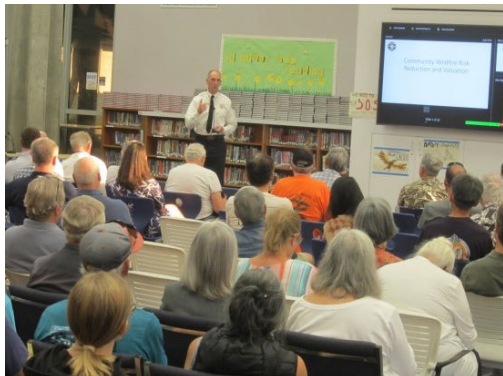


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Town of Moraga and MOFD host Fire Safety Community Meeting

By Vera Kochan



MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker gives a presentation during Fire Safety Community Meeting Photo Vera Kochan

developed into the Camp Fire, eventually burned 153,336 acres, was responsible for 85 deaths, and went on to become the deadliest and most destructive fire in California history. Up until that point, fires that burned entire communities were not on many Californian's radars.

Winnacker started the ball rolling with a slide presentation discussing, "What has changed?" He noted a significant increase in fuel loading (combustible materials), more development in fire dependent landscapes, increasing vapor pressure deficit (the difference between the amount of moisture in the air and how much moisture the air can hold when it is saturated), and increasing exposure to extreme fire weather.

Winnacker's presentation added that between the years 2010 - 2020, fire crews were "responding to unprecedented environmental and property losses" that were overwhelmingly human-caused. Lightning strikes played a significantly smaller role, followed by "undetermined" causes.

There is a disconnect in understanding wildfire risk, and it is important to note that mitigations matter. Winnacker also stated, "We cannot suppress, regulate, or price our way out of the WUI fire problem [Wild Urban Interface -- areas that experience wildfires], and there is a linkage of conditions on the ground to pricing of risk" with regards to insurance.

Wildfires enter a community via three pathways: vegetation to vegetation, vegetation to structure, and structure to structure. MOFD's goal is to disrupt the pathways through fuel treatments, defensible space, home hardening, and WUI suppression response.

Winnacker also discussed a comprehensive view of risks to be considered such as, "how the fire will come to the community; where it will enter via ground component and ember cast; how resilient are those entry points; how many firefighters are available; what are those firefighters equipped for; how long will it take to get them there; and under what command relationships will they work." All of this falls within the understanding of risk, mitigations and residual risk of conflagration level loss.

There are parcel level mitigations that involve property owner cooperation. Maintain a Zone Zero (0-5 feet from a structure) free of combustible material to include mulch and fences; home hardening retrofits; roofs and gutters maintained free of leaves and needles; annual grass and weeds cut to 3 inches or less by June 1; juniper removed within 10 feet of a road; dead trees removed within 100 feet of structures or property; and ladder fuels removed to create six foot airgaps to tree canopy.

Watkins explained that urban conflagration is a phenomenon that is new to insurance agencies. Homeowners don't understand why they can still be considered high-risk when they've done everything they can to fire-proof their property. However, their entire neighborhood must be in alignment with regards to home-hardening in order to be considered low-risk.

King discussed the importance for residents to register with the Community Warning System (www.cwsalerts.com) with regards to emergency information. In a statement sent through Nixle, MPD explained that CWS is "what will be used in the event of an emergency to issue evacuation orders and warnings. CWS allows us to notify people within individual evacuation zone areas, ensuring that notifications

With fire season fast approaching, residents of Lamorinda can't help being concerned about whether the area is prepared for a worst case scenario. The Town of Moraga and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) hosted a May 30 Fire Safety Community Meeting to discuss fire prevention measures, fire insurance, and other related topics.

The Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School's library served as the venue, and Town Manager Scott Mitnick estimated over 100 residents came to hear MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker, Moraga Police Chief Jon King, Principal and Consulting Actuary Nancy Watkins of Milliman (a property and casualty practice), and Mitnick discuss the topics at hand.

The specter of the 2017 Tubbs Fire, which destroyed parts of Calistoga and Santa Rosa, was just the beginning of what Mother Nature is capable of doing. In 2018, the urban firestorm that began in Paradise and

are directed to those who need them, rather than being sent out townwide. CWS is the primary warning system that will be used, and residents should register both mobile and residence phone numbers with CWS."

The town also uses the Genasys Protect program (www.protect.genasys.com) which displays evacuation zones and will be used with CWS in order to provide additional information to residents. The project is funded by the county's Measure X funds.

Moraga also uses Nixle to provide emergency and advisory information. Nixle is available through the Everbridge app, which can be found in the App Store or via Google. For additional information about emergency preparedness visit: www.lamorindacert.org.

Mitnick spoke to the unlikely scenario of a complete evacuation of the town and noted that with the 1,118 Housing Element units that Moraga is required to build, staff is very mindful of the evacuation possibilities and procedures.

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