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## MOFD Board Places Liens on Orinda, Moraga Homes

*By Lucy Amaral*

At its January 20th business meeting, The Board of Directors of the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) approved the placement of liens on seven homes in the District for failure to pay for the cost of required exterior hazard abatement.

The seven homes, five in Moraga and two in Orinda, were among more than 2800 homes in Moraga, Orinda and Canyon that received abatement requirement letters this past year.

According to Fire Marshall Mike Mentink, the goal of the Exterior Hazard Control Program, more commonly known as Weed Abatement, is to limit the spread of wildland fire by reducing potential fuel sources through the reduction of combustible litter and vegetation on properties. These 'sources' can be grass, debris, firewood, trees, even wood pallets, anything that would support the extension of a fire.

This program holds key importance, added Mentink, because proper abatement slows the spread of fires involving combustible vegetation by reducing the volume and interrupting the continuity of the fuel. "This limits the fire's ability to spread quickly to structures and adjacent properties which can result in a catastrophic fire event," said Mentink.

Mentink said that letters are sent annually to affected property owners informing them of the abatement requirements and that an inspection will take place. He added that problems with homeowners addressing the issues are rare. "Most of our residents are aware of the need to abate and the benefit compliance brings," said Mentink. "After the initial notices are sent out in April, most residents take care of any issues on their properties."

However, if those inspections, notifications and appropriate compliance times elapse and the work is still not complete, then the work is done by an outside source. "Ultimately, if the property owners fail to address the concern, a contractor is hired to mitigate the identified hazards and the property owner is sent an invoice," said MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley.

If the property owner does not pay, a lien is placed against the property and the amount of the invoice is added to the annual property tax, which can either be paid by the owner through property taxes or collected through escrow at the sale of the property.

Invoices for these seven properties ranged widely, from \$187.50, to more than \$3,100. "Larger properties with significant hazards cost more to mitigate than smaller properties with less significant hazards," said Bradley. Last year, Bradley said two homes in the District had liens placed on their property for non-payment of abatement invoices.

Complete Exterior Hazard Control requirements can be found on MOFD's website, under the "Fire Prevention" link.

### MOFD Unveils Revamped Website

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) has officially launched its new website. The announcement was made January 20 at the MOFD Board of Directors meeting.

Found at the original website address, [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org), the site has been completely redone, said Board President Frank Sperling. "Our new website provides the look and feel to make it easier for visitors to find the information they are looking for," said Sperling. "The bottom-line goal of the improved site is to provide the community with information that they may want to have relative to the Fire District - services, upcoming events, governance documentation, and health and safety education."

MOFD Fire Chief Randall Bradley said the new site includes not only all the information from the old site, but current news, a history section and an area for public comments. "Because the new website is much easier to update, the information on the site will be current and relevant," he said.

Planned information updates will include adding District documents, such as agendas, budgets, long range plans and strategic plans. Also in the works: streaming fire prevention and other instructional videos, and links to MOFD's upcoming Facebook and Twitter accounts.

"Members of the public that have Facebook and Twitter accounts will eventually be able to sign-up to receive immediate information about emergencies and non-emergency department activities," said Bradley.

Bradley's hope for the site is that people visit the site often and take advantage of the information. "I hope the new website will be used by the public to stay informed and engaged in the happenings of the Fire District," he said. L. Amaral

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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