

A Message from Rich Shortall, President of the Fire Board

The recent power shutdown and the destructive Kincade Fire in neighboring Sonoma County once again remind us that we live in an area of high fire danger. The power shutdown affected almost 100% of Marin County – most of us in Sleepy Hollow were without power for four days or more. It is very likely that we will experience many more power shutoffs in the future due to more extreme weather conditions related to climate change plus the aging and poorly maintained PG&E power grid.

Emergency Communications

The power shutdown highlighted the fact that emergency communications are poor or non-existent for most of Sleepy Hollow. We have no cell coverage during normal conditions and those who are familiar with the technology can only access their cell phones through Wi-Fi calling. But there must be power in our homes for Wi-fi and for most landlines to function. We will address these and related communication issues more comprehensively in a future article.

NOAA Radios

Meanwhile, the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District (SHFPD) is working with the Marin County Office of Emergency Services to implement a pilot program utilizing National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios to receive the same emergency alerts during widespread public safety power shutoffs or other large scale disasters that are broadcast over the Alert Marin system. The SHFPD has purchased desktop NOAA weather radios with battery backup for our Block Captains. We will test the radios for approximately one month to ensure that we have good coverage and that the radios are properly programmed to receive alerts. If the program is successful, we will consider purchase of a NOAA weather radio for each residence in Sleepy Hollow and distribute them through our Block Captains. Unfortunately, the radios do not have the capability to call 911 for a medical or other emergency when our phones are down, but each residence should be able to receive emergency alerts during widespread power outages.

Portable Generators

The SHFPD has received many inquiries regarding use of portable generators. Backup electric generators can be a part of your preparedness plan during wildfires, Public Safety Power Shutdowns, and other power loss events. Backup electric generators operate as a stand-alone power source and are not connected to PG&E's power grid. Generators are typically powered by natural gas, propane, gasoline, or diesel fuel. Solar

systems typically do not provide power during outages, unless equipped with a battery storage system and special equipment to create a home-grid. FIRESafe MARIN (<https://www.firesafemarin.org/power>) does not recommend the operation of stand-alone, gasoline-powered generators during fire weather events. The San Francisco Chronicle (Nov. 14) published an article on generators causing fires and carbon monoxide poisoning during the power outages. Propane or natural gas powered generators are safer and less likely to spark a fire or expose residents to dangerous combustion gasses. The best option is a permanent, (professionally) installed propane or natural gas generator.

Community Center

The power shutdown once again showed the importance of having a Preparedness Center located in the middle of our community containing emergency power, enhanced communication capability, heat, basic medical supplies and other emergency supplies such as flashlights, batteries, portable generators, hand tools, food/water, cots, etc. How many of you would have utilized such a facility to get up-to-date information, charge your cell phones, or borrow a flashlight or battery? The Sleepy Hollow Homes Association and the Sleepy Hollow Charitable Foundation are moving forward with their plans for the Community Center Renovation project and hope to start construction in the spring. Additional funding is still needed, so please give generously to help make our community safer.

Block Captains

The SHFPD recently held our Fall Block Captain meeting which was well attended. There was a spirited discussion about problems and potential solutions related to emergency communications, the power shutdown, and the need to move forward with the Community Center Renovation. If the NOAA weather radio pilot project is successful, you can expect a visit from your neighborhood Block Captain. Please support the program. We still need Block Captains for a few more areas in Sleepy Hollow. If you can help, please contact SHFPD Director Sharon Adams at (415) 454-0420.