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Sleepy Hollow/MOFD Host Firewise Workshop

By Lucy Amaral



From left: MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley; Firewise Communities Manager Michele Steinberg; California State Fire Marshal (and former MOFD Fire Marshal) Tonya Hoover; and MOFD Board President John Wyro. Photo Lucy Amaral

Michele Steinberg, the Firewise Communities Manager, Wildland Fire Operations Division, presented information about the nature of fire, what fires have taught them and what individual homeowners should do to protect themselves.

She emphasized that no fire suppression system can be relied upon to completely stop losses from large-scale fires. However, homeowners are the best, first line of defense and can start protecting their homes well before a fire occurs. She said a number of actions could help reduce losses, such as proper roofing materials, creating a fuel free area around one's home, removing dead trees and brush, and using fire resistant plants and building materials.

A goal of this workshop was to form a Firewise Committee from members of the Association to spearhead the process of developing their own fire safety plan. Bradley said that while the committee completed its efforts, MOFD would be working on an official evacuation and warning system for Sleepy Hollow and hoped to have that ready in the next six to eight months.

Wayne Hill, co-president of the Sleepy Hollow Homeowners Association, said the event was organized to help get information out about fire safety.

"Our goal was community awareness of how important it is for us to be the first line of defense - especially Sleepy Hollow, because first responders might not be able to get to us (right away)," said Hill. The Firewise program is a great way to get the rest of the community aware of how we can be the first line of defense in stopping a firestorm."

Hill said a committee was formed that night and the next step will be for the group to be trained by Chief Bradley on how to assess homes for fire safety. "We want to be able to offer neighbors advice on how they can make the perimeter of the house fuel free and less of a fire threat," he said. Hill added that he hopes by meeting with the neighbors one on one, they, too, will want to join the committee and carry on the Firewise work.

Bradley said the Sleepy Hollow community is the testing ground for the Firewise program. If results are as successful as he believes they will be, he would like to take this program to the other neighborhoods in the District.

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