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THE OVERLOOK

January, 2014

Edited By Joanie Wynn



Local Fire Presents Learning Opportunity

By Steve Wynn

On the morning of November 2nd at 12:28 a.m., a fire broke out at 209 Sunset Way. MBVFD Assistant Chief Chris Gove woke to the sight of fire consuming the west side of his neighbor's house. After calling 911 and checking to see if anyone was inside, he and Aaron Collier attacked the fire with a garden hose and fire extinguisher. Minutes later, MBVFD was on scene and extinguished the fire before the other responding agencies arrived.

It appeared that the fire had started as a result of a rag soaked with a high VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) product that had not been properly disposed. Oil-based paints and stains, varnishes, polyurethane, and paint thinners containing a high VOC have the ability to spontaneously combust and catch on fire.

In order for fire to exist you need three things: fuel, oxygen and heat. A wadded up oily rag left in a bucket can go through the process of oxidation and create the perfect storm of elements needed for spontaneous combustion to occur. As the rag dries out, it produces heat. This heat, in conjunction with the oxygen trapped in the folds of the rag, and the rag itself (which acts as the fuel) can produce fire.



O V E R L O O K

This event is an important reminder to handle combustible materials in your home properly. According to Mendham Fire Department, the easiest and safest way to dispose of flammable oily or solvent-soaked rags is to use this method:



- 1) Place the rags in an empty metal container that has a tight metal lid such as an empty paint or stain can.
- 2) Fill the container with water until the rags are submerged.
- 3) Place the metal lid tightly over the water-soaked, formerly combustible rags.
- 4) Take the container to your local hazardous waste disposal center or save it until your local community has a hazardous waste pick up day.
- 5) Please make sure not to dump solvents or paint or anything else like this down your drain or sewer.

Another suggestion on how to dispose of oily rags comes from Mass.gov which states that oil or gas-soaked rags should be safely disposed of after use using two steps:



- 1) Hang them outside to dry in a safe area or spread them out flat, making sure they are weighted down outdoors. They should not be in a pile.
- 2) Once they are dry, they should be disposed of properly (as referenced above).

The MBVFD responded quickly to extinguish the fire. However, keep in mind that if high winds had been present that night, that single fire could have easily spread up the hill and burned out of control rather quickly, endangering many other nearby homes. As mentioned in previous issues of *The Overlook*, this is a reminder to make sure you have a good defensible space around your home.

A side benefit of the fire was the homeowner's willingness to allow us to train in the damaged structure before repairs were made. This kind of hands-on training in an actual structure allows us to fine-tune our skills for future scenarios.



O V E R L O O K

ELECTRIC HEATER CAUSES CLOSE CALL

By Steve Wynn

A few months ago I got an email from a Muir Beach resident who reported that his electric heater had caused a fire at the electrical outlet during the night while he slept. He didn't have a smoke detector in his room, but luckily the sound of crackling fire woke him up just in time. Using a fire extinguisher, he was able to put the fire out before it got out of control. After opening the doors to ventilate the room he was able to reflect on the incident.

"...The fire, being so small, was easy enough to put out; however, I was extremely thankful for two things: one, that I had a working fire extinguisher in the house; but more importantly, two, that I woke up before getting CO poisoning; as I said; I was very surprised on how much smoke such a small fire produced."



Luckily everything worked out, but I have a feeling his next purchase will be a smoke detector and another blanket so he won't have the need to keep an electric heater on throughout the night.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

By Barbara Piotter

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope you had a great holiday season.

We have a busy year ahead of us in order to get our community organized and prepared for a potential disaster.

If you have not done so as yet, please drop off your household registry form to either your neighborhood liaison or me at 64 Seacape Dr. You can find the forms at: www.Muirbeachfire.com. Click on the Emergency Preparedness link, where you will find the household registry forms.

Don't forget to include a sketch indicating the location of your house in relationship to the road, your propane tank, your main water shutoff valve and main power shutoff switch.



O V E R L O O K

T H E

If you need help locating these items, feel free to contact Steve Wynn at steve@muirbeachfire.com

To all of you who already dropped it off, a big thank you.

Volunteers needed

We are still looking for more people to help out in the following community emergency preparedness committees:

- Medical and first aid
- Food and shelter
- Elderly and special needs
- Search and Rescue
- Animal rescue

Or any other help/skills you have to offer that could help us in a disaster.

If you think you would like to get involved in any of these areas, please contact me Barbara Piotter at: aufkirchen@gmail.com or call me at: 415-755-8524

Alert Marin

If you haven't already registered with Alert Marin you might want to do so now.

Alert Marin is a disaster alert system that will notify you by phone or cell phone if there is a fire, tsunami or disaster of any kind approaching your neighborhood. It gives you the chance to get out in time if you are at home and unaware of an approaching danger or allows you to warn someone if you aren't at home but your loved ones are.

If you want to be notified on your home phone and on your cell phone you need to register twice with two different email addresses.

If you live, work or go to school in Marin County and are 18 years or over, you may now register your cell phone or VoIP (voice over internet protocol) phone to receive emergency alerts sent by call, text, or email from the County of Marin. It's free and easy. Simply go to: <http://www.alertmarin.org>

CERT Class

There will be another CERT class on Jan. 11th and 18th in Nicasio. It's \$45 for two, full day classes. You will learn a lot of very handy stuff. If you don't want to give up your weekend, you can join me on Feb. 5 and Feb. 7 for another opportunity to get certified.

If the cost of \$45 is too much for you, there are ways to get it waived. Money should not stop if you want to help and get involved.



O V E R L O O K

TOWEL METHOD

For the people who haven't heard about the towel method in the case of a disaster:

- **Hanging a towel outside of your house:** we are okay.
- **No towel hanging outside of your house:** we need help

The towel should be securely hung in a very visible spot like on the front door or front gate in order to communicate your condition to the responding emergency crews.

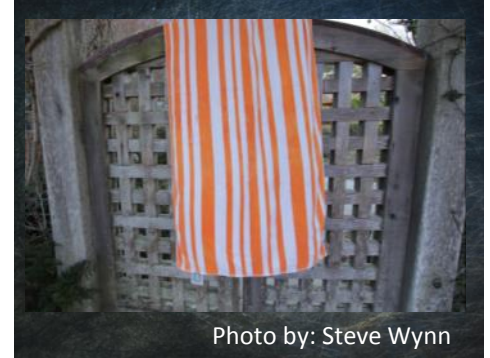


Photo by: Steve Wynn

Thank you to all our great and wonderful Neighborhood liaisons and volunteers who already stepped up to take on Emergency preparedness.

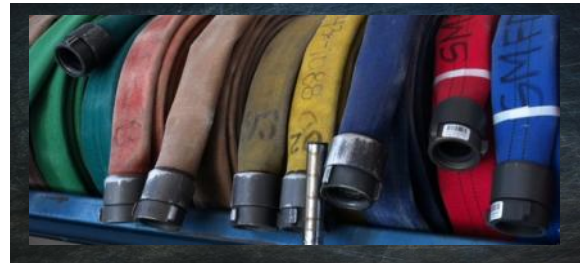
NEW LIFE FOR OLD FIREHOSES

By Steve Wynn

Several months ago, Lonna Richmond asked me what we do with our old fire hoses. Apparently, tons of fire hose winds up as landfill across the U.S. each month and Lonna found a local way to recycle them.

Oxgut Hose Co. in Emeryville, oxgut.com, is a company that puts decommissioned fire hoses into the hands of great designers and artisans where the hoses are given new life.

Oxgut's CEO, LauraLe Wunsch says, *"They're a wonderful way to display the fire hose and appreciate its history, in a utilitarian way. We're also big believers in working locally, participating in our community and giving back. As a company, we're committed to donating a portion of our proceeds to The Children's Burn Foundation."*



Check them out and maybe you'll see our retired hoses in a new form as one of their beautiful designs.

Thanks Lonna!



O V E R L O O K



MBVFD YEAR IN REVIEW

By Steve Wynn



2013 was a great year for the MBVFD. Muir Beach firefighters put a lot of effort towards improving the quality of emergency services they provide to Muir Beach and the surrounding areas and it has paid off. Their outstanding performance has been noted and complimented by neighboring Marin County Fire Stations.

Our equipment is well maintained and up-to-date and our firefighters, both long-standing and new recruits, are working together like a well-oiled machine.

This year, we solved the ISO fire insurance issue that was affecting our community's insurance premiums. We also stepped up our community outreach programs; acquired and organized discounts on chimney and fire extinguisher services, hosted a blood drive, organized a CPR/AED and Water Safety class, installed an AED device in the Community Center. We launched this quarterly newsletter *The Overlook*, and with ongoing help from Julie Smith, we have improved and updated our website, www.muirbeachfire.com, creating a new look and adding new information and links to pertinent emergency information.

We have been working closely with the CSD to improve safety issues within our community, such as how best to improve emergency vehicle access along our roads, improve address numbering and visibility of our homes, and address maintenance issues regarding our trails in case the need for evacuation arises.

This year, VFA President, Michael Kaufman is stepping down along with VFA board members Leslie Rehil, Brent Smith and Laura Van Amburgh. The VFA plays an important role in the success of the MBVFD and all of these board members have put in a lot of time over the years supporting our fire department. We thank them for their service to the department and to the community of Muir Beach.

I would like to welcome new VFA President Michael Moore, along with VFA board member and head of the Muir Beach Community Emergency Preparedness Barbara Pottter and VFA board members Laura Lovitt and David Piel. I look forward to working with all of them to continue to provide the very best emergency services possible for Muir Beach.



O V E R L O O K



I believe it is important to acknowledge everyone's efforts in supporting our fire department from the firefighters and their wives, to the VFA, the CSD and of course, our community members who come out in force each year to support our events. I also believe it's especially important to acknowledge those who have put in that extra effort.

At this year's MBVFD/VFA appreciation dinner I introduced what I hope will be a long-standing tradition within our department. Upon cleaning out the fire house a year ago, I came across two old bronze fire nozzles. I polished them up and made two trophies, one for the firefighters and one for the VFA. Each year I will present these trophies to one Muir Beach firefighter and one VFA member who have "gone the extra mile".

This year's Muir Beach firefighter's award recipient went to Assistant Chief Robert Allen and the VFA award went to Michael Kaufman.

Great job gentlemen and congratulations!



Photo by: Steve Wynn



Photo by: Steve Wynn

MBVFD RECRUIT IN TRAINING

This year's CPR/AED class sparked interest from one of our next-gen Muir Beachers. Ryan Wynn, age 10, signed up for the class to be the youngest Muir Beacher to complete 2013 CPR/AED class.

Well done Ryan!



O V E R L O O K



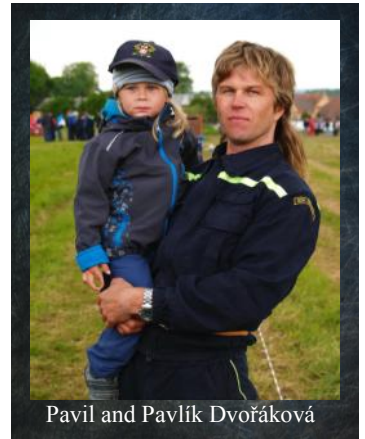
Our Big American Fire Department

By Steve Wynn



Irena and Pavlík Dvořáková

Last year I received a letter from a woman named Irena Dvořáková, from Drahov, Czech Republic who came across the MBVFD website and decided to reach out. Her husband, Pavil, is a volunteer fireman in the small town of Drahov and they have a 4 year old boy named Pavlík.



Pavil and Pavlík Dvořáková

Over the past year, we have been corresponding regularly, learning about the differences between our cultures & sharing what everyday life is like in our respective communities. The common thread, of course, is our mutual interest and involvement in volunteer fire-fighting and emergency response.

Drahov was founded in the 14th century and has a population of 150. They have about 75 houses for permanent residents and 25 vacation homes owned by people from Prague who come to Drahov on the weekends and holidays.

There are a lot of similarities between Drahov and Muir Beach. Like us, they have a close-knit community with lots of BBQs and celebrations that focus on their volunteer fire department. Although they have had practically no calls, they train regularly, put on demonstrations for the community and connect and train with neighboring fire departments to stay prepared.



Photo by Irena Dvořáková



By Steve Wynn

Photo by Irena Dvořáková



Photo by Irena Dvořáková



O V E R L O O K



Irena tells me how the Drahov volunteer firefighters love to hear about what the “big American“ MBVFD is doing; how we train, to what kind of calls we respond, etc. I tell her we are actually a very small department in a small coastal community but, due to the influx of so many visitors to Muir Woods, Muir

Beach and the surrounding trails, we are quite active in regards to providing emergency services. So compared to Drahov, I guess we are a “big American fire department“.

One thing that perplexed them was why our “department symbol is a dog urinating“. I tried my best to explain American humor, but after emailing a few paragraphs her reply came back, “oh“.

The MBVFD website has been an interesting gateway to people from over the hill and across the world. Through it I have met all sorts of people who have reached out; some to compliment the site on the wealth of emergency information it contains, some to share emergency information and others simply to connect. It’s part of the job I didn’t anticipate but enjoy.



Photo by Irena Dvořáková



Drahov Volunteer Firefighters

Photo by Irena Dvořáková

Update on our donated fire engine

By Steve Wynn

A few months ago I got a letter from Tom Forster, the man who helped orchestrate the donation of MBVFD’s old engine to the Plumas County Fire Department and the transfer of Lucas’s Skywalker engine to us. Apparently our old engine has seen some action up there fighting wild land fires. Tom sent me a photo and wrote:

“Steve, The Type III has worked out really well for us. Thanks again for your generosity to Plumas County, we really appreciate it”.



Photo by Tom Forster



O V E R L O O K



Summary of MBVFD Calls for 2013

- **Total calls:** 69
- 4 structure fires calls, 2 vegetation calls, 6 false alarms, 35 medical calls, 17 vehicle accidents, 1 tree down, 1 service call, 1 transport, 2 other rescue.
- 34.8% of calls were within the Muir Beach area, including the beaches and overlook
- 26.2% of calls were to Muir Woods
- 30.4% were for roads and highways
- 1.4% were to Slide Ranch
- 2.9% were to Green Gulch
- 4.3% for trails and other rescue

Aug 28 through December 2013

- 8-28-13 Fall/head injury, Muir Woods
- 9-11-13 Bike down, Hwy 1
- 9-21-13 Bike down, Hwy 1 near Green Gulch
- 10-3-13 Structure fire, Muir Beach
- 10-11-13 allergic reaction, Muir Woods
- 10-17-13 Vehicle accident
- 10-28-13 Stroke, Green Gulch
- 11-2-13 Structure fire, Muir Beach
- 11-2-13 Fatal vehicle accident, Car off road, Hwy 1
- 11-11-13 False alarm, smell of burning rubber
- 11-28-13 Bike down, Franks Valley Rd.
- 11-29-13 Motorcycle down
- 11-30-13 Fall, Muir Woods
- 12-4-13 Allergic reaction, Muir Beach
- 12-7-13 Public assistance/vehicle stuck, Muir Beach
- 12-13-13 Vehicle loses breaks, Seacape Muir Beach
- 12-27-13 knee injury, Pirates Cove. Transport by helicopter
- 12-29-13 Dumpster fire, Pelican Inn

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

**PLACE A MBVFD
STICKER ON YOUR CAR WINDOW**



To get your free MBVFD sticker contact
Steve Wynn at :
steve@muirbeachfire.com

***STICKER GOES ON THE OUTSIDE OF
WINDOW***

***Did you know? You can get safety tips,
buy MBVFD merchandise, make a
donation or read these stories online at
www.muirbeachfire.com***