



PRESS RELEASE

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Moraga-Orinda Fire District
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Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District Trains Volunteers to Evaluate their Neighborhood's Vulnerability During a Wildfire

With the weather getting warmer and the spring rains becoming scarce, fire officials at the Moraga Orinda Fire Protection District are already thinking about the impending wildland fire season. Lots of rain this year has led to a bumper crop of grass and, while that makes for happy grazing animals, it's cause for concern when hot, dry winds could fan flames through all that dry grass this summer.

On April 7th and 8th, the District hosted a two-day "Wildfire Hazards and Home Ignition Prevention" training at St. Mary's College. The course was prepared by the National Fire Protection Association's FireWise Communities program. Twenty volunteers from Moraga, Orinda, Lafayette and Canyon attended and were taught how wildfires burn homes in the Wildland-Urban Interface. The next step is for the group to meet with their neighbors, look at homes and make recommendations for improving their neighborhoods chances of escaping a wildfire. Attendees will also form a corps of volunteers that will be available to conduct assessments for property owners throughout the District.

Research done by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Fire Protection Association shows that there are many simple, inexpensive things individuals can do to improve their homes chances of surviving a passing wildfire. Armed with this information these volunteers will evaluate the "home ignition zone". The assessment is not a formal inspection and there is no obligation for the homeowner to act on the assessor's recommendations.

Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief, Randy Bradley, who chairs the NFPA Committee that wrote the "Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire", said, "We are trying to change how residents look at protecting their homes from wildfire. It's not a one shot deal. We need to teach residents that If maintain their neighborhoods in an ignition resistant state they can dramatically improve their safety and survivability. Just like you clean out your gutters before the rainy season you need to remove leaves and pine needles from your roof prior to, and several times during, the fire season."

MOFD Fire Marshal, Mike Mentink tells us "During a major wildland fire suppression resources will be stretched thin and there may not be a fire engine available to protect

every house in the path of a fire. What residents do now to reduce potential ignitions from flying fire brands on and around their homes is critical.”

Orinda’s Sleepy Hollow Neighborhood is leading the way and may become Lamorinda’s first “FireWise Community”. The designation means that the neighborhood has committed to maintaining their homes and landscaping to reduce wildfire potential, holding an annual neighborhood wildfire prevention event and working together to make the area safer from fire. After a community meeting in January, residents have formed a “FireWise Board” to coordinate their efforts and residents have already begun projects around their homes to reduce their risk.

For more information on how your neighborhood can become involved in the FireWise Communities Program or to schedule a volunteer to assess your home, contact the Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District at 925-258-4525.



Instructor Hank Blackwell leads a discussion during the class’s field exercises