

The LWC Safety Committee met on 9/22/20 to debrief on the Labor Day Week storms and wildfires incident, and to make recommendations for improved response to future incidents that necessitate activating the LWC incident command. We appreciate the input we've received from the community, and the support of Safety Committee volunteers who responded. As noted on the [Emergency Plan](#), the mission of the Safety Committee is to help residents prepare for, and respond to emergencies, and to care for one another when disaster strikes. No drill can replicate real life emergencies, so this was quite the test of our team and Emergency Plan. We were fortunate that the wildfire was not imminent nor the situation life-threatening. Lessons learned were not insurmountable but invaluable. We were able to see what worked in our Emergency Plan, and what protocols we need to change to respond more effectively.

The following information reflects the challenges LWC faced from the windstorm, utility outages and wildfires Sept. 8-11 as well as the recommended changes in emergency response.

#### CHALLENGES:

- **Lincoln County Emergency Alerts** - These are frequent, and monitored by the Safety Committee. However, the county emergency management is not staffed 24hrs. The weather advisory we received early Sept. 7 forecast winds from the east. Alerts on the wildfires, road closures and evacuation levels were not immediately accessible.
- **No Utilities** - On Sept. 8, all electrical power, cell phone service and landline phones were out. That meant the internet, email, and Call-em-All were not available to update LWC residents.
- **Situation Assessment** - Downed and falling trees were a danger, and smoke was at hazardous levels. We advised ALL area captains to remain indoors, and to contact residents when it was safe to do so. LWC staff were delayed in arriving to do damage assessment due to HWY 101 closure from fallen trees. We cannot rely on LWC staff to fix every concern, so we need to have a plan for assessing problems when they are not here.
- **Communications** - We monitored HAM radio transmissions to obtain information about conditions outside of LWC, and began relaying this information to area captains mid-morning. We found that not all areas were able to hear or provide reports on the hand-held radios - especially in low-lying areas. We know now that we should have immediately activated one function of the incident command system LWC has adopted, and that is the public information component.
- **Lack of Area Coverage by Safety Captains** - There are \_\_\_\_ homes on \_\_\_\_ acres in LWC, divided into 14 areas for Safety Captains to cover. Only 10 of those areas have volunteers willing to serve as captains, and several are part-time residents. That left considerable gaps in our ability to reach all areas of the community.
- **Evacuation Notices** - Determining where the wildfires were, and when we might have to evacuate were not immediately evident. Evacuation notifications are determined by city and county emergency management. The Echo Wildfire advanced rapidly, but we were able to track the county evac levels. While Depoe Bay never advanced to Level 1 evacuation measures, Hwy 101's closure, and the limited egress (only one way through the main gate) pose a considerable threat to our ability to evacuate \_\_\_\_ households quickly.
- **Evacuation Egress** - There is only one way out of LWC, and there are too few keys to open the back gate. Further, there are no protocols for evacuation out the back gate, or to other safe locations if the roads are impassable.

#### CHANGES TO BE MADE

- The Board and Safety Committee chairs will be more proactive in putting the whole committee on standby when the potential for an emergency response is evident.

- The Incident Command System we adopted from FEMA is a highly effective model. We will amend our Emergency Plan to more closely reflect that structure and the functions needed for any situation.
- The Public Information function (PIO) will be activated immediately when Incident Command is activated. The PIO will ensure timely alerts and periodic updates are sent by whatever means possible. When no power affords email or phone contact, information will be posted on the bulletin board outside the Rec Center.
- The Safety Committee will identify and recruit a team of residents with EMS experience to activate immediately for assessment, reducing the time to analyze damage and danger, and providing crucial information for area captains to disseminate.
- HAM Radio operators will start hourly call-downs with area captains at 8am
- More Safety Captains, and alternates are needed to cover all areas. Further training is needed for information distribution and radio protocols.
- Plans are in the works to improve the back gate easement and widening accessibility for firetrucks and ambulances into LWC, as well as rapid evacuation of the northwest area of LWC.
- Homeowner emergency preparedness is your responsibility and vital to our having a safe community.

The Safety Committee can create plans, print quick emergency guides for you to post on your refrigerator, offer workshops, and even program personal radios at the right frequency so you can hear what we hear. Safety Committee volunteers are not emergency responders, and should not be expected to safeguard residents. The committee makes an effort to educate and encourage homeowners to be more aware of potential hazards in our forest and coastal environment, and be prepared for any kind of emergency from evacuating at a moments notice to sheltering-in-place for at least 72hrs. But it is the onus of the homeowner to read what is made available and participate in emergency fairs. Hopefully, the windstorms and wildfires of Labor Day week drilled that message home.