

Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade
Fire Brigade News
February 2017

“Rain, rain, go away”..... So goes the refrain, I don't even know if I want the rest of it, “come again another day”. Not so much right now. I think I've had about 66 inches and its only mid-February. We are inundated, drenched, dripping and water is flowing from everywhere. I don't remember seeing so much land and highway moving; even in 1998 it was over in one big blow out almost overnight taking out the highway in multiple locations.

Our lives have now undergone a huge change with the damage on the Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge that happened last Saturday. Already 9 days ago, it seems like months. We got the word it moved 7 inches in one day, I think just let the damn thing fall down and get it over with. I hope someone is there to video it when it does fall.

So much impact... Business's shut down, unemployment, school kids and one set of parents trying to find housing in town, half the family on one side of the bridge the other half on the other side, mail disrupted, the simple routine of getting the newspaper gone. The new normal is to go get the mail in Monterey; at least those of us on the north side can get our mail.

The Fire Brigade along with the Chamber and CPOA are working very hard to get and keep residents supplied. The helicopter service that was active in 2013 offering short hops over the Rocky Ck viaduct are back ferrying people back and forth. We need to find an LZ for them on the north side. Post ranch has graciously allowed them to land on the south side. This will be a help but residents need to settle in to the new normal, it will be relying on help for supplies or now going south for groceries and feed for the animals. We have lots to organize and many conference calls with the agencies in town.

We will need to have propane trucks come all the way up from the south. Will tourists come all the way up just to turn around and go back for an ambi at Nepenthe? We are trying to identify a trail around the canyon which will help. There has been the discussion of a suspension bridge for pedestrians. None of these solutions can come soon enough.

I think there is no opportunity to build a one lane road like there used to be, it is too steep. It is hard to plan ahead when one doesn't know what to plan for, how long will it take to replace the bridge?

Tori and I went up to the fire house on the last day we were allowed to cross and shut it up like closing up a house at the end of summer. I look at my desk and can't decide what to bring home where I will now work from for an unknown time. Will I eventually get into a routine to walk across and hitch a ride to the fire house?

How hard it is for people to decide what to buy for their final shopping trip on the north side. I am fortunate in that I am on the north side but I remember well being shut in down here for long stretches. I guess we survived.....

The ambulance crew is at the fire house still, they will get flown in and out for shift change. It hasn't been too much fun up there lately with the power out. We are trying to conserve all our propane so they only get to run the generator for a short time a couple times a day.

After one of the many power outages they get the power back on and we promptly get a tree fire from a broken wire on the south side. So PG&E has to turn the power back off to deal with it, poor people south of there, brutal.

We mustn't forget the middle area, Lucia and the Hermitage; they have been shut in already for at least 9 or 10 days. We touch base with them and they say, so far so good here. Then there is the south coast, as of this writing I have not heard the latest on the status of Nacimiento, is it still passable? If not those folks from Limekiln will go south when and if they can get out.

Everyone is helping out with tractors and chain saws, we're all in this together and are trying to make the best of it.

The road north takes some big hits yesterday and last night, I just dumped my rain gauge, another 6 inches, not what we need.

We are trying to keep our FF 1 class going, but I'm not sure we can. We brought up an engine from Gorda and the USFS is nice enough to let us keep it and a squad at the Big Sur station. We will try to meet there for our class or the MAF.

I have FB members in the different areas up and down the coast and USFS has some personnel at the Pacific Valley station. It could be depending on the circumstances a patient will need to get carried out over a trail to get to the hospital. Life has indeed changed.....

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Chief