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MOFD's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

By Sophie Braccini



MOFD's new Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Dennis Rein Photo Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Orinda Fire District recently hired Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commissioner Dennis Rein as its new Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Rein is a multi-generational Lafayette resident who spent his professional life in law enforcement and fire fighting with the Regional Park District.

Since his retirement in 2006, Rein has been a member of the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission. He started his new part time job on July 1st with a vast and simple mission: Ensure that Moraga and Orinda are fully prepared to handle any emergency. Rein is fully aware of the complexity of the task at hand.

Rein says his interest in natural resource management started with 4H when he was just a kid. While studying Recreation and Resource Management at Oregon State University, he volunteered as a ranger for the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) at the San Pablo Reservoir and was hired there when he graduated. EBMUD sent him to the Police Academy and he became part of the police and emergency response team; when the team's responsibilities were transferred to the Regional Park District in the 80's, Rein followed the job.

Rein served the Park District as a police officer and fire fighter until he became the East Bay Regional Park Fire Chief, in charge of 60 parks and more than 100,000 acres. "After retiring in 2006 I continued to consult for the Parks, and when my friend John Stuart asked me to join him on the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission I was glad to contribute to their excellent work."

The opening of a new position with MOFD gives Rein the opportunity to serve once again in his area of expertise.

"(MOFD) is very fortunate to have someone with Dennis' qualifications and experience to fill this position," said MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley in a press release, "...he's already spent much of his professional life preparing for and managing emergencies in this region."

Rein sees his first priority as integrating the different groups that would have to work together in case of an emergency. "I see myself as a liaison officer between the municipalities, the schools, and the general population," says Rein who is aware that at any given time there are a minimal number of first responders (police and fire) on duty in Lamorinda. "An emergency plan will aim at linking together the groups of residents and schools with the emergency operation centers," says Rein, "but people need to realize that they are their own best first line of defense. During the 1991 tunnel fire, many issues were resolved quickly by the people who were right there."

Rein believes that the real challenge of his position will be to keep the general population engaged. "If you're not prepared, you become part of the problem," he notes, adding that he thinks the best way to communicate during an emergency is at the small area level and face-to-face, which requires the creation of a multitude of basic neighborhood units. "I will work with the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)," he says, "and hopefully will do some outreach, too."

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