

## **7/27 DISCUSSION WITH LAFD CHIEF R. FIELDS REGARDING FIRE EMERGENCY & EVACUATION**

Chief Fields heard from some of our area reps about challenges faced by neighborhoods with hillside streets or narrow roads with dense development and the challenges they may pose for evacuation in case of an emergency.

He also heard about brush clearance and overgrowth issues that may impact fire preventions efforts and lead to dangers posed to communities as fire season approaches.

Chief Fields said he hears our concerns and they are not unfamiliar to him. He has been with LAFD for 30 years and has had extensive brush fire-fighting in wildland experience. He was the Division Commander at the Getty fire and is astute at managing and fighting wildland fires.

He noted that FD gets very little opportunity to give input on decisions to allow construction in one area or another, citywide. He more specifically noted that the way environmental impact statements are currently written, with half century old language, do little to serve the current challenges faced by fire and need to be updated to include a review of population density. Building in Los Angeles, he said, is “a political thing” and he would like to see communities advocate for a change in the way standards are written for construction, considering fires.

Regarding evacuation strategy and safety, he informed us that once a wildfire breaks out LAFD sets up an evacuation route taking into account terrain, temperatures, rates of spread and forward progress of the fire - and then they determine an evacuation strategy. He stressed that for people who choose to evacuate on their own, they should go before they see LAFD resources on the ground. Once they see those resources, any movement compromises the evacuation strategies. He noted that the evacuation order is given by LAFD, but the evacuation procedure is managed by LAPD.

Communication is the biggest issue in this process, and that is where he and the department can use our help and cooperation to establish a strategy of information gathering/spreading and effective communication within the community. The evacuation plan is solid, he said. The communication plan is not.

People leaving their homes unexpectedly can lead to congestion or other complications and evacuation, once a fire has come close, should be at the direction of LAFD. He explained that they implement increments of evacuation at 2hrs, 1hr or 30 min, depending on the movement of the fire and other factors like wind and rate of spread. These things can be communicated to residents, so they know the rules, they understand that LAFD is present and has a plan and they know what they are expected to do.

Chief Fields has some ideas how circles of communication can be set up but needs help with a neighborhood specific plan and is willing to bring more people to the table to develop a strategy. I suggested that PPCC will create a committee for fire preparedness and begin the conversation. We agreed to stay in touch and talk again.