

Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade Fire Brigade News – July 2015

We were paged out for a veg fire in the area of Henry Miller in June. Upon arrival there were 50 foot flames racing up the redwood trees in the exact same area as the last time the power lines went down. The cause was possibly a limb falling on the wire. The Fire Brigade had a quick response and managed to get the fire under control pretty quickly all things considered. We had to make sure and avoid the live power line that was down so it was difficult to do anything in that area. The hill up there is also incredibly steep which made for an exhausting evening. Thanks to Cody Oliver for helping out with our water supply. The Brigade did an outstanding job on initial attack! USFS had been out of town on another fire and it was after hours so they had to gather all their guys before they could respond. Cal Fire also had their engines committed elsewhere so theirs was a delayed response as well. There was no air attack available either. We were lucky there was no wind.

The 4th of July weekend brought everyone and their brother as my Father would say, to Big Sur. I thought Memorial Day was bad, well Friday the 3rd was worse. Such creative and I might add illegal, parking in the area of Sycamore canyon! Traffic was bumper to bumper, stop and go from MAF to the deli. I was told it was the same in the area of Bixby as well.

We had a number of calls throughout the weekend including 2 more fires. My favorite, and I say this complete sarcasm, was what I now refer to as the "Great Wattle fire". A clueless person, (I don't think this was on purpose) decided to dump their briquettes on the wattle around the Cal Trans dirt pile at the Pfeiffer ridge turn out. Luckily it did not go anywhere, just burned up about 3 feet of "wattle". Later on that night someone again dumped something, I suspect briquettes, over the edge just south of Esalen and started another fire.

We had a huge lightning storm the evening of the 19th and really dodged a bullet. The next day smoke was reported up the Little Sur drainage and we spent hours looking for it. Finally the smoke was spotted in the back country in USFS area.

We ended June 12 calls ahead of last year at this time, and last years included a lot of false alarms, which fortunately we have not had this year.

The inspections are on hold for the time being, the inspector is out working in other areas of the County. They were for the most part well received, I know there are some that wanted to have them done that he couldn't quite get to. Maybe next time....

I thought a reminder wouldn't hurt to recommend that you have all your phone numbers listed with Alert Monterey. They will call you in the event of an emergency in your area. You can do this by going to Alertmontereycounty.org. Something else to think about is a Cal star membership; it is a really inexpensive way to avoid the high costs of a helicopter flight from Big Sur. We are using more helos with the new trauma center.

Our First Responder class is going well, we ended up with 8 people taking it and we are already halfway through. They are a good diverse group with a good mix from different areas up and down the coast.

We have had such dramatic changes in our weather! From lightning to hot and muggy tropical to such a hard drizzle it was almost rain, all in one week! But in spite of all that it is good to remember we are in the 4th year of a drought and the conditions are extremely dry, be fire safe! The large fire burning up in Napa right now was caused by a vehicle accident, anything can happen.... I'm hoping the predictions for a BIG El Nino are going to be correct. Maybe an early winter will be in store for us.

I did forget to thank some people for their help with the Muster, my apologies! Thanks to Lana Weeks and CERT members Laura and Victor Pavloff, and Josef London.

Martha Karstens
Chief