

Multiple agencies involved in Lamorinda virtual evacuation drill



Photo Sora O'Doherty

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Members of Lamorinda CERT and the LARIG sent messages to their members, asking them to radio in and also to respond, had this been an actual emergency, if they would have been available to assist their neighbors to evacuate. CERT sent text messages to 618 trained CERT members. Over 97% of the messages were delivered, and 37.5% of the recipients replied. Over 100 CERT members reported that they would be available to assist. CERT also conducted a General Mobile Radio System (GMRS) net. This net received 44 incoming calls from seven zones in Moraga, 10 in Orinda and three in Lafayette. Twenty-two HAM radio operators checked in with LARIG between 8:25 and 9:18 a.m.

The Sleepy Hollow, Orinda Downs, and Monte Vista neighborhoods organized a functional evacuation

exercise, where about 25 neighbors "evacuated" to the Orinda Safeway where they shared coffee and donuts.

The scenario was a wild-land fire originating at the reservoir, pushed by heavy fuels, hot, dry winds, and low humidity. The imaginary fire in the drill escapes the initial attack, triggering evacuation actions in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

At the end of the drill, a survey was sent to participants. Although the initial link sent was not operational, after discussion with CWS staff the issue was identified and a new link was posted. The updated link received 564 responses from exercise participants. About 37% of respondents live in Lafayette, 33% in Orinda, and 29% in Moraga. About 28% of respondents reported that they are members of one of Lamorinda's FireWise Communities, while just over 30% do not, and over 41% of respon-

dents did not know if they live in a FireWise Community.

Three quarters of respondents do not have school age children in the household, with the remaining quarter reporting the presence of between one and four children at home, and 68.4% of respondents had not logged on to their CWS Alert account to verify their information within the past 90 days, while small numbers had either logged in within a shorter time or never. Of those who did log on, only 49.5% reported that they were able to locate their evacuation zone, while over 50% said that they could not. And although more than 50% reported that they had not packed "go bags" for each family member and pet, the overwhelming majority reported that during an actual emergency they would be willing and able to check on their neighbors before leaving.

Recycle Smart updates Orinda City Council on recent service issues

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Kreuger said that one of the benefits that has improved owing to a renegotiated contract with Republic Services is if bins are collected two days late, consumers can receive a credit for the week by calling Republic Services, whose telephone number is located on the bins.

Tony Mancini, general manager of Republic Services, also addressed the council. He admitted that since 2019 there has been an issue of not being able to consistently collect on the days specified for each neighborhood. "We work as hard as we can to solve the problem," Kreuger noted. He explained that there have been some long-term retractable problems that have contributed to the problem. It can take up to two years to get new garbage trucks and it is also difficult to get qualified technicians to work on the trucks, which are complicated vehicles. Their new plan is to obtain less qualified technicians and train them. Although it is an ongoing process, four people have been promoted in the past year.

Smaller vehicles more capable of dealing with Orinda's narrow, twisting, wooded roads are also more challeng-

ing. Although three of these vehicles were ordered in July, Mancini noted that, owing to supply chain issues, they will not arrive until the first quarter of 2024.

Further, Mancini stated that Republic Service's plan includes getting new drivers acclimated and trained. "We've got five new drivers," he noted, "but we need five more." He added that they have brought in emergency drivers from other states.

City Council Member Brandyn Iverson complimented the drivers who serve Orinda as really masterfully skilled, talented folks. But Council Member Janet Riley said that the problem of late pickups is not new, but has taken a downturn in recent years. She expressed fears that when bins are left out overnight it may cause difficulty for emergency vehicles in the event that they need to access the street. Sandy Gross, speaking in public comments, also complained that the bins present a fire hazard.

Council Member Latika Malkani had questions about what to put in each bin. For example, she wondered why we can't put compostable cups and cutlery in our green bins. Kreuger said that it comes down to "truth in advertising." While some items are theoretically compostable, not all facilities can handle them. On the other hand, he added that some compost facilities accept the fact that there will be microplastic in the compost, but Recycle Smart decided that that is not a good thing.

In response to a question from this reporter, Kimberly Lam, Municipal Manager with Republic Services, said that the Big Belly Receptacles have been very effective in helping people dispose of their items properly. The bins have pictures showing which items go in which container, and the extra step of having to open the containers, rather than just tossing an item into an open bin, seems to give people a little more time to make the best choice.

To report a missed pickup or other service issue, contact Republic Services at (925) 685-4711. If not satisfied, call RecycleSmart at (925) 906-1801 or email authority@recyclesmart.org.