control of combustibles. Hazard burning below 3000 feet ended on May 15 and I have been told the last allowable day for hazard burning in the Sierra Forest will be June 15th.

Kudos to the cabin and condo owners who have made the extra effort to clear and dispose of the limbs and other combustibles around their cabins and condos. Particular thanks should go to the Condo Owners' associations for the work they have done around the condos. Niles Kant and his team last fall and this spring cleared hazard trees and trimmed other trees to minimize ground and 'ladder fuels' (combustible materials that are arranged in steps upward that a fire can climb to produce a devastating "crown fire"). We hope others follow the lead of the condo owners to reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire at Huntington.. This summer is going to be one of the highest risk fire seasons we have had in many years so we really encourage this extra ef-

fort.

CPR Saves Lives

CPR is a skill that we all should know. The probability of a successful outcome is greatly increased when people at the scene of a heart attack are able to begin CPR before the Fire Department personnel arrive. This is a skill that is taught by many organizations in most towns and takes only a couple of hours to learn. In the past year or so changes have been made in the way by-standers are asked to do CPR. These changes have made it both easier and more effective. The American Heart Association refers to the "Chain of Survival" as a four step process in cardiac emergencies. The Four steps are: 1) Early notification of the 911 emergency system, 2) early use of CPR, 3) Timely defibrillation and 4) access to Advanced Life support (Paramedics). We ask you to learn CPR, and in the event of an emergency, after calling 911, begin CPR immediately and continue until we arrive. We will continue CPR and provide defibrillation, if appropriate, and paramedics will be on the way from Shaver. This care plan begins with you both in calling 911 and in beginning CPR and provides the best possible chance of saving a patient in cardiac arrest.

We commonly hear that many are afraid to attempt CPR in a

real life situation for fear of "doing it wrong". Remember that even bad CPR is better than NO CPR, so learn the basic skill and don't worry about "doing it wrong".

Big Trucks Need Wide Roads

We have already had 8 calls this summer season. We suspect this pattern is going to continue throughout the summer and we are prepared for it. As we mention early every summer, please make sure that your driveway and access roads provide a clear path for our emergency vehicles. We need an unobstructed path at least 10 feet wide by 12 feet high to get our big vehicles in. Take a look at low branches or small trees close to the road that may need trimming or removal.

A Community Working Together

Finally in closing, I want to offer a very personal thank you to all who have helped make the improvements in the Department over the last 9 years. When I reflect on how far we have come in such a relatively short period of time, I am both awed and humbled. Adequate words are hard to find to express how deeply I have been moved by your generosity and the implied confidence you show in the Department. Recognizing this is a huge positive motivator for all of us in the Department. Thank you all so very much for what we continue to do together!

Brother Chris
Fire Chief

Special points of interest:

- *Get ready for a Dry summer!*
- *We are getting grants*
- *July 8 is Pancake Breakfast*
- *Some food for thought*

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We are winning grants from new sources.

A note from your Board of Directors

We have made significant strides in a number of areas that will benefit the Department over a long period. First, we have begun putting in place tools to apply for grants for the Department and we are getting positive results. We have received one grant for \$5,000 for wildland fire protection shelters for our firefighters. We have also applied for a much larger grant from the Department of Homeland Security to replace our current firefighter breathing apparatus with modern versions that comply with the current National Fire Protection Standards. We expect to hear about this grant this summer. We have learned a lot about how to apply for grants and we have located many different sources. This will be beneficial over many years. Second, we have updated our filings with the Internal Revenue Service to assure our compliance with 501

(c)(3) status.

We will be sending out our request for donations very soon. Please look for these in your mailbox and do all you can to help us keep the Department running.

With a lot of great feedback from our community, we are learning how to use our website to greater advantage of the entire Community. (continuing thanks to Ponderosa Telephone for providing this to us at no charge!) We are posting all of our newsletters, as well as Board Meeting Minutes and notes. We are also adding a section on medical information that could be of interest to many of you. Our emphasis in this section will be on issues targeted to the unique high elevation/ low humidity environment.

Finally, on an old item, we continue to follow-up with our friends at Southern California Edison about their commitment to help fund a new water tender. They remain positive as always, but their ability to release funds to us is dependent on finalizing the terms of the new contract with the Federal Government agency with whom they work. SCE has submitted the agreement among all parties out here, but they have to review it in Washington and that can be an "unpredictable" process.

We hope to see you all at the Pancake Breakfast on Sunday July 8. More about this below..

Mark your Calendars: July 8!

The annual Pancake Breakfast, hosted by the Huntington Lake Association to benefit the Huntington Lake Volunteer Fire Department will be held on Sunday, July 8 from 7:30 to 11:00 am in the main hall at Lakeshore Resort. This annual event is great fun for all who attend. As we did last year, we

have arranged for the good folks at Jorgenson & Co. to be there to service (or replace as needed) your fire extinguishers. Additionally, this year we will have one of our folks at a table to help you get your smoke alarms working. We will have replacement batteries available as well as complete

smoke detectors. Please test the smoke detectors in your bedrooms and kitchen and, if they need a new battery or need to be replaced, come see us.

Food for thought: Taking care of yourself to avoid the need for a 911 call

It is not really a surprise, but the review of our incident call data shows that the most frequent call for help is a "breathing emergency". These calls are frightening for the

person affected and can also be very stressful for all family members around. There are several things that each of us can do to minimize the risk of one of the emergencies hap-

pening to us.

A little background will probably help. At Huntington Lake, the air is only about 75% as dense as at

Food for Thought (cont.)



sea level. This means that every breath we take contains only 75% of the oxygen molecules we would get at sea level. Your body will respond to this by increasing the number of red blood cells (hemoglobin) in your blood to allow more carriers for the oxygen that is available. However, this takes time. The average fit adult will adjust to a significant altitude change in about 7 – 10 days. It will not happen over a three day weekend!

Now if a person does not match the description of “average fit adult,” the issue can be more complicated. Any pre-existing condition that causes the circulation system to be in less than optimal form will exacerbate the impact of the fewer oxygen molecules per breath. For example, we have had a case where a teenage person collapsed and could not get the energy to walk during the first day at altitude. This person, it turns out, was anemic. The individual felt that he could not get enough air to keep him going. The problem was not getting the air in the lungs, it was transporting it through the blood.

Dehydration causes a “thickening” of the blood and it does not move about as eas-

ily. This increases the effort required by the heart to pump the blood, which further increases the body’s need for oxygen. Dehydration occurs very easily at Huntington because the air is low in humidity, so each exhaled breath takes moisture out of the body. We all tend to be more active at the Lake than at home. Exercise will cause us to lose water. And many of us have more party activity than at home and this may include consumption of alcoholic beverages, a well known mechanism for reducing water in the body.

Advancing years, unfortunately, includes a reduction in the lungs’ ability to move oxygen across the lung lining onto a hemoglobin molecule for transport. This slow reduction begins after 40 years of age and continues. So even if you feel you are able to do all of the wood chopping when you first arrive because that is what you did when you were 30, slow down and use a more measured pace.

There is a great early warning indicator in the body for when you are overdoing it and your body is not able to deliver enough oxygen to keep you going. You get a headache. This is because an excess of carbon dioxide (a byproduct of our body’s use of oxygen) will

build up when you cannot exchange enough CO₂ for new oxygen. This excess will cause a headache. If you start getting a headache when you are hiking, cutting wood or doing any of the “active” things we all do, then stop and take a break.

In summary, to reduce the need to call 911 for a breathing problem, 1) take it easy in the first three days after a major altitude change, 2) if you have any pre-existing conditions that compromise your respiratory system, be even more diligent about undue exercise, 3) drink plenty of the good, wonderful tasting water we have here at Huntington Lake, and 4) recognize that each year after 40 reduces the efficiency of the lungs, so be smart. But if this does not work and you need to call us, do it! We have the best pure oxygen in town and we have some tools to help us assess the nature of your unease.

Call us!

Be good to your self

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