

FROM THE CHIEF – Cheryl Goetz

As I sit and reflect on 2007 I can tell you that I honestly feel that our community was very fortunate. The Brigade responded to a total of eight vegetation fires. Four of these fires had the potential to turn into large damaging fires. Unfortunately October's fire will remain with many of us for quite some time to come. The fire service lost a great firefighter our brother Matt Will. I personally lost a good friend. Matt's family is doing well although as I am sure you can imagine this last month has been very hard for them. I spent a week with Matt's dad during December and he can't thank everyone enough for the support the fire service has shown their family.

Out of the fires ashes emerged the stories of two heroes'. The first of course was the heroic efforts on the part of Matt Will. Matt can be credited for stopping the fire on the east side. Yes of course you will say, but the air tankers made numerous drops on the fire. I can tell you from years of experience that retardant is but a bandage meant only to last long enough to allow the ground forces to gain access. If Matt hadn't cut the line down the hill the story would have had a much different ending. Matt lost his life while trying to assist his partner whose dozer had become stuck in a very precarious position while trying to reinforce the original line Matt had cut. Matt made the ultimate sacrifice and paid the highest price. For his efforts and for his courage (take a look at the steepness of the hillside) this community should forever be thankful.

Our second hero's story should come as no surprise. For this hero is none other than Norm Cotton. Norm received a phone call from a neighbor reporting the fire at the Draper's and he immediately went to the fire station. Norm responded alone in the engine and was the first to arrive at the scene of the structure fire. Norm had a tough choice to make: try to extinguish the vegetation fire, which would have been impossible alone, or save the Drapers home. Norm single handedly battled the structure fire for fifteen minutes before help from Cal Fire arrived. By that time Norm had contained the fire to the outbuilding and kept the fire from spreading to the Drapers home which allowed Cal Fire to concentrate its first efforts on the vegetation fire. Thank you Norm!

To the community I would like to send my heartfelt thanks. The fire station played a vital role in battling the Colorado Fire. Without your continued support throughout the years this facility would still be only but a dream. You made it a reality and a place that we can all be proud of and because of this facility we now have the best equipment ever. Your donations keep the dream alive. Please don't forget to donate. I hope you all have a happy, healthy and safe new year.

2007 RESPOSE STATISTICS

Traffic Accident	17
Medical Aid	12
Other	4
Hazardous Condition	1
Smoke Check	4
Debris Fire	1
Structure Fire	4
<u>Vegetation Fire</u>	<u>8</u>
TOTAL	51

COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULED

The community meeting to discuss the Colorado Fire has been scheduled for Monday, January 14th at 7pm. The meeting will be held in the apparatus bays at the fire station. Room will be limited so please make other arrangements for children. Remember to bring a chair if you would like to sit and a warm jacket as we do not have heat available in the building.

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 27th Sunday– Big Sur Marathon and road closures

August 30th Saturday – Labor Day Celebration and BBQ at the station. Please bring your own meat to grill and a side dish to share with the community from 1pm – 4pm

October 31st Friday – Canyon Halloween Trick or Treat Ride. Time TBA. Please remember that with the new engines there is room for only seven children on the fire engines. If you want this tradition to continue and you have small children that enjoy the ride please get

involved. Jennifer Allen has been heading this event for a long time. As her children are becoming young adults her interest in heading up this event may come to an end. Please contact Jennifer if you would like to help or take over. Also consider setting up a candy stop in the bottom of the canyon. These are your children, get involved and make this a great event for them.

HELP NEEDED FOR FUNDRAISING

Pam Peck has graciously agreed to commit to another year as a community member to the Brigade's board of directors. Pam is heading up the fundraising activities. The Brigade is looking at November to host another "Silent Auction" event at a wonderful location on Highway 1. Pam cannot do this alone. Please get involved and help Pam and the Brigade raise money to complete the fire station. We would like to ask everyone in the community to consider obtaining an auction item. You can contact Pam for further information at (831) 624-5418.

DOORYARD BURNING

The backyard burn season began on December 1, 2007 and will end on April 30, 2008. Although you do not need a permit in the Mid-Coast area to burn we do ask that you:

1. Contact Monterey Air Quality to determine if it is a burn day. The recording is changed every day at 5pm for the following burn day. Their number is (800) 225-BURN (2876)
2. Contact Mid-Coast Fire after 5pm at (831) 625-8175 and leave a message that at a minimum should include your name, phone number and location address. If you can do this the day before it will make it easier for us to notify all Brigade members.
3. Remember to follow established burning guidelines:
 - a.) Have a minimum of a 12" line cleared to bare soil around the pile.
 - b.) Have water "Immediately" available at the burn pile. This means a hose connected,

charged and stretched to the pile.

- c.) Piles should be no larger than 6x6x6
- d.) Piles can only contain natural yard trimmings. The burning of household trash or lumber is prohibited.
- e.) Have someone in attendance at all times!!!!
- f.) Do not add anything to the pile after 3pm. This will allow the pile to burn down and be out by dark.

Please remember that if you burn on a non-burn day you can face **large** fines imposed by Air-Quality. We will have to respond with fire equipment and extinguish your pile. Also remember that if your burn pile escapes you can be billed for all suppression costs associated with extinguishment of the fire. Please be safe and contact the Brigade if you have any questions.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

As I sit and write this article rain is falling at an alarming rate. Flashbacks from El Nino come to mind. So why am I talking about defensible space this time of year? Because, I believe that it is never too early to plan for a safe future. Next year's fire season will arrive before you know it. The wonderful rainy season we have all been praying for is both a blessing and a curse. With the rain comes growth in the vegetation and added fire danger. So please, start planning on cutting vegetation around your home. How much is enough? The State of California passed a law requiring a minimum of 100 feet of clearance around your home. The first 30 feet should be lean, clean and kept green. The additional 70 feet should be substantially thinned out and you should consider replanting what you cut with fire resistive landscaping. A good rule of thumb to know if you have done enough to save your home in the event of a fire is to consider this: If you have to leave can your home survive on its own? If the answer is no then you need to do more. I have heard from more than one neighbor that they are not worried because they have insurance. If you believe this to be the case for you then I pose

this question. Can you walk away from your home today and afford both financially and emotionally to lose it, all your belongings and memories to a fire? Please help us to help you in the event of a fire and provide defensible space around your home. If you have questions or would like someone from the Brigade to offer advice on what you can do to improve your defensible space, please give us a call!

NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATORS

In January of 2000 the Auxiliary was born. Its mission was to support the Brigade in whatever way it could. Over time the Auxiliary has ceased to exist. One of its most important legacies was the establishment of the Neighborhood Coordinator program. The concept of neighbor helping neighbor was born during the El Nino storms. Neighborhood coordinators were supposed to maintain a list of all their neighbors and contact phone numbers in case of an emergency. During the Colorado Fire many people did not even know who their neighborhood coordinator was or that the program even existed.

Many folks showed up at the fire station during the Colorado Fire. In many instances this hampered firefighting efforts as equipment could not pull in as bystanders and cars were blocking their ingress. Some called the fire station looking for information only to be frustrated as no one was available to answer their calls until late in the fire. In the event of a fire or other natural disaster the Brigade will undoubtedly be very busy working on the emergency incident and will not be able to provide information to the community. Your neighborhood coordinator is the vital link in this instance.

I hope that someone in the community will step up and reinstitute the Neighborhood Coordinator program. I look forward to discussing this at the community meeting on the 14th.

The newsletter will be available on our website. Please check out the website for other valuable information and contact phone numbers:

www.midcoastfirebrigade.org