



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, May 17, 6:30 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, May 23, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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Inspiring outcome to an MOFD emergency call

By Nick Marnell



Robertson and firefighter Airola reunite in April. Photo provided

Reed Robertson left his friend's house in north Orinda the evening of Sept. 18, and as he biked home along La Espiral his bicycle hit a crack in the pavement, he rolled over the handlebars and he slammed into the street, banging his helmet, forehead and shoulder into the pavement. "I could feel something happening to my neck, and I knew it wasn't good," Robertson said.

He lay in the street, saw lights approaching and he tried to get out of the way of the traffic but he could not move. "My God, I hope I don't get run over right now," thought Robertson, who heard a neighbor frantically call 911.

Robertson could not move because the C4 and C5 vertebrae at the base of his neck had jammed together, and he lay paralyzed.

The Response

Capt. Adam Goodyear of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and his Station 43 engine company arrived at the scene at 8:55 p.m. "Right off the bat, we had a feeling this was significant," Goodyear said. "He was still, in the middle of the road, in an awkward position. He was tangled in his bike."

Less than 10 seconds later arrived the Station 44 ambulance. "When we see someone sprawled

out, in no pain, lying perfectly still and calm, it gets our attention," said firefighter-paramedic Jacob Airola, who immediately assessed a spinal cord injury.

"They kept poking me, but I felt nothing," Robertson said. "Where's your arm, they'd ask me, and I'd say it was by my side. But I couldn't locate it."

Keeping the body straight and immobile is critical with a spinal cord injury, and the firefighters stabilized Robertson's neck and placed him on a vacuum splint, a device that runs the entire length of the body and wraps around the patient. Onto a gurney they placed Robertson, and into the ambulance to John Muir Hospital.

"It was a somber ride," Airola said. Since Robertson never lost consciousness and was able to

speaking, Airola asked him about his day, his job, his love of biking. It was a subtle bit of investigative work, with Airola trying to ascertain if anything was going on in Robertson's life that might compromise his treatment.

The Rehab

On the way to the hospital, Robertson felt his right toe. He could not move it, but he felt it, and at that point he realized two things: that he was determined to relearn how to walk and that he would need a lot of therapy.

Robertson had surgery two days later. As he recovered, he lay strapped onto the hospital bed, screws and rods inserted into his neck, a ventilator down his throat. "It was like witnessing your own death," he said. "People are talking and crying, and you're just lying there and you can't move."

After five days in the intensive care unit, Robertson began his rehab. For four hours a day, Robertson pushed, kicked and pressed to the point of exhaustion, the toll on his body so severe so that he would pass out as his family and friends talked to him. In order to eat, he had to lean his head into his food, his arms of little use.

In October Robertson flew to Denver to Craig Hospital, one of the country's premier centers for spinal cord rehabilitation. Improvement came quickly. Robertson measured his progress as he wheeled into the elevator. At first, he pushed the floor buttons with his forehead, gradually working up to the use of his arms. On Nov. 2,

he abandoned his wheelchair completely.

"I was lucky," said Robertson, who experienced flashes of survivor's guilt as he regained use of his limbs while other patients made little or no progress. "I used my strong recovery to inspire the other people around me so that they could do better." He became the model of a patient who worked hard and came all the way back.

The Recovery

Robertson, 35, returned to Orinda in mid-December. He used a ride-booking service to continue his rehab and to work at his real estate business. On March 31, he regained his driver's license and he visited Station 44 to thank the firefighters. "I was surprised he walked into the station," Airola said. "I didn't think it was possible, but if anyone could do it, it would be Reed."

Only a medical professional might notice anything awry with Robertson today. He walks, he jogs, he rides his bicycle, he traveled to Macchu Pichu in April. He has trouble lifting his right arm above his shoulder, and he struggles to flex the fingers of his left hand, but otherwise he appears in excellent health.

"You can come back," Robertson said. "It's tricky, and it involves a lot of rehab and some luck. But, it can be done."

Robertson will speak at the May 17 MOFD board of directors meeting, 6:30 p.m. in the Mosaic Room at the Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga.

Cal Fire Ready for Wildfire app now available

By Nick Marnell

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection released an app to help the public stay a step ahead of a potentially devastating fire season and offers those who download the app a chance to win a \$10,000 grand prize.

The Cal Fire Ready for Wildfire app includes checklists for taking charge of defensible space, assembling an emergency supply kit and creating an evacuation and family communication plan. One of its most popular features is notification of wildfire locations.

"You can set up a push notification for your home area or for areas where your loved ones live. Or, the location of a Tahoe cabin," said Mike Marcucci, Cal Fire battalion chief for Contra Costa County. "Use it for travel. If the Grapevine is closed because of a fire, it will

tell you."

Cal Fire maintains jurisdiction over State Responsibility Areas throughout California. Anything outside a city limit falls under a Cal Fire SRA. In addition, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District include mutual threat zones, where a fire will prompt automatic notification to Cal Fire.

"Areas like Wilder, Happy Valley, Sleepy Hollow," Marcucci said. "If there's a fire in those spots, we send a full-on response." The agency responds to Contra Costa County calls out of the Sunshine Station in Clayton.

"Fires don't observe jurisdictional boundaries," Marcucci said. "I stay up at night worrying about Lamorinda because there hasn't been a major fire there in years."

He's not the only one.

ConFire Chief Jeff Carman has repeatedly warned of the potential for a catastrophic fire in the Lafayette area, especially this year after a record-breaking rainy season that caused significant growth in annual grasses — fuel for incinerating wildfires.

"With the potentially challenging wildfire season ahead, you can never have too many tools to help you prepare," said MOFD Chief Stephen Healy, who praised the Cal Fire app for its timely alerts and accurate information.

The Ready for Wildfire app is available on Google Play and the Apple App Store. Those who download the app by May 21 will be eligible to win a \$10,000 grand prize that includes a \$7,500 home improvement gift certificate and \$2,500 cash. The Cal Fire website lists details and rules.

Lafayette

Implicit Bias workshop

Brien said that they expected different views would be expressed and that conversations might get emotional. She said, "These conversations are productive despite being uncomfortable at times because they bring to our awareness issues that we need to confront."

"Participants completed surveys, both before and following the presentation. As Chandler later commented, "For the most part our program was very well received with positive feedback."

City Manager Steven Falk said, "I'm just really proud of the progressive work our Police Department and Crime Prevention Commission are doing here. Rather than waiting for something bad to happen, they're trying to prevent it before it does."

Christensen said that the city invests in the training of its police officers. The entire police staff recently attended training at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles on race and bias.

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He is a strong believer in police and community working together at events such as this and also the Citizen's Police Academy, to foster trust and a sense of togetherness.

Christensen said the event was very successful. "In baseball parlance, the event was a home run. In fact, because of the comments from the audience during the event, the commission is likely to host a second community forum on the topic of racial profiling before the end of the year."

Advertising

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