



## Fire Districts

### Public Meetings

#### Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors

Wednesday, July 22, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library Community Room  
1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

#### ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, July 21, 1:30 p.m.  
Board Chamber room 107,  
Administration Building,  
651 Pine St., Martinez  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

# Orinda House Fire Response Questioned

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According to Healy, that type of meeting occurs routinely. In fact, the chief encourages face-to-face meetings among his crews, subject to a district directive that took effect July 1. "I want them to get out and learn their streets," he said.

From 10 a.m. until sunset, the crews can go anywhere for any reason, but only within their primary first-due response areas. The crews may leave their areas for what Healy termed an operational necessity.

"They must remain in the vicinity of their own station's primary coverage area to minimize any delays," said battalion chief Jerry Lee. "For example, the fire engine from the Rheem station in Moraga will not be allowed to venture out of the Rheem area during those hours."

District training sessions and meetings between crews, such as the one that took place the morning of June 21, must now be scheduled before 10 a.m.

The Contra Costa County Fire

Protection District crews do not normally conduct in-person meetings outside their first-due areas, according to Lon Goetsch, assistant chief of operations. The district personnel often meet via teleconference, and some of the district training is conducted using web-based software. "But we do encourage them to drive through their

first-due areas," he said.

Goetsch said that crews often run training exercises away from their stations. Two or three crews may run a structure fire drill at Saint Mary's College, or the Lafayette station 17 captain often will conduct drills in the rough terrain of the Hunsaker Canyon area. "In the summer, we train in the morn-

ing so we can keep them close to their stations in the afternoon," said Goetsch.

Healy told the MOFD board that, although the response time to the Charles Hill fire was at the upper limit of the district performance standard, it fell within what he cited as a national response time standard of nine and a half minutes for a suburban area.

## Public Forum

JOIN IT

### What Lies Below

Are high-pressure pipelines running through your community?

By Britt K. Strotzman

Most people don't know what lies beneath the streets they live and travel on each day. Communities statewide contain multiple systems of wires and pipes for delivering water, sewage, storm drainage, gas and electricity — all of which can pose life-threatening dangers when least expected.

On Sept. 9, 2010, a natural gas pipeline owned and operated by the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. exploded and caught fire in a suburban neighborhood in San Bruno, Calif., killing eight people and injuring 66 others. The victims had no idea a 30-inch high-pressure natural gas pipeline ran right through the middle of their neighborhood. In the wake of this disaster, every contract for the sale of residential property must now contain a specified notice pertaining to gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines. Yet, that notice merely alerts buyers to the general location of gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines located through the National Pipeline Mapping System — it does not always provide the most accurate or pertinent information about the age, quality and maintenance of those lines.

Inaccurate recordkeeping led to a 2014 gas pipeline explosion in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif., where faulty PG&E records misled construction crews replacing a gas-distribution line in a residential community. The pressurized "live" line was accidentally punctured, causing gas to escape into a nearby house that later exploded and leveled the house, sending building debris just over the heads of crew and residents walking nearby. Shrapnel was hurled into neighboring houses and windows were blown. It was a miracle nobody was killed.

While construction-related tampering of pipelines can cause leaks and explosions, age, corrosion, weld failure and pipeline mismanagement often present the greatest threat to public safety. The following examples illustrate a significant increase in recent years in the number of local incidents and disasters nationwide caused by underground infrastructure failures that were not primarily driven by third-party damage:

1. Bellingham, Wash. — Liquid gas line break killed three people (1999);
2. Carlsbad, N.M. — Natural gas explosion killed 12 people at a campsite (2000);
3. Bergenfield, N.J. — Natural gas explosion in apartment building killed three people (2005);
4. Plum Borough, Pa. — Natural gas explosion in a home killed one person and seriously injured a 4 year-old girl (2008);
5. Rancho Cordova, Calif. — Natural gas explosion in a home killed one person (2008);
6. Middletown, Conn. — Gas plant explosion killed six people (2010);
7. San Bruno, Calif. — Natural gas pipeline explosion killed eight people and injured 66 others. Thirty-eight homes were destroyed, 17 homes were rendered uninhabitable and 53 other homes were damaged (2010);
8. Allentown, Pa. — Natural gas explosion in suburban neighborhood killed five people (2011);

9. Sissonville, W.Va. — Gas line explosion destroyed part of an interstate highway and damaged nine homes (2012);
10. City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif. — A PG&E distribution line gas leak caused an explosion that leveled a home (2015);
11. Fresno, Calif. — A PG&E gas pipeline burst and exploded, killing a man and injuring at least 11 others (2015)

Given the number of incidents that continue to occur, residents in communities statewide are now questioning what pipelines and other underground utilities lurk beneath their homes, jobs and children's schools and whether those pipelines are now safe — or being made safe.

With all the PG&E pipeline work going on in the Lamorinda community, it is more important than ever to understand what lines run beneath your neighborhood. The following questions are a good place to start:

1. Call your local elected official and ask that they obtain current pipeline information from pipeline operators, including relevant maps and records regarding the physical location and characteristics of pipelines and other lines operating within the jurisdiction. Specifically request details including:

- The products carried by local pipelines;
- The operating pressure and capacity of those lines;
- The materials the pipeline is made of;
- The method of welding used;
- The precise location of the pipeline and shutoff valves; and
- The location of the nearest utility yard with personnel qualified to shut off the gas 24/7 in an emergency — and their contact information.

2. Ask your local PG&E operator for a copy of PG&E's safety plan as it relates to pipelines that run in your neighborhood. In the event of an emergency it's important to make sure that plans are in place to protect your community's safety.

Unfortunately, residents should not rely solely on natural gas and other utility pipeline operators to maintain and operate safe systems. It is important for communities to work with elected officials to obtain the necessary and meaningful information about the pipelines running through local communities — and help ensure that what happened in San Bruno and other local communities does not happen again.

*Britt Strotzman is an attorney for Meyers Nave where she serves as a Principal and Chair of the firm's Crisis Management: Public Policy, Ethics and Investigations Practice. In her capacity, she serves as Special Counsel to the City of San Bruno, the City of San Carlos, and the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea handling complex, intertwined civil and criminal investigative, legal and regulatory matters stemming against PG&E from the deadly 2010 PG&E pipeline explosion in San Bruno, explosion in Carmel-by-the-Sea, and pipeline safety issues before the state's regulatory agency in San Carlos. Ms. Strotzman is a resident of Moraga and can be reached at [bstrotzman@meyersnave.com](mailto:bstrotzman@meyersnave.com).*

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Lafayette

## Homes at Deer Hill Review Continues

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The July 27 meeting is slated to cover parks facilities, site design and architecture, and the applicant's reclaimed irrigation water strategy. A special meeting is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8 to review the development agreement, and review findings necessary to approve

or deny the project, and conditions of approval if appropriate. A final public hearing is slated for the city council's regular Aug. 10 meeting.

City council members agreed that if residents were out of town for the Fourth of July holiday and missed the July 6 meeting, they are still welcome

to comment on topics that were discussed at the July 27 meeting.

To see all the questions and answers prepared for this meeting, or to listen to the over-three-hour audio version, simply go to [www.love-lafayette.org](http://www.love-lafayette.org) and click on the July 6 city council meeting.

Moraga

## Moraga Management

"(When entering a negotiation) the leadership factor is huge," he said, "and what we have here is a town manager who is in tune with her hard-working people and she can balance the council's priority for fiscal responsibility."

Other representatives included Kelly Clancy and Julia Elbo, and Sgt. Brian South who negotiated for the Moraga Police Officers Association. Keimach said at the council meeting that the police officer's union representative was asked to leave the bargaining table. "We didn't need him,"

confirmed South. "Everything went very smoothly."

Clancy, who has been part of the negotiations in Moraga two times, says that Keimach is easy to work with, and she is fair and reasonable. "This creates a certain level of trust," she confirmed. King added that Keimach always listens and is interested in hearing different sides of an issue.

The Bay Area is now close to full employment and King said Keimach understands that to keep quality people you have to compensate them

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well. The salaries in Moraga are not the highest in the Bay Area, and Moraga's chief of police has repeatedly explained that one of the reasons that the town has difficulty retaining police officers is the compensation package with a pension that is 2 percent at age 50, compared to other agencies that offer 3 percent at age 50.

But there are other ways to keep people happy, and Clancy acknowledged that rearranging the schedule to have every other Friday off is a good thing.