

August 2007 - Mountain Charlie Fire

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This month's Loma Prieta Volunteer Fire Department article covers a lot of territory. First off, many, many thanks to everyone who came to the barbecue back in June. Thanks as well to everyone who helped make the event happen by donating food, labor, services, and prizes for the raffle. We raised about \$20,000 this year, and with those funds we expect to purchase new defibrillators, new lighting equipment and generators, and some new haz-mat response gear. As you can see, your participation in the barbecue really makes a difference. Once again, we thank you all!

If you're like most of us, you want to know when something important is happening in the neighborhood. The Loma Prieta volunteers are trying a new scheme to get information out to you in a timely manner - a blog. We'll update the blog as often as we can with information about major (and sometimes even minor) fire department related events in our area. The first entry is a set of photos from a recent wildland fire fighting training session at Radonich Ranch. We can even update the blog from the field, assuming the incident gives us the time to do so and cell service is available. You can find the new blog here: <http://lomaprietafire.blogspot.com/>

Next up, be sure to look in next month's MNN for information about upcoming CERT - Community Emergency Response Team - training, which will be given later this year, free of charge, to any interested community members. We're still working out the dates, but expect the training on two weekends in October or November. This will be an excellent opportunity to get more involved in the community, and it may be a big of help in the event of a major incident here in the mountains.

While it wasn't a huge incident, some of you have no doubt heard about the June 23 fire on Mountain Charlie Road, near 17 and Summit. It was reported early Saturday morning and resulted in a large response from your Loma Prieta volunteers and CAL-FIRE crews. The fire grew to about one acre in size before it was fully extinguished. Unfortunately the cause is undetermined at this time. The fire burned in heavy fuels - brush & timber - but there was no wind that morning, so thankfully it was slow to spread. As the fire climbed the hill it approached a house on Summit road, but it stopped before it got there because the homeowner had just cleared the vegetation away from below his home. If the six foot high scotch broom had still been there the outcome could have been very different. Keeping a defensible space around your home is critical, and in this case it really paid off.

That defensible space around your home isn't merely a good idea, though. It's actually the law. California requires homeowners to keep 100 feet of defensible space around their homes in areas like ours where wildfires are possible. That doesn't mean a moonscape with no vegetation, but it does mean keeping the brush and grass down, the trees limbed up, and using fire resistant plantings where possible. If your home is on a hillside you may need to trim or clear more aggressively below and around the house to protect it adequately. If you need advice on

what sort of work to do, start with this website: <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/>.

The Loma Prieta volunteers wish you a safe summer!



Fire fighters work the Mountain Charlie fire from the top of the hillside, above the fire.



The slope below the house.



Firefighters hike down to the burn. Note the cleared area they are hiking through. That may well have saved the home!



A firefighter foams down hot spots below the home. Again, note the cleared brush below the house.