

Dear Sirs,

If I were seeking a cause for the Malibu fire, I would review all the earliest TV news coverage which we watched anxiously.

Whoever may have initially set the fires, we were appalled to learn, on early newscasts, that the fire captain overseeing the Topanga blaze made a fatal mistake. He deployed all his units eastward despite a brisk west wind. When asked about this, he said his first duty was to protect the few houses directly to the east. The TV reporter seemed as baffled and dubious as we were.

Sure enough, as firemen waited east, the blaze quickly blew westward until it was out of control. Had he called for reinforcements and held the western line, there would have been no Malibu fire.

We are all for Affirmative Action, but not at the expense of putting less qualified personnel in charge of such lethally dangerous operations. Although all the firemen involved worked nobly and bravely, if the Fire Dept. asks who started the fire, I would have to conclude: You did.

Lois Gibson
26740 Latigo Shore Dr.
Malibu

February 21, 1994

Matt Mattheson
County Wildfire Investigation Committee

Dear Matt,

Regarding the Firestorm in Malibu on November 2, 1993 there is some information which I would like to share with you and members of the Committee.

I was a precinct worker at the Carbon Canyon Fire Station during the Election on November 2, 1993. I arrived at the station at 6:30 a.m. and remained there until approximately 11:10 a.m. when I went for my lunch break. At no time during the morning did any fire station personnel speak to any of the four precinct workers about a local fire, imminent danger, questions about where we lived, or the possibility of closing the precinct. In fact, except for the constant ringing of bells, this morning was not unlike the other four elections in which I worked in the Fire Station. In fact, in one respect, we had even less concern since there had been no positioning of fire trucks outside on the driveway for quick response in an emergency, such as had happened in the past. Only one truck had left the station sometime after 10:00 a.m., and to my knowledge did not return while I was at the Station.

There was even one fireman, whom we have known before, who spent a great deal of the morning transporting his personal belongings to his car because he had several days off. At one time there were two male fire personnel looking at a wall map of the Malibu area. Their backs were to me, but I tried repeatedly to question them about the location of the fire, where it was headed and in fact simply to be able to see where they were pointing on the map. I was completely ignored, but thought there could not be much danger because of the academic way in which they were discussing the location of the fire.

Because of the atmosphere in the Fire Station, I was not concerned about imminent danger to myself or my home from the fire. However, after going to the Hughes Market during my break, when I came out of the market I could see an immense cloud of smoke above the hills and knew there was a crisis for our area.

I immediately drove home, located my cats, filled a trash barrel with water, warned several sets of neighbors then returned to the Fire Station with the intention of closing the precinct. I arrived at the Fire Station at about 12:20 p.m. to find the remaining two precinct workers standing in the doorway of the Station looking at the smoke. When I asked them if they had called the Election Commission of the County Registrar/Recorder to say we were closing, they did not believe we could do so. From this I assume that even at this point there still had been no fire warning.

At my insistance the Precinct Inspector, Vidya Ghosh, went into the Fire Station office to make the call. While she called, the other worker and I collected all the voting materials we could and put them in Ms. Ghosh's car when she returned. 'At this point, approximately 1:15 p.m., I ran to my car parked on the opposite side of the street in the cut out about 50 feet from the station. I saw flames already halfway down the hill on the same side as the Fire Station, about 150+ feet from the Station. I stopped my car in front of the Station, wondering if I should honk my horn to alert the firemen, but as there were no firemen in the engine part of the station at that time, I felt I did not have time to jump out of my car and locate the firemen. Since the flames were already within a half mile of the fourth precinct worker's home, my concern was to warn her.

I drove to Claire Grenville's home at the west end of Rambla Vista where she and her husband were actually eating lunch. They were not in the least concerned about fire until I warned them that I had already seen flames in Carbon Canyon and they must get their things together and prepare to evacuate.

I still cannot believe that we, as precinct workers in the Carbon Canyon Fire Station received no warning what-so-ever about the fire which consumed all three of our homes. (The fourth worker was a substitute from Pt. Dume). I personally was home no more than 40 minutes when we were advised to evacuate, and I'm sure Mrs. Grenville at the end of Rambla Vista had less time than that. Ms. Ghosh received burns on her arms and body and smoke inhalation during her evacuation from Calle del Barco. It is ironic too, that the majority of our neighbors who voted at the precinct also lost their homes.

Beyond the obvious sadness, anger and a feeling of betrayal on a personal level, there is an obvious question about how could the fire personnel in the Carbon Canyon Station and Chief Sheppard in particular, not have been more aware of the fire danger. I do not have any answers, but would appreciate your investigation into the situation I have described.

Thank you very much for your help in resolving these issues. All of us, homeowners and all levels of fire fighting personnel, must work together to ensure that this disaster not be allowed to repeat itself.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Hays
3885 Rambla Orienta, Malibu (formerly)

515 Mount Holyoke Avenue
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272
310/454-0400

April 25, 1994

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES WILDFIRE SAFETY PANEL
1320 North Eastern Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90063-3244

Dear Sirs:

There are several issues which I did not address in my testimony to the Panel in Malibu on April 13, 1994 nor in my written testimony of the events which happened to me on November 2nd. My house and approximately 83 of 102 homes in our neighborhood were burned to the ground.

1) COMMUNICATION

Accurate communication during an emergency is vital to all concerned. Residents need to know and rely on information. In this case, where the fire was, the path and speed of the burn, whether the highway was open and with what restrictions, where to evacuate, where it was unsafe. The same information is required by Emergency personnel. Equally important, is to quell rumors and misinformation.

On the day of the fire, between 1:45 and 3:00 p.m., my phone rang constantly. Friends from far and near were warning me about the fire, aware it was heading my way. They all offered any assistance they could. Even our daughter in Boston was warned. The information from friends watching the media was more timely and accurate than that of the local fire department. One of the ironies is that when an officer came to recommend evacuation, he did not know the location of the fire or its path. Only that he was told to notify residents. Considering that we could see that Pacific Coast Highway was jammed in both directions, we decided to continue packing rather than sit in traffic on the highway.

The unfortunate part about all the warning calls, however, was that everytime I answered the phone, it disrupted my train of thought. Consequently, I overlooked quite a few items I planned to take.

I would like to propose a committee be formed to work out a communication/information network. The network would be ready to go into effect immediately during any of the typical emergencies which happen in Malibu, such as the fire, flooding and mudslides. The concept could also be replicated in other areas during emergencies. I believe the same need existed in Alta Dena and Laguna last fall.

The committee should consist of: City and County representatives, Fire and Sheriff Departments, emergency medical centers, animal shelters, local radio and TV stations, citizens, local

businesses, insurance companies and news media. State and federal emergency agencies should also be included or consulted.

We are all aware of the Emergency Warning Broadcast tests on local radio stations. However, no matter how many emergencies we have had in the Southern California area, never once have I heard that we had an "actual" emergency. Excuse me, but I think we did have an "actual" emergency in Malibu and would have benefited from an "actual" warning with reliable information.

How easy it would have been to have tuned in to a local radio/TV station with helicopters in the air with accurate maps which could have kept us informed. With power outages, it would not have been possible to watch TV, but who had time anyway. It would seem that with all the traffic alert helicopters in the air, they have a head-start knowledge of various areas and could be most accurate spotting from the air regarding locations. Being familiar with an area before a fire emergency would be a pre-requisite.

For complete information, there would also need to be trained and knowledgeable personnel on the ground. Additionally, if a reliable information source were available, a mechanical warning siren could alert residents in their homes to listen to the emergency station. That could eliminate the need for personnel to knock on doors with incomplete information.

2) TRAINING OF LOCAL FIRE FIGHTERS AND RESIDENTS:

It appeared that neither the fire fighters nor residents had a clear plan on what to do as the fire raced toward us. Residents relied on old wives tales from old time residents. Our residential area had not had a fire since 1956, although we had been directly threatened in 1970 and again in the 80's. We are well warned of the impending earthquake danger, that within a period of time we can expect "the big one". Now I realize, that we should have expected a burn each year until it happened.

This antitipation would have triggered a very different preparation by residents. That it did not trigger a vigorous preparation by the Fire Department alarms me. Number one, were they truly aware of the yearly danger? If so, why not share the knowledge with residents. And if not, there is need for a major overhaul of the department with more emphasis on prevention and pre-planning to fight fire storms.

If our neighborhood had realized that the Fire Department considered us "indefensible", I can only believe that we would have worked to remedy the situation. After the fact, the neighborhoods are working well together through Operation Recovery. Wish that our leaders had organized an "Operation Fire Prevention" before the fire and saved us from this ordeal, but it's not too late for other areas in Southern California. A collective human failing is to wait for and rely on "heroic" intervention.

We need strong leadership now and honest evaluation of the limitations of emergency services during widespread emergencies. In that way, citizens can accurately assess their risks.

We are all familiar with fire drills in the schools. An annual fire drill for each neighborhood would get the residents and emergency personnel working together. Practice could make perfect.

There need to be specific requirements for local fire fighters regarding thorough knowledge of the area they are hired to protect. A local fire department official stated that he had not been up to Sumac Ridge Road before or after the fire. If local fire fighters do not know the terrain and streets, how can we expect out of town fighters to know.

3) ANALYSIS OF HOMES IN THE FIRE STORM AREAS WHICH WERE SAVED

I would recommend that the Panel inquire as to why certain homes remain standing while many or most of the homes around them are burned to the ground. Operation Recovery would be happy to furnish the Panel with names and addresses for you to contact.

4) POWER OUTAGES DURING FIRES

I do not know the accuracy regarding another suggestion, but my understanding is that power had to be turned off during the fire because of danger of falling live wires. After the fire it was also reported to me that power poles had burned. The power grid, if it does distribute from the land to the ocean, is in the same direction as the fire burns. Therefore, the power supply would always be cut off during a fire. Additionally, flammable poles would not seem to be the correct technology in fire/brush areas. Perhaps insulated steel with cement wrap or similarly protected power poles would be more successful.

5) INCLUSION OF WOMEN ON THE WILDFIRE SAFETY PANEL

I am disappointed that the Panel includes only one woman and she has appointed a deputy to attend the sessions. As a women's college graduate, Mount Holyoke College, I am well aware of the abilities and value of women in problem solving. Not to value this potential contribution is appalling. A paradigm shift, requiring new thought, may be the necessary ingredient in order to solve the problem and break out of the business as usual mode. The comment that "...no new lessons were learned from the firestorms in Southern California during October and November, 1993..." is a compelling reason not to rely on Fire Department to solve the problem. It seems as though they have thrown up their hands in defeat. We, the residents, cannot do that if we are to remain in Southern California.

I do appreciate Jesse Perez's contacting me regarding this issue, and am glad to know that there are at least two women on a working sub-committee (Vegetation Management). However, I am again reminded that this unfortunately is not an atypical situation. Women at the working level but not the decision making level.

I wish to thank the Panel members for your time and the seriousness with which you approach this issue. Your recommendations have the potential to end the terrible destruction of property and people's daily lives. We really can't afford such destruction. That wildfires happen, we all accept. But that we can mitigate their severity before they start is imperative. My personal hope, and that of many friends and neighbors, is that our experience can be an example of "how not to" so that others may avoid this devastation.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Hays

3885 Rambla Orienta, Malibu, CA 90265 (formerly)

515 Mount Holyoke Avenue
Pacific Palisades, CA 90265
310/454-0400

Malibu Times - Summary of Wildfire Safety Committee Testimony

Gretchen Hays

Puzzle: Why are the homeowners the ones to take the leadership role in correcting the problems that allowed our houses to burn? We are not firemen. We do not work for the water district nor are we water engineers. We do not work for the city.

If I were a firefighter, charged with the responsibility of protecting the eastern section of Malibu (knowing there was not, nor will there be enough water or water pressure to protect the residents and their property), I would be leading the fight to ensure an adequate water supply so that I could do my job in the future. If a significant portion of "my" city burned to the ground, I would be first to demand an adequate water supply for the protection of our citizens.

The acceptance that these fires are inevitable and basically uncontrollable, is defeatist and does not inspire confidence in those charged with our well-being. Many of the residents who have lost so much are optimistic that we can make corrections and prevent another disaster of the same magnitude. We want to make it safe for ourselves and others. The rest of Malibu should be aware of assumptions made by those responsible for their protection.

False messages:

The fire department's only significant prevention requirement is "brush clearance" in established residential areas. Because La Costa basically complied with this requirement, many residents felt they were "safe". No mention was made of the heavy ornamental growth or the type of flammable trees which were present in abundance. Residents were unable to accurately assess their risk factor, which is also a contributing reason for under-insurance.

Fire Department personnel admitted after the fire that they knew there was not sufficient water to fight a major fire. Why was this kept a secret from the residents?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation

Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265

828-8776

(310) 456-2652

son Marshall Cohen & Linda Cohen 21390 Rambla Vista (310) 456-2585
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.

My house is/was in (please check)

☐ Serra Retreat Area ☐ Sweetwater Mesa Area
☐ Carbon Mesa Area ☒ La Costa Area
☐ Upper Rambla Pacifico ☐ Las Flores Mesa
☐ Upper Las Flores Canyon ☐ Lower Las Flores Canyon
☐ Big Rock ☐ Topanga
☐ West Saddle Peak/Pioma ☐ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
☐ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? YES Was your house saved? _____

Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? YES By force? _____

Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____

Did road closures prevent you from returning home? _____

Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? YES

Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? NEVER *

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO What time? at 4:00pm - 4 drove up the street.

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks X Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment _____

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? YES (See father comments)

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). I WAS there at 4:30pm. My parents had called me & I came.

Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? Rambla Pacifico 4:00pm & saw the flames & strong wind

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? Our neighbors house burned around 7:00pm. Our house caught fire by a large tree that was adjacent to their property & over our house.

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? YES - until 4:30pm - then only Marshall stayed.

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? _____

Were you successful in saving your house? NO

* OUR NEIGHBOR NEXT STORE had water. In fact an unknown square foot a fireman - saved her house with a garden hose. Her house caught fire & trees caught fire but someone took her hose inside house & fought the fire!!

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? NO

Please explain your answer. I felt like I WAS in a Mad Max Movie. The few fire + police men I saw around 4:00pm on Rambla Vista did not acknowledge me or give any information. WE HAD no information except from each other. I SAW my friends + neighbors in complete shock not being directed or helped at all. I looked down on the Coast Highway + saw the fire engines lined up like Christmas trees, the News Helicopters over my head, the WORLD came to an end for me that day + I will never be the same. Jaida Cohen
 Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? YES

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos NO or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? Eye witness reports of the confusion +

Further comments: breakdown in the chain of command.

immediately. Unfortunately they left already. ~~They were~~ I WAS in Pete McKellars back yard on Coast Highway (the house below mine) with SEVERAL firemen + laces. My house caught on fire I asked them to come with me up the hill (not far) + help me save my home. They said there was no water. My neighbor Pelly Pierson had her house SAVED because there was water. I SAW her house + trees catch

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.** fire.

NFES

Marshall Cohen

OH

TODD M. SLOAN
21613 RAMBLA VISTA
MALIBU, CA 90265

1127 LACHMAN LANE
PACIFIC PALISADES, CA 90272

December 11, 1993

Ms. Carolyn Van Horn, Mayor
City of Malibu
23805 West Stuart Ranch Road
Malibu, California 90265

Dear Ms. Van Horn:

Almost six weeks ago our neighborhood was ravaged by the tragic firestorms that destroyed almost all the hillside homes in La Costa. Those who survived the fires heaved a sigh of relief and went about their lives. Those of use who lost our homes are now faced with the myriad of problems which emanate from insurers and government but nobody has addressed the issue of the woeful lack of fire protection. Let me start by saying that I do not denigrate the brave individuals who manned the fire lines. They were trained to go in harm's way and did so valiantly. But many did not.

It is very difficult to find out anything about the command and control of the fire fighting efforts. Quite clearly, from the meeting at Pepperdine on November 23, there is a lot of rage out there and it is not being addressed. Unless the effort is analyzed and the dysfunction of command and control remedied, more homes will burn, even perhaps some of those that are about to be reconstructed.

The following points demonstrate that we were ill-served by the fire fighting command - and, indeed, by some of the fire fighters themselves:

1. Aerial tankers, which could have stopped the fire in its tracks were not employed until after La Costa had burned. We all know about the arcane 1932 law that prevented their engagement until all civilian aircraft were engaged. It is a hymn to the bureaucratic mind that nobody had the guts to take the initiative and launch the strikes and equally so that now nobody seems to be energized to remedy the problem.

Ms. Carolyn Van Horn, Mayor
City of Malibu
December 11, 1993
Page 2

2. As Sara Wan noted in her letter the week after the fire, there were no trucks on Carbon Mesa except those unfortunate few that got stuck up there and had to fight their way out. Carbon Mesa was engaged by the fire, as near as I can tell, at approximately 1:30 p.m.
3. With Carbon Mesa aflame in the early afternoon, why was the nearest fire department and the one most familiar with Malibu, Santa Monica, not called until 2:30?
4. Each fire department that came to Malibu was assigned an area. Again it is difficult to find out how these units were coordinated but it appears that each department could do what it willed in its area. Absent maps or guides, they were unwilling to go up into the fire areas - and none were provided. Fire fighters from outside Malibu could not find hydrants and when they did, there was no water.
5. Water District 29 has known about the inadequacy of the water supply for fifteen years and I presume the fire protection agencies have also been aware. Apparently nobody stopped to think that there was plenty of pressure on the PCH and trucks could have refilled there or that there were swimming pools in the area that could have been used as a water source.
6. A rough estimate of the engagement of the fire fighters leads to the conclusion that almost one half of the trucks never uncoiled their hoses. This led to the massive traffic jam of fire trucks on PCH.
7. La Costa was assigned to the City of Los Angeles Fire Department. Whoever made that decision must have taken leave of their senses. It was - or should have been - apparent to anyone with a modicum of common sense that LAFD trucks are open cab vehicles and that the occupants are exposed to falling trees and structures. To assign this unit to a densely populated area like La Costa simply meant that the fire fighters would not go into the area at all - and they did not.
8. Some fire fighters were never deployed. Units from Wyoming sat out the fire at Gladstone's. Why pay to bring them here if they are not going to be used? We will never know, unless somebody investigates, just what the percentage of participation was among the fire units. I dare say it would not exceed fifty percent.

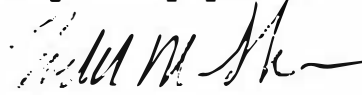
Ms. Carolyn Van Horn, Mayor
City of Malibu
December 11, 1993
Page 3

Our story is tragic but no less than any other story of a lost home. Our home survived the firestorm. There were small spot fires in the vegetation behind the structure which were observed by neighbors from the Villa Costera Mesa. A LAFD truck was there at the time and the fire fighters were asked to go to our house to put out the fires. They refused to do so. Another neighbor walked to the Coast Highway and asked a fire unit to come up to put out spot fires after the firestorm. He was informed that there was no water to "waste" on Rambla Vista. Our house burned at approximately 10:00 p.m. - almost four hours after the firestorm. There are other neighbors who can provide other insights into what happened on November 2 that are equally uncomplimentary. What comes clear is that there was little thought or control given to the effort. Anything off PCH was simply abandoned.

It is equally tragic that almost every home still standing on Rambla Vista is the result of homeowner effort with no assistance from any fire department. Those homeowners were not only not aided in their defense of their structures, they were further impeded by the CHP traffic control which acted more like storm troopers than a civic service organization. Were not we all comforted by the picture of the brave CHP members drawing their weapons on a homeowner who wanted to get in to Malibu to protect his home since nobody else would?

After the November 23 meeting I was approached by Chief Sheppard, who claimed to have controlled the fire effort. I told him of my concerns and he promised to contact me. I finally contacted him a week after the meeting and sent him the data I had amassed. He again told me that there would be studies made of the fire fighting effort. I fear that nothing will be done; I fear that unless some of us who care are permitted to attend and ask these difficult questions, this is going to happen all over again. These fire fighting efforts are not free and unless we are very careful, we are going to get short-changed again.

Very truly yours,


Todd M. Sloan

TMS/sxc

cc: Editor, Malibu Times ✓
Editor, Surfside News

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

ROLAND M. JOSLYN 3833 PASEO HIDALGO (310) 459-1299
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____	

Did your house burn? YES Was your house saved? _____
Were you evacuated? YES Voluntarily? YES By force? _____
Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? _____
Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach
your area? YES
Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? @ 3 PM
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? YES What time? @ 4:15 - 4:30 PM
What color units? Yellow trucks X Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe LAGUNA BEACH & SAN CLEMENTE UNITS
What kind of fire equipment BIG RIGS
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more
details). I LEFT AS THEY WERE ARRIVING
Did fire fighting units leave? APPARENTLY If so, when? ?
Why did they leave? NO WATER, I AM TOLD.
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? @ 5 PM - 5:30 PM
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save
it? NO

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? _____
Were you successful in saving your house? _____

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

No

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO. FIRE DEPT WAS NOT PREPARED ITSELF. IF IT WERE, THE RAMBLA - PACIFIC RD BEHIND OUR HOME WOULD HAVE BEEN!

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? REGRADED AND AVAILABLE FOR EMERGENCY FIRE EQUIPMENT USE. AS IT WAS, THERE WAS NO WAY EQUIPMENT COULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE FOR USE ABOVE OUR PROPERTY TO HELP CURTAIL THE FIRE'S SPREAD TO THE LOWER AREA.

SEE ATTACHED LETTER

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? NO. WOULD NOT STAY WITH NO WATER PRESSURE.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? Yes.

Can you furnish us with fire photos _____ or videos (even TV-taped) HAVE NONE!

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments: _____

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

*RANBLA PACIFICO
FOR EMERGENCY
USE*

3833 Paseo Hidalgo
Malibu, CA 90265
31 September 1992

John F. Knipe, P.E.
City Engineer - City of Malibu
23805 Stuart Ranch Road, #245
Malibu, CA 90265

Subject: Rambla Pacifico Landslide

Dear Mr. Knipe:

Thank you for your letter of 31 August 1992, addressing my concern to reopen Rambla Pacifico as an emergency fire access road.

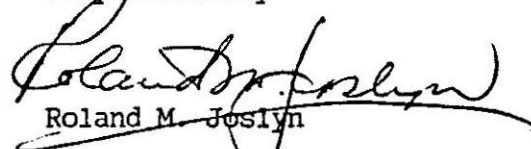
I totally agree with the Malibu City Council's position that the maintenance and monitoring of the landslide area is the responsibility of Los Angeles County. The situation still exists, however, where a lack of action by the County can have disastrous consequences in the event of a major brush fire. The question is, is the City Council doing enough to spur on the County to provide access off the hillside to the residents and fire equipment in the event of a major fire?

I understand no additional weight should be added to the slide mass, but has any detailed grading study been made of the area with the thought of reopening Rambla Pacifico Road for emergency road use? Cannot enough dirt be moved within the area itself to fill-in and reconnect the road? Should not the areas that show negative slope (the broken up sections of Rambla Pacifico Road which slope into the hillside, for instance) be regraded to have a positive slope and thereby facilitate rain runoff?

The average annual rainfall on the slide area contributes weight of 55,00,000 pounds (100% absorption). That figure would be doubled in a heavy rain year. Road grading would add no weight if the compacted fill came from the slide mass. If all the fill is brought in, then the added weight might reach 10 to 12% of rainfall weight, depending upon the road geometry. Grading of the hillside for rain runoff would probably cancel out the weight of additional dirt brought in (if necessary) by the reduction of rain water weight absorbed into the slide mass.

It is, however, up to you, the City Council and the County to determine what is best, but the grading costs cannot be equal to the cost of one home lost in a fire.

Very sincerely


Roland M. Joslyn

cc: John Harlow, Malibu City Councilman
David Kagon

456-2209

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
21547 Rambla Vista (310) 456-2652

Bill & Jody Stump 27860 Winding Way 457-0806
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ ☒ La Costa Area
____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? Yes Was your house saved? No
Were you evacuated? Sort of Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____
Were you at home? Yes Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? No

Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? No cars were stalling & overheating on PCH

Did you have water? No!! What time did you lose water pressure? 1:00

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? Yes What time? 4:00 (just before)

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks ☒ Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment _____

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? Yes, in leaving

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). 3 fire trucks - in front of our house when we left so we

Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? At 4:20 the lots behind A & B

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____ Plumbing

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____ caught fire

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? No

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? there was no water with

Were you successful in saving your house? No which to fight a fire

assured we "were in good hands". As we headed north on Avenida Vista, we passed a half dozen trucks going up Via Costera. The fire had not yet reached La Costa.

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
21547 Rambla Vista (310) 456-2652

Bill & Jody Stump 27860 Winding Way 457-0806
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ ☒ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? Yes Was your house saved? No
Were you evacuated? Sack of Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____
Were you at home? Yes Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? No
Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? No cars were stalling & overheating on PCH
Did you have water? No!! What time did you lose water pressure? 1:00
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? Yes What time? 4:00 (just before)
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks ☒ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe _____
What kind of fire equipment _____
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? Yes, in leaving
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). 3 fire trucks - in front of our house when we left so we
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? At 4:20 the lots behind A & B
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____ Plumbing
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____ caught fire
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? No

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? there was no water with which to fight a fire

Were you successful in saving your house? No

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

WILLIAM COHEN 2129 1332 WOODRUFF AVE LA 90024 310 456 2690
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area ☒ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? yes Was your house saved? NO
Were you evacuated? yes Voluntarily? _____ By force? yes
Were you at home? * Did you try to get home? yes
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? NO
Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? yes
Did you have water? yes What time did you lose water pressure? didn't lose it
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO What time? _____
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe _____
What kind of fire equipment _____
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO - no one to ask
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). Nothing except drive by the house, never stopping
Did fire fighting units leave? yes If so, when? approx 20 minutes before fire
Why did they leave? Don't know Came to let across the street
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 3:30 - 4:30 PM
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? ~~80%~~ ?
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? 1

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? NO

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? over
Were you successful in saving your house? NO

* I was at PCH and Rambla Vista

1. As the fire app^r left the house, I drove my car with all my belongings to the corner of PCH + Ramble Vista, to park & return to the house and fight the fire. The police refused to allow me to park (there was plenty of room) and forced me into the bumper to bumper traffic on PCH & I could not return to the house.
2. My son, who was able to observe from the La Costa Beach Club, had arrived by bike. It was too hot & smoky for him to get to the house (which was about 100 yards from the PCH) but said that there was a fire truck with a fully ~~extended~~ and full hose lying on the street, about 3 houses down Ramble Vista (he rode his bike over the hose), but the truck left ^{shortly} before our house caught fire and never used its hose.

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? Yes + ^{no} more
Please explain your answer. They seem to have protected most of Malibu valiantly. However, on my street & by my house, only 2/10 of 1 mile from PCH, and with water available, released NO!! assistance from any fire fighters notwithstanding that at least 10 trucks drove past the house, and at least hundreds of fire fights and at least dozens of fire trucks were on PCH visible from my house. Also - not one helicopter dumped water or chemicals in my neighborhood (over 20% of houses destroyed).

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? yes

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? yes

Can you furnish us with fire photos NO or videos (even TV-taped) yes

Please describe: yes - a friend taped several hours of TV coverage

Other fire documentation? NO

Further comments:

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation**.

NFES

La Costa Beach

I stayed on roof of my house @ 21344 PCH (La Costa beach,
from 3:45 - 10:45 pm

My house was immediately behind central command
station

I counted approx. 55 trucks on PCH within visibility
of approx. 150-200' in each direction

Two tall homes (at or above 45' ht. limit) immediately
behind realty office and apt. building burned
one at \pm 7pm and one at \pm 8pm.

A beach house 4 doors east of me burned between
8:30 and 9:30 pm - more than 2 hours after I
first alerted firefighters to flames on beachside
deck - and where 1 or 2 fireman were spraying
roof for 1 1/2 hrs.

I noticed a minimum of 6-8 homes on La Costa hill
which burned between 6-9 pm

Ron Goldman, architect
(310) 456-1831

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

Schuyler Bourn 2036 P.C.H. 6-1062
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon ☒ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? yes Was your house saved? No

Were you evacuated? No Voluntarily? yes By force? _____

Were you at home? yes Did you try to get home? was home

Did road closures prevent you from returning home? _____

Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? yes

Did you have water? yes What time did you lose water pressure? 10 min prior

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? yes What time? 10 min to burn

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks ☒ Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment Strike Team 5 trucks

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? No

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). Leave

Did fire fighting units leave? yes If so, when? 10 to burn

Why did they leave? gave up and S.T. Bust.

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 4:30

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 75%?

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? 25%?

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? 30 min

fire went 1/3 mi to P.C.H. ran out of fuel and went back up gas flares to find fuel

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? No, it was so large

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? see above

Were you successful in saving your house? no

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

yes

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster?

no. could they? Do any of state govt know how to prepare or is it just the bureaucratic hunkles that stop the

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? No. operation.

Please explain your answer Fire Department. The first

decision is where the fire was going. Was in contact. from that point they could not re-assemble their forces. 2) why could not the pumper truck form in series and pump water on P.C.H. water as far up the hills as possible. The reason they wasn't done was no one told them in spite of the training for this situation that the dept does is the answer.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? yes.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? yes.

Can you furnish us with fire photos (1) or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments: _____

I think individual storage tanks are necessary especially pools. Community tanks & houses or ranch could pool (upon intended) together. But being how people are selfish I think individual tanks are in order, perhaps as part of the specific system.

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NFES

Sheriff Brown

Dick Guttman
18914 Pac. Coast Hyw.
Malibu, CA 90265

February 22, 1994

To the Editor
Malibu Times
Attention: Joyce Warren
FAX: 456-8986
Dear Sir,

Now that the last "Thank you, Firemen" banner has disappeared in the mudflows, I think it might be proper to voice a dissenting opinion formulated in the belly of the furnace that was Rambla Vista between 5:30 and 7:30 PM on the evening of November 2.

It was not easy to forsake the smokey safety of the La Costa stretch of PCH that eye-burning, blackened twilight. After all, there were thirty or more fire units flashing their lights, protecting that half mile stretch of concrete and the immediately adjacent houses. One felt safe. It was easy to think of good reasons not to go up into that orange hell. There would be thirty more companies up there taking care of the homes that could still be taken care of, wouldn't there? The answer.. sadly, shockingly, infuriatingly.. was NO.

Rambla Vista.. and most of the rest of our fire-gobbled only-place-to-live.. was not lost. It was abandoned. It was forsaken. It wasn't even sacrificed. Sacrifice, at least, is the mad side of religious fervor. This sorry defeat, retreat, capitulation, escape on the part of the Los Angeles County Fire Department and their unmotivated "visiting firemen" was the greatest and most conspired "scorched earth" policy since the Russians dragged Napoleon across the ashes to Moscow. What did the strategic geniuses of our Fire Command think?... that the Santa Ana winds would freeze to death in the icy oblivion of a Malibu winter?

The fact is that they didn't think. The great Rambla Vista strategy was "let's get the _____ outta here" or.. as a letter from Supervisor Edelman to Chief Manning seems to imply.. "which way to the Malibu Colony?"

It was lonely up there on that hill in the raging emotions and flames of the red tornado that blew through Rambla Vista. There were a few other nutty homeowners defying fire department threats in order to be with their homes as they went down, maybe to toss a beloved Persian rug in a pool, look for the cat. But when that blazing wind whirled through, we were alone.. a few insane castle-protectors there to mourn in lonely futility where a hundred gallons of hose-blast could have saved a home. Or the lucky ones on Paseo Serra who actually had water pressure and who were able to make a difference with their courage and sweat.

You could have counted all the real firemen up in that firestorm on the toes of your right hand. As I moved tentatively up the western slope, exhausted from the run in from Topanga where I had somehow eluded police chasing me down the beach to protect me from protecting my home, I found one unit about 100 yards up the hill, defending the succulent-covered backyard of a fireman's PCH house which already had three units securing it from the highway below.

Fifty yards further up, close enough for a quick dash back to PCH, was another unit.. City engine 241, as I recall, although memories still sting and shimmer in smoke-heat haze.. working on the house second closest to the highway, toying with a home sadly long-since lost, unwilling to venture further up into the flames that tunneled over and lapped into that winding little street of such dear recall. My entreaties at least to look at the houses further up still to be saved brought only threats of my arrest. Hell, the police could have done that for me an agony ago. I begged one honcho in a fireproof coat up to the next curve to look at all of the glory of salvation and rescue beckoning to them. He immediately saw it for what it was.. a trap. There was fire up there.

Can you really blame the County for letting the bastards burn? They wanted their goddammed city, now let 'em see what it tastes like.. cinders. Can you really blame those guys in engine 241 (if that's what it was.. and, after all, they were further up the hill than anybody else) for not wanting to go deeper into the blast furnace? A few hours ago, several other units had wandered.. ignorant of geography, absent of direction.. up slide-blocked Rambla Pacifico and had become trapped. Where is the Thomas Guide when you really need it? Where is Chief Manning? Taking care of the Colony and the school and Hughes? I mean, we're talking tax-base here. We're talking major campaign donations. Politicians have their feet to this fire. Whose tootsies are we going to let burn if burned-tootsies it must be? This is Armageddon.. somebody's got to eat it. What are these peasants doing up here anyway?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

Angela DeVargas 3375 Rambla Pacifico 456-1351
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

☐ Serra Retreat Area ☐ Sweetwater Mesa Area
☐ Carbon Mesa Area ☐ La Costa Area
☐ Upper Rambla Pacifico ☐ Las Flores Mesa
☐ Upper Las Flores Canyon ☐ Lower Las Flores Canyon
☐ Big Rock ☐ Topanga
☐ West Saddle Peak/Pioma ☐ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
☐ Monte Nido. Other, please specify Rambla Pacifico @ Sumac Ridge

Did your house burn? yes Was your house saved? _____
Were you evacuated? evacuated Voluntarily? yes By force? _____
Were you at home? no, but got there Did you try to get home? yes _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? no _____
Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? yes _____
Did you have water? yes What time did you lose water pressure? didn't _____
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? never What time? _____
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe no trucks _____
What kind of fire equipment none _____
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? there were none around _____
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). never saw one _____
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? they never showed up. _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? it had to be after 3:30 PM _____
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? ? _____
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? all but a couple _____
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? ? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? no _____

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? I felt it my duty to _____

Were you successful in saving your house? no _____
help my elderly landlady, who has respiratory problems, evacuate before the smoke got too thick. This was a concern as we had to drive back/up towards the fire to get to the highway. Also, over

the electricity went dead around 11 PM so my telephone (link to outside) went dead also.

In the midst of trying to grab a few things of mine and there a helicopter flew over head warning us about the hearing danger.

the electricity went dead around 11 PM so my telephone (link to outside) went dead also.

In the midst of trying to grab a few things of mine and there a helicopter flew over head warning us about the hearing danger.

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

no not arrested, I don't think, but, it warned us of the danger.

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? no

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? no. I believe

Please explain your answer the County with the suggestion of the fire dept. should have claimed the private dirt road that goes from behind the Cal-Trans station to Deeppath Ln. a long time ago & improved it with paving & proper radius & drainage. to support emergency fire truck. Use! Not to mention, citizen evacuation! I believe it to be selfish of the few neighbors whom own the road to not consider their neighbors! I also believe that the fire could have been stopped a lot sooner than to just let it run its course. over

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? if I would have had some help.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? yes

Can you furnish us with fire photos ☒ or videos (even TV-taped)

Please describe: my friend Chip Booth has footage of the fire

~~Other fire documentation?~~ from when it was still on the

Further comments: other side of Stunt Rd. He heard about it [the fire] and rushed up there w/ his video camera... Why didn't the fire men hear about it & rush up with their trucks?

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation**.

NFES

Proper fire mgmt. would have ~~been~~ make it much more controlable. ① The initial onset of the fire would have been doused with water from the heavy planes sitting on the ground @ Pt. Mugu. If KFWB news radio knew about the fire @ 11AM (or earlier). Those planes could have been sent to help while it was still early. ② Fire trucks/teams should have been sent up the canyon earlier. It seems they had no sense of an attack the problem mode and more of a "save yourself" attitude & watching attitude... "Yep, that's fire, look @ it!" ③ Alarm, warning system should be established. For instance, I'm sure Lost Hills Sheriff station & various fire stations knew of the fire shortly after its onset. One of my neighbors was shopping in Hughes Market for 2 hours after the fire started. Can't the sheriffs or fire dept. make calls to at least the grocery stores & ^{other} major public gathering places ~~and~~ fire, to give people a chance to get @ least some things & save animals? ④ Emergency salt/ocean water pumps should be set up @ places like Sealion, Moonshadows, Topanga Beach, Chantouse, Carlos Pepe's, etc or @ least mandatorily stored & quarterly inspected @ these places

LACO Pub lites
- 458-5100
Operational Serv
Tech. Serv. -
#58-1700
Traffic & Lighting
Investigations
i - 5909
9.66 or Pat.

11-2-93 Arrived approx. 12 noon at Rambla Pacifico. News reports said fire was at Saddle Peak—heading NW.

Soaked down roof, filled plastic trash cans with water on roof—turned off gas to building at 2:00—at least 10 fire trucks came up the road, and turned around. Trucks with lots of guys (Conservation -----) arrived at tennis courts and sat there—I took pictures.

Packed some pictures and files in my car, Rick Wallace and Steve Spinass, car also, fire trucks, police continued to drive up the road and turn around, 20 or 30 more at approx. 4:00 the fire appeared on the ridge behind us—took some art and had the -----leave the area. (All this time we continued to wet the roof and stairs—filled buckets with water.)

At approx. 5:00 we had to leave—the flames came over the ridge directly behind the building and catching the homes on fire. Steve and Scott went back to water down the house, flames coming over their heads. They went back to the cars at the tennis courts and then got—tried to get—two engine trucks at the bottom of Rambla to go up. They refused to go back. Flames almost engulfed the cars with flames. Steve and Scott left the parking lot to the first set of garages—there were two engine companies -----. Fire trucks were at the base of Rambla Pacifico (diagram enclosed) and command truck. The trucks went up the road in smoke—then backed out. They gave up—didn't even probably see the buildings.

I in the meantime left and checked Courtney's car—then went over to the Sea Lion restaurant. The flames were all the way to the Post Office. I left the Sea Lion, went to Moonshadows then to 20058 PCH, Kurasch residence. Made phone calls—then approx. 6:00 we walked down the highway to see the fire and moved my car to 19214 PCH and drove Steve's back to Big Rock and walked back to 20058 PCH. We walked back down the beach—through the smoke and cinders (all homes there evacuated). We went up through a property near the Sea Lion and walked across the street at Rambla Pacifico. I could not see my building from that spot so we headed up the road. We were stopped by two firemen. I told them I wanted see if my home made it and if it did I could get my daughter's car keys. They refused to let us go further and were quite adamant about it. They put us in a Highway Patrol car—then took us back to Big Rock Drive (through embers where the fire had moved to).

All along PCH were hundreds of fire trucks, approx. one for each property. People were serving drinks and food to the firemen. There was a lot of activity—especially the news media. I was very upset because with hundreds of trucks—at least one could have been protecting my property—especially since I didn't know for sure if it had caught on fire.

Suzanne Lee Clarke
3855 Rambla Pacifico

I helped Lee [Clarke] for a few minutes in the early afternoon as the fire approached. By 5:00 I too was scrambling as the fire got closer, and by 5:45 was out of my place with flames across the street. I heard from Kathy down the beach at about 7:00 that Lee's place had burned down—somebody had seen it burning on TV. I wasn't surprised, but so sorry to hear it. I snuck back to my place at about 7:30 and just stayed close by. Lee called me at about 9:00 and I told her I was sorry about her place. She mentioned she had tried to get back there earlier but was turned away. She asked if I could go up there and check it out. She told me to page her all 9s if it was okay. I asked what if it is gone—I suggested all 6s like the devil.

Soon after, my car wouldn't start due to an electrical problem that occurs at times, so I jumped in Mei's, still full of boxes, and drove near to Las Flores Canyon. There was virtually no activity by police or fire there at the time, at about 9:15. I walked up Rambla Pacifico in pure darkness except for the moon and orange cinders in the hills all around. The power was out, it was very quiet. Around the one small bend I could see small orange light against the hill behind the apartment building—I thought it was the last remnants of the fire, but as I walked closer it looked like the building was still standing as well as the house next door. I was a little confused, especially when I heard a radio on. Up the driveway I could hear KNX and I thought somebody was there, and I still wondered if the inside of the walls had burned. Up the patio, I yelled "Is anybody here?" and was a little scared. Then I realized the fire in the back of the building against the hill was just the beginning of the building starting to burn!

I ran down the driveway, and as fast as I could, down the street to PCH. Two fire trucks were now in front of the Albatross in its final burning and as the driver of one was getting in to pull away, I yelled that I just checked on a friend's place and it was just starting to burn. He told me to walk up the street and they'd head up. As I ran up Rambla Pacifico, two fire trucks passed me and went to the end to turn around. Up on the driveway it seemed forever for them to turn around and I heard a smoke alarm go off! I couldn't believe it—I had gotten there just in time!

The two trucks pulled up on the street (other fire officials came up the street in pickup-size trucks) and the firemen started to pull hoses out and prepare to fight it. I walked from the patio as it started to consume the whole back wall and the alarm continued. After 5 long minutes they had the lines set to start blasting away and blew out a path to the back side. I was yelling information that the stairway divided the building in two and they could save the front two units.

I climbed up the embankment and up the hill level with the roof as they entered the top right unit with a hose and were blasting away. They only had one hose and I believe as the fire burned strong up the back and part way into the back units. Suddenly, a helicopter approached from 200 feet coming up the canyon with a large searchlight. To my surprise it made a direct hit on the fire with a large load of water that snuffed out at least half the blaze. It hit me that they were going to save it!

I was sure Lee's unit wouldn't even be damaged and the back two units could be repaired without too much reconstruction. The helicopter circled again and approached and this time I was ready for the water. It seemed to wait an instant longer and I could see the drop above me. It was a direct hit again—on me!! For 4 or 5 long seconds it hammered at me hard and totally drenched me, knocking me a couple of feet down the hill in the slop. But I looked up and the fire was out!

As the helicopter headed out, I scrambled down the hill and wiped out making the jump onto the patio. The firemen continued to work from inside the top unit and having entered the bottom unit by this time too, and around the back where I noticed the stairway had burned, leaving no access to the roof. Some fire started up again in the upper corner of the top right unit, but it still seemed small and 90 % of

the building was unburned. I went out and asked one guy where they were from (Orange County) and got the firetruck #s (E221 and E220) so I could tell Lee who saved her building and she could send some thanks. I wondered how I was going to report this to Lee on the pager—I guessed I would just punch in 6-9-6—9-6-9 ... to the pager. I went up behind the house and got up on the wall behind the little yard and straddled the chain link fence and noticed the fire was gaining some momentum again on the roof. I yelled to the firemen mostly in the patio area who could not see it. While they seemed to take some time to react, it started up the top master bedroom walls that I had helped hose down 9 hours earlier. It was now about 10:00 though I didn't have a watch with me.

The fire was now consuming all the wall of the top bedroom as I yelled several times they had to go through the top left unit and through the living room to get to uppermost floor. It took them a long time to put together extra line and a couple times they went in but came out confused. With a portion of the master starting to burn now, they finally went in and stayed in and I watched for evidence they were knocking it down or at least restricting the fire to the top bedrooms. I still hoped all but the master would be saved from the front units. But they were losing the battle. After about 15 minutes I saw them coming down the stairs in a slight panic and starting to count heads. My heart absolutely sank. No! It was saved, don't lose it now. I heard one guy yell they'll just have to fight it from the outside. I got down and started watching from the driveway, hoping not to see any flame coming into the living room. For a long time, I didn't. But the dining area window broke and smoke starting coming out. After a long while, 10 or 15 minutes, they started positioning a hose on the east end from the empty lot and one on the top balcony of the adjacent house. On occasion the balcony hose would shoot water, but mainly a guy was trying to fight it from the ground with the top bedroom becoming engulfed.

I was so frustrated they were losing it and I talked with firefighter at one time. He told me they couldn't save it and they were going to just defend the house. I spoke with another guy who just said they didn't have enough pressure or manpower. He said a building of that size on fire would usually bring 12 large trucks and he pointed out they only had one "large" one and two smaller ones. (One other had come onto the scene.)

I watched for a long time—maybe a half hour—usually from the street between the trucks hoping the one hose would keep it from getting into Lee's living room, but noticing 1) it takes a very long time for wood and a wall to burn, and 2) it takes a lot of water to put it out. At one time I saw a cameraman come up and walked around to him to see he had a KCAL channel 9. I asked him if he had a reporter with him. He didn't answer, but a second later somebody called for him and he ran down the road. The other guy said "Let's go live!" I guessed it was near 11:00. I continued to watch a long time as the one guy fought the fire from the ocean side but it started into the living room. It took a long time to burn. When I finally left, the bottom three windows were still dark in the lower unit. Upstairs, the left two windows of the dining room and kitchen were in flames and the back bedroom hadn't been hit yet. I couldn't bear to watch longer. I walked to my car, drove short of my place and parked up the street cause of commotion as a house on the hillside of PCH was on fire, and walked the last part to my condo. Eerily, my car lights were on, shining across the street, apparently the electrical problem resolved. I went upstairs and paged Lee.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

ED STALCUP 3443 RAMBLA PACIFICO 310-456-5302
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

____ Serra Retreat Area ____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
____ Carbon Mesa Area ____ ☒ La Costa Area
____ Upper Rambla Pacifico ____ Las Flores Mesa
____ Upper Las Flores Canyon ____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
____ Big Rock ____ Topanga
____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma ____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? ☒ Was your house saved? _____

Were you evacuated? No Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____

Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____

Did road closures prevent you from returning home? No

Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach
your area? No

Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? _____

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? No What time? _____

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment _____

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NONE THERE

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more
details). _____

Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 3:00-4:00 ?

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save
it? I STAYED UNTIL FIRE STORM HIT. THERE WERE NO FIRE TRUCKS AROUND.

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? SO I SOAKED MYSELF

Were you successful in saving your house? No AND WALKED DOWN THE HILL.

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO - DIDN'T SEE ANY HELICOPTERS. HEARD
NOBODY SAYING TO EVACUATE. NOBODY AROUND.

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? NO But
Please explain your answer IT WAS THE FAULT OF THE COUNTY
FOR NOT HAVING RAMBLA PACIFICO OPEN AND THE CITY
FOR NOT HAVING AN ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY AND
THE STATE FOR NOT HAVING THE SUPER SCOOPERS.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE IN THIS
FIRE STORM WITH NO FIRE TRUCKS AND WATER.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos____or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments: _____

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
~~Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403~~ P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
 (310) 456-2652

Name (optional)	Address (optional)	Phone
-----------------	--------------------	-------

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
 My house is/~~was~~ in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido.	Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? Damage to decks only. Was your house saved? Yes
 Were you evacuated? No Voluntarily? — By force? —
 Were you at home? Yes Did you try to get home? Yes
 Did road closures prevent you from returning home? No. I beat them to it.
 Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? No. Rambla Pacifico prevented adequate access.
 Did you have water? No What time did you lose water pressure? 2 or 3 PM
 Did fire fighter units arrive to help? No What time? —
 What color units? Yellow trucks — Red trucks — Green trucks —
 Other color trucks? Please describe —

What kind of fire equipment —
 Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? —
 What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). The units on Rambla Pacifico left before the fire arrived. They did nothing.
 Did fire fighting units leave? Yes If so, when? just before the fire hit
 Why did they leave? Approaching flames scared them off.
 Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 4 PM? Can't remember.
 What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 10%
 What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? 90%
 How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? Up to 12 hours later.

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? Yes

If yes, why? I had a pool pump If no, why not? —

Were you successful in saving your house? Yes

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

No. They were telling people to get out though.

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? Not at all.

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? Absolutely not.

Please explain your answer. No helicopter water drops. No water in pipes.

Fire trucks on Rambla Pacifico left before the fire hit & never returned to the area. Did not see a fire truck for 2 days after the fire. Most houses in my area burned because there was no follow-up by fire trucks. Total confusion reigned. The trucks on Rambla were not local & had no idea where they were. There were many open safe areas where they could have waited out the passing of the head of the fire. They seemed to have no plan at all. Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? I did.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? Yes.

Can you furnish us with fire photos _____ or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments: _____

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

John Hancock, 21531 Deep Path 456-3627
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ ☒ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? yes Was your house saved? NO
Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____
Were you at home? yes Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? NO
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? NO
Did you have water? yes What time did you lose water pressure? 5-10 minutes
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NEVER What time? before fire got there
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe None
What kind of fire equipment Nothing, no choppers, no trucks
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). _____
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 4:30
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? Don't know
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? Don't know
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? yes, until just before fire got there
If yes, why? Had gas pump + pool If no, why not? Pump too small
+ running out of gas, fire too big
Were you successful in saving your house? NO

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain.

Yes

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

No

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? No

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? No

Please explain your answer. Disorganized, passive, didn't know the area, valued their equipment more highly than our houses. Many appeared to be having a profound experience of the power of nature rather than fighting the fire. All prep + no fight. McEllen comes to mind.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? I think so -- if I had the equipment.

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? I guess. If it would include the right to protect our homes with controlled burns before the fire starts.

Can you furnish us with fire photos no or videos (even TV-taped) no

Please describe:

Other fire documentation?

Further comments:

Re-open Rambla Ben sure but:

If my comments above don't make it clear that I think big changes are needed in the fire command + guidelines + prep, let me remove any doubt.

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NFES

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SAVING CASHIN RESIDENCE DURING MALIBU FIRE

1. Brush was cleared 200 foot down the slope. No woodpiles or debris had collected around house. Landscape plants are very low profile near house.
2. Roof has class A fire rated fiberglass/composition shingles.
3. Eaves are stuccoed. Areas under decks are also stuccoed.
4. Decks have class B fire rated surfaces.
5. Aluminum roll down shutters were installed over windows and doors. Model US-60 slats withstand 1500 degrees Farenheit temperatures and 140 mph winds.
Manufacturer-Roll-A-Way, St. Petersburg, Florida.
Local Rep-Charlies Sales-818-330-7433
6. A 1600 gallon water tank (6feet diameter & 8feet tall) was installed at a high point on the property to permit a gravity feed of water if gas powered pump fails. Sprinkler system on lower part of lot was connected to tank to circulate water through tank and prevent fungus buildup.
Tank Manufacturer-B & H Tank-800-221-9751.
7. A gas powered fire pump and 150 feet of fire hose was available to water down roof and decks just before fire arrived and also to put out fires after the firestorm passed.
Pump & Hose Supplier-Grainger-818-341-2808 (they also stock pool fire pumps) Alternate-Kolbe Honda-818-348-7865.
8. I stayed with house during fire in order to put out spot fires. The firestorm passed in just a few minutes leaving several railroad ties and the wood fence in flames. I restarted the pump and put out the fires. It was necessary to continually put out flareups all during the night. Before the fire came I moved the propane barbeque tank and other combustible materials away from the house. The openings that did not have shutters were covered with plywood.

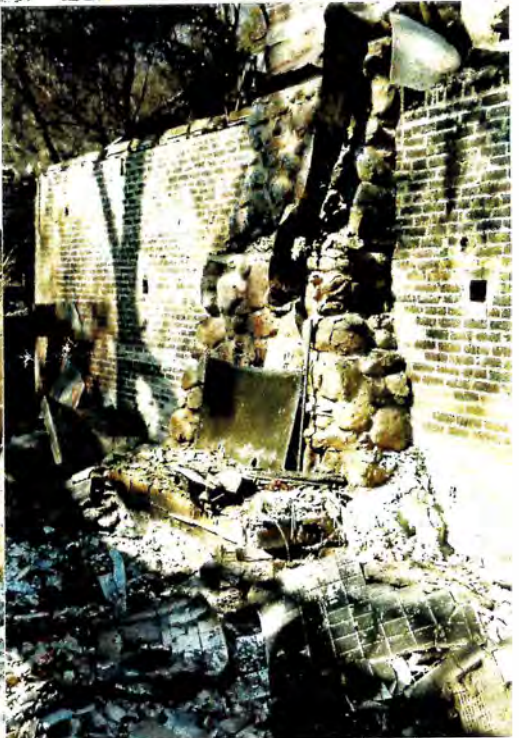
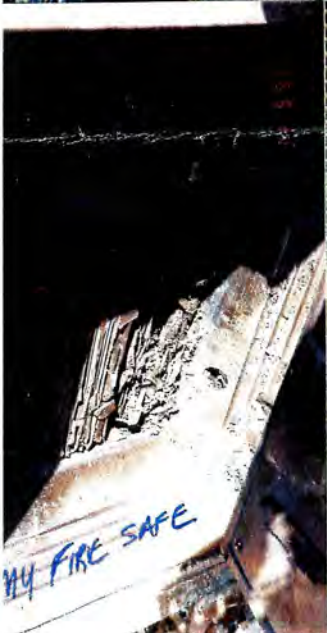
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SAVING CASHIN RESIDENCE DURING MALIBU FIRE

1. Brush was cleared 200 foot down the slope. No woodpiles or debris had collected around house. Landscape plants are very low profile near house.
2. Roof has class A fire rated fiberglass/composition shingles.
3. Eaves are stuccoed. Areas under decks are also stuccoed.
4. Decks have class B fire rated surfaces.
5. Aluminum roll down shutters were installed over windows and doors. Model US-60 slats withstand 1500 degrees Farenheit temperatures and 140 mph winds.
Manufacturer-Roll-A-Way, St. Petersburg, Florida.
Local Rep-Charlies Sales-818-330-7433
6. A 1600 gallon water tank (6feet diameter & 8feet tall) was installed at a high point on the property to permit a gravity feed of water if gas powered pump fails. Sprinkler system on lower part of lot was connected to tank to circulate water through tank and prevent fungus buildup.
Tank Manufacturer-B & H Tank-800-221-9751.
7. A gas powered fire pump and 150 feet of fire hose was available to water down roof and decks just before fire arrived and also to put out fires after the firestorm passed.
Pump & Hose Supplier-Grainger-818-341-2808 (they also stock pool fire pumps) Alternate-Kolbe Honda-818-348-7865.
8. I stayed with house during fire in order to put out spot fires. The firestorm passed in just a few minutes leaving several railroad ties and the wood fence in flames. I restarted the pump and put out the fires. It was necessary to continually put out flareups all during the night. Before the fire came I moved the propane barbeque tank and other combustible materials away from the house. The openings that did not have shutters were covered with plywood.



The Day AFTER
November 3rd
1993

The Korthouse 1906-1993





11:00 AM



12:00 pm



2:00 pm



3:00 pm



3:45 pm



4:15 pm



4:40 pm



4:20 pm

November 8, 1993

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers during these last few days.

Unfortunately, this is not the type of newsletter we would want to write. The Malibu fire took everything we had - except our lives. Our house is a total loss; yet, we are both safe, healthy, and strong enough to go forward with our lives.

To give you all a clear and complete story, our diary of events below says it all:

November 2, 1993

I had just returned from the Tribal Indian Show in St. Louis, MO. when I received a phone call at my office (about 10:15 am) telling me that there was a new fire in Calabasas, which is the backside of Los Flores Canyon where we live. I immediately checked with the Malibu Sheriffs Office and heard that the fire was 100% contained and not to worry.

11:15 AM I just happened to glance toward the mountain range surrounding Malibu and saw miles and miles of smoke. John, a fellow who works with me, and I immediately took off in my car towards the cabin. We found ourselves narrowly getting through the roadblocks that the sheriffs department were setting up to keep people out of what was now a *major* fire zone.

12:00 NOON We were working at priming the pumps and successfully had water flowing to the 5,000 gallon tank located on the hill above our house. I had constructed this water tank only six months ago, just for this eventuality. I have to admit that once John and I had water flowing out of four different sprinklers on the roof, we were somewhat at ease and pretty confident that the house was safe. But to be on the side of caution, we took time to load a few major, framed manuscripts into my car.

2:00 PM We saw flames appearing at the top of canyon above the house, but still felt very confident that our house, that had escaped seven previous fires, would be a survivor. While we sat on the roof listening to the radio reports of the fire moving toward us, we heard low flying helicopters sounding the evacuation sirens. Things were starting to appear more severe. Winds had risen to 50 - 70 miles per hour!

3:00 PM Electricity and phones were gone! Flames could be seen two blocks away on the last ridge before our ravine. Since our house cannot be seen from the road, our neighbor had sent down one of the fire engines to our house. A three-man team instructed us on helping them disburse hose, and we started to foam the entire structure.

3:45 PM Foaming was completed and the team leader, out of the blue, looked up on the hill 500 feet away and saw a 100' wall of flame heading directly toward us. He yelled "Code Red", the order for immediate evacuation. While John and I were still up on the roof with our hoses, I saw the team leader take a razor knife and cut the hoses from the fire truck so that they could leave immediately. I **now** knew that this was possibly the end of our fight to save the cabin. We could not stay any longer because the heat and smoke were so overpowering. On my way down the stairs, I grabbed the John Kennedy Presidential Cup and ran out the door just in time to see a 300' fire tornado coming down Little Los Flores Canyon.

4:15 PM We all retreated to my neighbor's newly-constructed house, located at the top of our driveway. John left the area in his van. I stayed behind with my neighbor Gus, who wanted to stay with his home.

4:30 PM It was just us - Gus, his cat, and I. We took shelter from the advancing firestorm in an underground, concrete fire vault. From inside the fire vault we could look out through a small, screened opening. It was as if someone turned off a light switch at night. It was completely **pitch black**, except for red embers swirling rapidly through the air in small funnel clouds. We quickly recognized the rapid flow of air loss, because the fire was feeding on the air we were breathing. It was sucking all the oxygen from the vault through the little vent opening. I immediately took the towel from my face and shoved it into the vent opening, stopping the air flow. Now all we could do was wait.

4:45 PM We removed the towel and looked outside - total devastation. We saw plumes of smoke, charred remains of trees, billows of smoke, and black skies with red embers flying everywhere. I couldn't wait to look down our driveway to see if the house was still there.

4:55 PM We realized that the fire storm had passed. Luckily, Gus was extremely prepared. We kicked on his generator, positioned his two inch fire hose, and started the pump. We had the whole swimming pool behind us as a reservoir.

5:30 PM We successfully hit all the major hot spots on the house and then concentrated on the next perimeter of trees and stacked firewood. Once I felt confident of laying down the hose for five or ten minutes, I walked across the road to the top of our driveway to view our home which was fully engulfed in flames. All I could hear was my windows breaking and some ammunition going off. There was nothing I could do!! I couldn't even bear to witness the devastation of our family home that was built in 1906.

5:45 PM I returned to Gus's to see that all of the fires we thought were out had reignited. So, back to the fire hose for the next three hours.

9:00 PM Even though the neighboring canyons were still fully engulfed and flames were visible from Gorge Road, we felt very confident that this situation at Gus's house was under control.

10:00 PM I realized that Karan was at my parents' house and I needed to call her. Cellular phones were the only way to communicate, but to use my cellular phone, I had to drive to the top of Los Flores to get a signal. However, downed power lines were everywhere, making the road impassable. I was able to find a cable cutter and successfully severed enough of the lines to get through to the top of Los Flores Canyon.

10:30 PM I reached Karan, Mom, and Dad on the phone and told them that I was in one piece, but the house was completely gone and we had lost everything.

10:45 PM I tried to make it out of the canyon, but numerous, downed power poles were blocking access.

11:00 PM I took the next three hours trying to find an exit, while viewing the devastation of hundreds of homes still burning.

2:00 AM I found refuge in one of my neighbor's homes and slept in the basement.

5:30 AM I hardly slept, anxiously awaiting daylight.

6:00 AM 100 Gorge Road was devastated, even more than I could imagine.

These were the longest twenty-four hours of our lives! We will never forget any minute!

Karan and I are working toward making some positive decisions about our future.

Words cannot express our gratitude for all of the prayers, phone calls, and support.

Thank you.

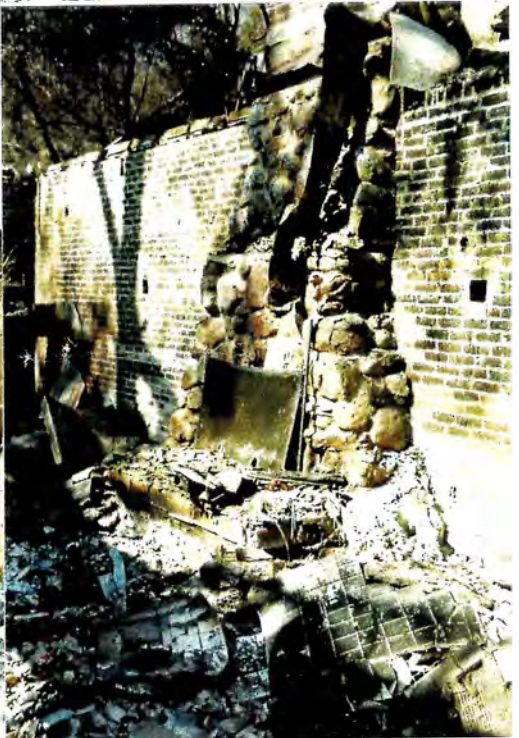
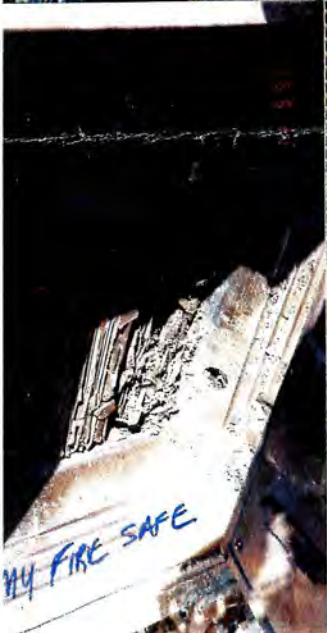


PS We can be reached at:
Chris's parents' 818/785-4334 (We got a private line in Van Nuys.)
Karan's pager 310/998-1253. (Please include your area code.)
Chris's pager 310/587-5926. (Please include your area code.)

Mail can be sent to: 4058 Del Rey Avenue
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292



The Day AFTER
November 3rd
1993
The Korthouse 1906-1993





11:00 AM



12:00 pm



2:00 pm



3:00 pm



3:45 pm



4:15 pm



4:40 pm



4:20 pm

November 8, 1993

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers during these last few days.

Unfortunately, this is not the type of newsletter we would want to write. The Malibu fire took everything we had - except our lives. Our house is a total loss; yet, we are both safe, healthy, and strong enough to go forward with our lives.

To give you all a clear and complete story, our diary of events below says it all:

November 2, 1993

I had just returned from the Tribal Indian Show in St. Louis, MO. when I received a phone call at my office (about 10:15 am) telling me that there was a new fire in Calabasas, which is the backside of Los Flores Canyon where we live. I immediately checked with the Malibu Sheriffs Office and heard that the fire was 100% contained and not to worry.

11:15 AM I just happened to glance toward the mountain range surrounding Malibu and saw miles and miles of smoke. John, a fellow who works with me, and I immediately took off in my car towards the cabin. We found ourselves narrowly getting through the roadblocks that the sheriffs department were setting up to keep people out of what was now a *major* fire zone.

12:00 NOON We were working at priming the pumps and successfully had water flowing to the 5,000 gallon tank located on the hill above our house. I had constructed this water tank only six months ago, just for this eventuality. I have to admit that once John and I had water flowing out of four different sprinklers on the roof, we were somewhat at ease and pretty confident that the house was safe. But to be on the side of caution, we took time to load a few major, framed manuscripts into my car.

2:00 PM We saw flames appearing at the top of canyon above the house, but still felt very confident that our house, that had escaped seven previous fires, would be a survivor. While we sat on the roof listening to the radio reports of the fire moving toward us, we heard low flying helicopters sounding the evacuation sirens. Things were starting to appear more severe. Winds had risen to 50 - 70 miles per hour!

3:00 PM Electricity and phones were gone! Flames could be seen two blocks away on the last ridge before our ravine. Since our house cannot be seen from the road, our neighbor had sent down one of the fire engines to our house. A three-man team instructed us on helping them disburse hose, and we started to foam the entire structure.

3:45 PM Foaming was completed and the team leader, out of the blue, looked up on the hill 500 feet away and saw a 100' wall of flame heading directly toward us. He yelled "Code Red", the order for immediate evacuation. While John and I were still up on the roof with our hoses, I saw the team leader take a razor knife and cut the hoses from the fire truck so that they could leave immediately. I **now** knew that this was possibly the end of our fight to save the cabin. We could not stay any longer because the heat and smoke were so overpowering. On my way down the stairs, I grabbed the John Kennedy Presidential Cup and ran out the door just in time to see a 300' fire tornado coming down Little Los Flores Canyon.

4:15 PM We all retreated to my neighbor's newly-constructed house, located at the top of our driveway. John left the area in his van. I stayed behind with my neighbor Gus, who wanted to stay with his home.

4:30 PM It was just us - Gus, his cat, and I. We took shelter from the advancing firestorm in an underground, concrete fire vault. From inside the fire vault we could look out through a small, screened opening. It was as if someone turned off a light switch at night. It was completely **pitch black**, except for red embers swirling rapidly through the air in small funnel clouds. We quickly recognized the rapid flow of air loss, because the fire was feeding on the air we were breathing. It was sucking all the oxygen from the vault through the little vent opening. I immediately took the towel from my face and shoved it into the vent opening, stopping the air flow. Now all we could do was wait.

4:45 PM We removed the towel and looked outside - total devastation. We saw plumes of smoke, charred remains of trees, billows of smoke, and black skies with red embers flying everywhere. I couldn't wait to look down our driveway to see if the house was still there.

4:55 PM We realized that the fire storm had passed. Luckily, Gus was extremely prepared. We kicked on his generator, positioned his two inch fire hose, and started the pump. We had the whole swimming pool behind us as a reservoir.

5:30 PM We successfully hit all the major hot spots on the house and then concentrated on the next perimeter of trees and stacked firewood. Once I felt confident of laying down the hose for five or ten minutes, I walked across the road to the top of our driveway to view our home which was fully engulfed in flames. All I could hear was my windows breaking and some ammunition going off. There was nothing I could do!! I couldn't even bear to witness the devastation of our family home that was built in 1906.

5:45 PM I returned to Gus's to see that all of the fires we thought were out had reignited. So, back to the fire hose for the next three hours.

9:00 PM Even though the neighboring canyons were still fully engulfed and flames were visible from Gorge Road, we felt very confident that this situation at Gus's house was under control.

10:00 PM I realized that Karan was at my parents' house and I needed to call her. Cellular phones were the only way to communicate, but to use my cellular phone, I had to drive to the top of Los Flores to get a signal. However, downed power lines were everywhere, making the road impassable. I was able to find a cable cutter and successfully severed enough of the lines to get through to the top of Los Flores Canyon.

10:30 PM I reached Karan, Mom, and Dad on the phone and told them that I was in one piece, but the house was completely gone and we had lost everything.

10:45 PM I tried to make it out of the canyon, but numerous, downed power poles were blocking access.

11:00 PM I took the next three hours trying to find an exit, while viewing the devastation of hundreds of homes still burning.

2:00 AM I found refuge in one of my neighbor's homes and slept in the basement.

5:30 AM I hardly slept, anxiously awaiting daylight.

6:00 AM 100 Gorge Road was devastated, even more than I could imagine.

These were the longest twenty-four hours of our lives! We will never forget any minute!

Karan and I are working toward making some positive decisions about our future.

Words cannot express our gratitude for all of the prayers, phone calls, and support.

Thank you.



PS We can be reached at:
Chris's parents' 818/785-4334 (We got a private line in Van Nuys.)
Karan's pager 310/998-1253. (Please include your area code.)
Chris's pager 310/587-5926. (Please include your area code.)

Mail can be sent to: 4058 Del Rey Avenue
Marina Del Rey, CA 90292

We went to the Sea Lion parking lot where there was a ROW OF FIRE RIGS PARKED. Both Jason (my grandson) and I told them that there were at least 30 people trapped up on the Mesa which was CLEARLY BLAZING BY THEN. They looked at me and said: "Lady, get out of your car and start walking down the highway." That was it. Nobody made any effort to try to save the homes on the Mesa or to protect the residents. We have never been given a satisfactory reason for this inaction. They must have decided to just let our homes burn. We lost everything! There was not a trace of any usable objects left when we finally went back the next day to see what had happened. We were very fortunate that no injuries occurred. Elderly women in their 80's were forced to hike down a trail at the end of our cul-de-sac and a few even had to go down the cliff by rope, hand over hand. Of the over forty beautiful homes on the Upper and Lower Las Flores Mesa, only 9 or 10 remain. This is inexcusable.

My husband was informed by a ham radio operator, that the head security officer at Pepperdine University who is also a ham radio operator, reported hearing a request over the air to send a helicopter to the second major canyon East of Malibu Canyon to warn the residents of the fire direction, and to evacuate. The second major canyon East of Malibu Canyon is Las Flores Canyon. Apparently the pilot was confused as to where he was and instead warned the students at Pepperdine to evacuate their dormitories. Ironically, the students had already evacuated into the Field House and were completely safe.

Sincerely,

Constance M. Cornett

THE SOUTHLAND FIRESTORM: HOLDING THE LINE :

Preparedness, Not Luck, Saved Home : Fire safety: Owner of a house overlooking steep canyon built in careful precautions, including a 12,000-gallon water supply and high-pressure nozzles.

Bob Pool. Los Angeles Times Nov. 5, 1993

Louis Hill was sitting on the porch of his Las Flores Canyon home Thursday when a firefighter rode by and flashed a thumbs-up at him.

"You're lucky," firefighter Keith Carlson shouted as his engine rumbled past.

But luck had nothing to do with why Hill was relaxing at his house when virtually all of his neighbors were homeless.

The 84-year-old mountain man had meticulously built his house on Las Flores Heights Road to survive the kind of fire that roared through the canyon three days earlier--the kind that had burned down his parents' home on the same land half a century ago.

Besides using fire-resistant plants and a non-combustible roof, Hill had built his own miniature fire station. It was made of concrete and equipped with a 100-foot fire hose, high-pressure nozzles, a gasoline-powered pump and valves connected to a 12,000-gallon water tank designed to never be less than half-full.

He had designed plywood shutters--complete with handles for easy carrying and labels to tell him which shutter went on which window--for his entire two-story, four-bedroom home. He had a dozen 50-gallon plastic trash cans scattered outside the house. Each was filled with water and had a burlap bag hanging on it.

Before planning his house across the canyon from a spectacular grove of oaks and about 500 feet above year-round, spring-fed Las Flores Creek, Hill read every book on fire safety he could find. He enrolled in a fire safety seminar conducted by one of Southern California's top wildfire experts. In class, he took good notes.

My parents built a little cabin up here back in 1927 when I was a 12-year-old," Hill said. "I loved that place. But it burned down in a big fire in 1943. And that really drove home the need for fire protection for me."

Las Flores Canyon could not be more susceptible to brush fires.

Its sides are steep, fanning out from towering Saddle Peak down to the ocean. Santa Ana winds that whistle down the canyon each autumn are almost guaranteed to send brush fires that start in Calabasas or Agoura through the area.

Hill's 3 1/2 acres are among the steepest in the canyon. He has a small, flat pad for the house, which overlooks a sheer drop-off. That means that fire in the canyon below is likely to shoot up the hillside like a rocket.

So Hill built his house out of stucco in 1978. He made its roof from concrete tiles. Its eaves were enclosed. All of its vents were designed to be shut at a moment's notice.

He planted fire-resistant cactus and coyote brush to stabilize the slope beneath the house. Ice plant was placed in flat areas that were not paved. He removed the site's eucalyptus shade trees and replaced them with fire-resistant fruit trees and grapevines. His woodpile was carefully positioned downwind from the two-story house.

When this week's Santa Ana winds kicked up, Hill and his wife, Lyllis, 69, began placing the shutters on the windows. Ground-level shutters covered the windows on the outside, but the upstairs shutters had been designed to fit on the inside of the glass so Hill wouldn't have to climb a ladder.

When the fire broke out Tuesday morning, Hill's longtime friend, Michael Tellesfson, 34, rushed to the canyon to see if the couple needed help. Tellesfson is a heating and air-conditioning technician who as a teenager helped Hill build the house.

When the smoke became too dense to breathe, Tellesfson urged the couple to leave. He stayed behind and started up the Hills' pump. When the fire roared over the house, Tellesfson ran inside.

"I checked the rooms with a flashlight for sparks. The wind was rocking the house. It sounded like a jet engine," he said Thursday. "I was shaking and praying. But in about 10 minutes, the main fire had passed."

Tellesfson ran out and used Hill's fire hose on blazing trees and brush. Where the hose could not reach, he used the wet burlap bags to slap out flames. For 10 hours he ran from place to place, putting out sparks and using up most of the water from the trash cans.

As hundreds of other evacuated Malibu mountain residents were returning with trepidation Thursday to see if their homes were standing, the Hills were confident.

"I would have been very surprised if it wasn't there," Hill said. "We tried to do everything right."

Wildlands management and environmental safety expert Klaus Radtke says Hill did things perfectly.

Radtke, of Pacific Palisades, is a former Los Angeles County forester who taught the 1978 seminar Hill attended. He is also the author of a fire safety pamphlet that has been distributed over the past 10 years to thousands of mountain residents.

"With his location, if anyone should have lost their house, it was him," said Radtke--who was curious enough to hike five miles up the canyon Wednesday afternoon to see for himself whether the Hill house had survived.

Canyon neighbor Wilmer Lewis, 78, stopped by to congratulate Hill on Thursday afternoon after returning to find his own home of 22 years destroyed.

"He did a good job preparing," Lewis said. "He came out smelling like a rose."

PERSONAL OBSERVATION OF:

Constance M. Cornett
20990 Las Flores Mesa Dr.
Malibu, CA 90265

Phone: 573-1291

NOVEMBER 2, 1993

The day started like any other Tuesday, except for the fact that the Santa Ana winds were blowing hard. To us, they mean "fire weather". We had been through three major fires before having lived in our home for 39 years. About 10:45 A.M., we heard that ~~there~~ was a fire in Old Topanga Canyon, so we turned on ~~the~~ TV to keep track of it's progress. Meanwhile, we went about our ordinary business of the day.

Things seemed all right but about 3:00 P.M. we lost our power. At that time we had no way of knowing what was going on. My husband thought the wind was blowing away from us TOWARD THE PIER. We never saw a helicopter, a sheriff's car, or any fire equipment--nothing! For that reason, we did not seriously prepare to evacuate as we should have. I kept watching the smoke but was not unduly alarmed because the smoke was moving away from us.

Little did I know! A bit later, I looked out the kitchen window and saw very large flames in Dave and Audrey Magee's back yard, our neighbor's across the road. It was time to leave in a hurry. We grabbed what we could in the 15 or 20 minutes we had. If only we had some time, even one hour, we would not have lost all the things we did. For the most part, they were heirlooms and we will never replace them. A bit later I was shoved into a car with my 22 year old grandson and we headed down Las Flores Mesa Drive toward Las Flores Canyon. We did not know we were going into an inferno. At NO TIME were any fire department personnel, sheriff or any other emergency vehicles on our Mesa. We were on our own. We drove down through flames and smoke on the rims of the front wheels as the tires had deflated due to the heat.

We went to the Sea Lion parking lot where there was a ROW OF FIRE RIGS PARKED. Both Jason (my grandson) and I told them that there were at least 30 people trapped up on the Mesa which was CLEARLY BLAZING BY THEN. They looked at me and said: "Lady, get out of your car and start walking down the highway." That was it. Nobody made any effort to try to save the homes on the Mesa or to protect the residents. We have never been given a satisfactory reason for this inaction. They must have decided to just let our homes burn. We lost everything! There was not a trace of any usable objects left when we finally went back the next day to see what had happened. We were very fortunate that no injuries occurred. Elderly women in their 80's were forced to hike down a trail at the end of our cul-de-sac and a few even had to go down the cliff by rope, hand over hand. Of the over forty beautiful homes on the Upper and Lower Las Flores Mesa, only 9 or 10 remain. This is inexcusable.

My husband was informed by a ham radio operator, that the head security officer at Pepperdine University who is also a ham radio operator, reported hearing a request over the air to send a helicopter to the second major canyon East of Malibu Canyon to warn the residents of the fire direction, and to evacuate. The second major canyon East of Malibu Canyon is Las Flores Canyon. Apparently the pilot was confused as to where he was and instead warned the students at Pepperdine to evacuate their dormitories. Ironically, the students had already evacuated into the Field House and were completely safe.

Sincerely,

Constance M. Cornett

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

Sandra Price 20740 Las Flores Mesa Dr Malibu (destroyed)
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone
new; 858 Moraga Dr. #4 L.A. 90049 (New) 310 471-1286

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____	

Did your house burn? X Was your house saved? _____
Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____
Were you at home? yes Did you try to get home? yes walked 8 miles to get home
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? yes from Topanga
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? yes
Did you have water? NO What time did you lose water pressure? Approx 3:00
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO What time? _____
What color units? Yellow trucks NO Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe NO
What kind of fire equipment NO
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO phone
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). never came, never told us to evacuate
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? Approx 4:00 p.m.
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 100%
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? Almost 100%
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? Continued for several hours after 8:00 p.m.

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? Tried to get out, but couldn't.
If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? there was no water
Were you successful in saving your house? _____

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO!

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster?

NO!

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently?

NO!

Please explain your answer. At no time during this terrifying afternoon did fire dept. warn us to evacuate, assist us, drop water etc. I was able to stay alive at my neighbor's home who pumped his pool and was able to save his home. At approx 8:30 a pickup truck arrived (after everything had burned) and told us it was safe to leave.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? Possibly, if there had been water

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? yes.

Can you furnish us with fire photos ✓ after fire or ideas (even TV-taped) ✓

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments:

I really believe that in this instance the fire department failed us miserably. We should have been adequately warned and evacuated. I was able to walk in (approx 2 miles) to save my dog and cat. Neighbor saved his home with pool pump. When fire dept. finally arrived about 8:30, he requested a fire engine to save his home. It never arrived! At no point during this ordeal did we receive any assistance whatsoever.

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NPES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

Michael Wilson 20607 Eagle Pass 317-1344
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____	

Did your house burn? YES Was your house saved? _____
Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____
Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? _____
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? NO
Did you have water? NO What time did you lose water pressure? ± 3 PM
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO What time? _____
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe _____
What kind of fire equipment _____
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? YES - VIA TELEPHONE
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). _____
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? ± 5 PM
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? UNK
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? UNK
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? UNK

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? NO

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? NO WATER, NO Electricity
Were you successful in saving your house? NO

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO - we never had any evacuation notice

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? NO

Please explain your answer we CALLED 911 twice & LA 10 Fire directly
one requesting help - no response to our area.
FIRE TRUCKS all STANDING BY ON PCH. NO ATTEMPT
WAS MADE to get into our area to fight fire

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? YES, if we had water

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos NO or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments:

THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WAS LACK OF WATER.

THE FIRE DEPT. TOTALLY ABANDONED OUR AREA. I TALKED
WITH FIRE FIGHTERS later & WAS TOLD THAT THEY WERE
ORDERED OUT OF OUR AREA BY THEIR SUPERIORS.

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

JOHN MORRIS 20762 ROCKPOINT WAY 456-2120
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____	

Did your house burn? _____ Was your house saved? YES

Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? _____ By force? _____

Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____

Did road closures prevent you from returning home? AFTER THE FIRE

Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? NO ONLY BE CAUSE OF A LACK OF TURN AROUND FOR PUMPER

Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? 430 APPROX

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO What time? _____

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment _____

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). STAYED ON SEA BOARD

Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 530 - 545

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 3/4

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? NO

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? TOO GREAT A CHANCE OF BEING TRAPPED AND KILLED

Were you successful in saving your house? YES, WITH A LOT OF WIND, PURE LUCK, AND WATER

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain.

YES, BUT NO TRUCKS ATTEMPTED TO COME DOWN TO OUR PART OF ROCK POINT

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO, NOT WOULD I HAVE PAID ATTENTION

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? AS MUCH AS COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED / NEPTUNE / ISHIFER

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently?

Please explain your answer. MOST PROBABLY, THIS AREA WAS IGNORED, IF LET BURN, HAD WE HAD FIRE HOSES WE MIGHT HAVE SAVED ONE OF THE 5 HOUSES THAT BURNED

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures?

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? ABSOLUTELY YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos _____ or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments:

OUR HOUSE SURVIVED DUE TO WIND CURRENT A GREAT DEAL OF WATERING AND GREAT LUCK. I FEEL THAT IN GENERAL THE FIRE FIGHTERS WERE MAGNIFICENT, THE CITY A JOKE AND THAT WITH SOME EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING WE COULD HAVE SAVED MORE PROPERTY. I OBJECT TO BEING PREVENTED ACCESS TO MY HOUSE WHEN

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NFES

MEDIA ARE FREELY PASSED IN TO AN AREA THEY ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH. I GOT IN 2 DAYS AFTER THE FIRE BY CALLING ABC (FRIENDS) AND GETTING A TV CREW TO GO IN WITH.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265

(310) 456-2652

310 454-8202

310 456-8176

JONE-ERNEST RICKEIT 20330 Big Rock DR. Malibu, CA 90265 (answer machine)

Name (optional)

Address (optional)

Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area

_____ Sweetwater Mesa Area

_____ Carbon Mesa Area

_____ La Costa Area

_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico

_____ Las Flores Mesa

_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon

_____ Lower Las Flores Canyon

☒ Big Rock

_____ Topanga

_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma

_____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna

_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? Yes

Was your house saved? No

Were you evacuated? _____

Voluntarily? _____

By force? _____

Were you at home? No

Did you try to get home? Yes

* Did road closures prevent you from returning home? Yes

Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? Yes

Did you have water? _____

What time did you lose water pressure? 3:30 pm

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? Yes

What time? 6:30

What color units? Yellow trucks

Red trucks

Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

Saw them pass OUR

What kind of fire equipment _____

HOUSE ON T.V. NEWS

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? _____

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). _____

Did fire fighting units leave? Yes

If so, when? 10:30 pm??

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? _____

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

OUR House burned in the early hours of Nov. 3
from flying EMBERS. (related from neighbors)

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? No

If yes, why? _____

If no, why not? We were told

Were you successful in saving your house? by police that we

had to leave the premises.

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

Yes. Sheriff's Dept in Cars.

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster?

no

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? No

Please explain your answer No commands seen

so have been given to do anything about the lower Big Rock Houses. People have wide roads and access. They literally were surrounded by our neighbors on Big Rock who were down to PC it and asked for help.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures?

Yes

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards?

Yes

Can you furnish us with fire photos No or videos (even TV-taped) maybe?

Please describe:

Other fire documentation? No

Further comments:

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

* I IGNORED SHERIFF'S DEPT. PARTMENT
ORDERS AND WALKED ALONG THE
BEACH FROM TO PALMS TO BIG ROCK.
ARRIVING AT MY HOME AT ABOUT
330 PM.

IT WAS MY INTENTION TO STAY AND
TRY TO SAVE OUR HOUSE. I FEEL
REASONABLY SECURE IN MY UNDERSTANDING
OF FIGHTING FIRES MY TRAINING AS
AS NAVAL OFFICER. I WAS INVOLVED IN
PREPARING MY DROPPED CLOTHING AND
FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT CONSTANTLY
AVOIDING THE HELICOPTERS AND
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AT
THE DOOR. AT 6:30 PM AN OUT OF
TOWN FIRE COMPANY WAS PARKED
IN OUR DRIVEWAY. THE TELEPHONE
WHICH WAS STILL WORKING SUMMONED
ME AT ABOUT 645 MY WIFE &
CHILDREN ASKED ME TO LEAVE BECAUSE
THE MEDIA WAS REPORTING THE
CONCRETE STRUCTURE DEMAND FOR
HOMEOWNERS TO EVALUATE. THEY WERE
AFRAID FOR ME.

WITH THE FIRE COMPANY ON MY
DRIVEWAY, I FELT REASONABLY SURE
IN TURNING OVER THE JOB TO THEM.
I SHOWED THE COMPANY THE POOL
& I OPENED THE GATE FOR THEM.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 or P.O. Box 1127 Malibu CA 90265
(310) 456-2652

TOM VAN HORNE 24690 W. SADDLE PK R
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone
456 2207

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Serra Retreat Area	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweetwater Mesa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Mesa Area	<input type="checkbox"/> La Costa Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rambla Pacifico	<input type="checkbox"/> Las Flores Mesa
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Las Flores Canyon	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower Las Flores Canyon
<input type="checkbox"/> Big Rock	<input type="checkbox"/> Topanga
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> West Saddle Peak/Pioma	<input type="checkbox"/> Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
<input type="checkbox"/> Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____	

Did your house burn? NO Was your house saved? YES-BY ME
Were you evacuated? Y-WIFE Voluntarily? X By force? _____
Were you at home? Y Did you try to get home? NO
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? LATER - YES
Where roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach
your area? YES
Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? _____
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? NO-YES? What time? APROX 1 PM
What color units? Yellow trucks ? Red trucks ? Green trucks ?
Other color trucks? Please describe TOO BUSY TO PAY MUCH ATTENTION
What kind of fire equipment ?
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? YES
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more
details). LEFT - SEE ATTACHED
Did fire fighting units leave? YES If so, when? NEVER STOPPED
Why did they leave? ?
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 12:00
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 7% 10%
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? 10% 7%
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? 5-15 HRS

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save
it? YES
If yes, why? WELL PREPARED If no, why not? _____
Were you successful in saving your house? YES

* PRIVATE SUPPLY

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? NO

Please explain your answer SEE ATTACHED

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures?

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos NO or videos (even TV-taped) NO

Please describe:

Other fire documentation?

Further comments:

SEE ATTACHED

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for **Citizen Fire Investigation.**

NFES

FIRE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT AT 24690 W. SADDLE PEAK ROAD

In this fire the inadequate planning and misdirection of resources by the County Fire Department was again demonstrated. The major problems can be summarized as follows:

- 1) There was no support from fixed or rotary wing aircraft. The only helicopters around were from the news media.
- 2) The only fire truck that appeared at this location arrived after the front had passed and refused to provide assistance in mopping up the remaining hot spots.
- 3) The firefighters were apparently unaware of the water storage provided specifically for them.
- 4) There was no visible support during the period of several hours after the front passed when other houses caught fire.
- 5) Fire fighters at the main intersection near this community were confused as to where evacuees should go.

The house at this location was saved by the owner. This was possible because of considerable preparation for the event. Although there is landscaping surrounding the house, the native brush was thinned and lollypopped out to 200 ft. in the most critical direction. A 15000 gallon tank supplies water by gravity to sprinklers and two 1 1/2 inch outlets for fire hoses. A 100 ft., 1 1/2 in. fire hose and fittings are available on the property. Because of the facilities and clearance this is not a hazardous location to defend.

However, the effort required to defend the house with the fire hose when the fire approaches from several directions was exhausting for the 65 year old owner. Thus, when a truck came up to the driveway about an hour after the fire arrived the owner called for help to put out the remaining flareups. The truck turned around and went back down the road. It was another hour before the owner was able to stop and rest.

Since his wife had evacuated and couldn't get back in, and there were no firefighters around, the owner had to stand watch all night to be sure another flareup did not occur. During this period two other houses in the area burned. Since there is plenty of stored water in the area (over 10000 gallons) these houses could have been saved if fire trucks were here.

If there really were 7000 firefighters in the Malibu-Topanga area it is incomprehensible that at least one truck and crew could not be assigned to this area for the duration of the threat. Apparently all the fire trucks were assigned to watch the fire from Pacific Coast Highway.

If help was provided to the several homeowners who stayed to protect their homes at least two homes would have been saved and the threat to the others minimized.

The Fire Department imposes requirements for water storage and hydrants as a prerequisite to obtaining building permits. Yet it apparently has no intention of using these facilities since it does not provide information on them to firefighters on the site.

A thorough investigation of the Fire Department performance during this event is required. Hopefully this would lead to at least a reasonable policy for admitting residents during and after the fire and a shakeup in the obviously inept management of the Department.

Apr. 20, 1994
The Honorable Pete Wilson
State Capital Bldg.
Sacramento, CA 92468

Dear Governor Wilson,

This morning, on our burned out property near Malibu, the LA County Fire Prevention Officer gave us their requirements to rebuild our home. 1) Widen 350 feet of the driveway to a width of 15 feet (Estimated cost of \$10,000-\$12,000). 2) Install interior sprinklers in the rebuilt home (Estimated cost \$1.50/sq. ft.= \$3,600).

We do not have the money to do this and California Fair Plan will not provide funds for required upgrades in construction. We will not be able to rebuild our home. We now live on a fixed income since my business was destroyed with the house.

The fire department did not protect us and also neglected many of our neighbors. Even those neighbors who ran out on the road and begged for help. They were told that the firemen had another assignment. There has been meeting after meeting to establish accountability but so far no results. In spite of all this, the LA Co Fire Dept retains final say on ALL county bldg. permits.

Our house stood for 20 years and always passed our yearly fire protection inspection. Why can't we rebuild what we had and then work on the requirements? We are being victimized a second time by the LA Co Fire Dept.

We are appealing to you for help and understanding. We tried our supervisor, Edmund D. Edelman, but although one of his assistants has been very nice, he has not had the courtesy to correspond with us. The fire dept. is determined to apply some costly restriction on us although I have shown them receipts and our total insurance settlement. These were also supplied to supervisor Edelman.

We are not alone. There are many others in similar positions. We would appreciate any help you can give.

Yours truly,
William & Trudi Smith
P O Box 1021, Malibu

145 Valle Lindo Lane, West Middle Peak/Pioma

CC: Chief Freeman, LACFD
Supv. Hahn, Edelman
Mayor Riordan

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation

2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

PETOL ALEXANDER ^{MAILING:} 115 SOUTH TOPANGA #130 90290 (818) 591-7815
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock ☒ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify FLASH POINT: OLD TOPANGA AT TOP OF HILL

Did your house burn? YES Was your house saved? NO
Were you evacuated? NO Voluntarily? YES By force? _____
Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? _____
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? YES
Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? 10:55 AM 11/2
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? YES What time? 10:58 AM
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks ☒ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe FIRST ON SCENE WAS SMOKE TRUCK (TOO LITTLE TOO LATE)
What kind of fire equipment EVENTUALLY SEVERAL TRUCKS & BULL DOZER
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? ONLY TO RESCUE DURCAN GIBBINS
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). WAITED FOR FIRE TO BURN THROUGH THE EVACUATED GIBBINS & MASS
Did fire fighting units leave? NO If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? ?
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 10:45 AM NOV 12
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? ALL BUT ONE
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? NONE
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? FIRE FIGHTER, USING 5 GALLON WATER BOTTLES SAVED ONE GUEST HOUSE

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? ONLY FOR 10 MINUTES

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? _____
DRIVEWAY WAS ABOUT TO BURN - I WOULD HAVE BEEN TRAPPED
Were you successful in saving your house? NO

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain.

IF F.D. HAD SENT HELICOPTER WITHIN 5 MINUTES OF MY 911 CALL THE FIRE WOULD HAVE BEEN EXTINGUISHED WHERE IT STARTED.

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

NO

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? N/A

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently?

PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER. ONCE THEY GOT IN GEAR I THINK THEY DID A GOOD JOB. MY ONLY COMPLAINT IS IN THE LACK OF PREPAREDNESS. COMMON SENSE WOULD DICTATE HAVING LOADED HELICOPTERS STATIONED AT OR NEAR HIGH RISK AREAS DURING A SANDA HVA WIND STORM.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? NO WAY

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? TRAINING AND FIRE SAFE BUILDING ARE GREAT IDEAS. ANYONE

WHO IS STUPID ENOUGH TO RISK THEIR HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR THE SAKE OF WORLDLY POSSESSIONS SHOULD TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT RON MASS - OR DUNCAN GIBBINS *

Can you furnish us with fire photos No or videos (even TV-taped)

Please describe:

Other fire documentation?

Further comments:

* RON RISKED HIS LIFE TO SAVE DUNCAN - CORREX WHO HAD TIME ENOUGH AND AMPLE WARNING TO ESCAPE. IT IS HEROIC TO SAVE A FRIEND - "STUPID" TO RISK EVERYTHING FOR A HOUSE. GET GOOD INSURANCE AND GET OUT !!

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NFES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

Greg Hurley % 2716 Marquette Dr. Topanga
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house (is) was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify TOPANGA SKYLINE (UPPER)

Did your house burn? NO Was your house saved? YES
Were you evacuated? YES Voluntarily? YES By force? _____
Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? ALMOST/LATER, YES
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? YES
Did you have water? NO What time did you lose water pressure? 2 PM
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? YES What time? 11:30 OR 12
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks ✓ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe _____
What kind of fire equipment PUMPER
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). CONTAINED THE FIRE DOWNSLOPE FROM US
Did fire fighting units leave? YES If so, when? 3 PM
Why did they leave? TO FIGHT THE FIRE FURTHER DOWN THE CANYON
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? 11:00 AM
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? 2%
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? 2%
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? 1 HR.

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? YES
If yes, why? WIND SHIFTED AWAY FROM US If no, why not? _____

Were you successful in saving your house? YES, BUT IT WAS NOT REALLY IN DANGER EXCEPT EARLY IN THE MORNING

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain.

I WOULD HAVE HELPED THEM. I DID STAY WITH THE HOUSE.

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

I ONLY HEARD THEM ANNOUNCE FOR US TO LEAVE, NOT THAT WE WOULD BE ARRESTED

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? YES, BUT IT NEVER SEEMS LIKE ENOUGH

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? YES

Please explain your answer. I WAS ALWAYS AMAZED HOW COORDINATED & HARD-WORKING THEY WERE

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures? MAYBE

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES

Can you furnish us with fire photos No or videos (even TV-taped) No

Please describe:

Other fire documentation?

Further comments:

MY GRATITUDE TO THE FIREFIGHTERS -

GREAT JOB!

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation. NFES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: Citizen Fire Investigation
2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

Name (optional) Nissman 1577 N. Topanga Cyn. Address (optional) 455-2813 Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.

My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock ☒ Topanga — North End @ Ching
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? NO Was your house saved? _____

Were you evacuated? YES Voluntarily? ☒ By force? _____

Were you at home? YES Did you try to get home? _____

Did road closures prevent you from returning home? Prevented daughter from

Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? YES

Did you have water? YES What time did you lose water pressure? _____

Did fire fighter units arrive to help? Not needed What time? _____

What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____

Other color trucks? Please describe _____

What kind of fire equipment _____

Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? NO

What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). _____

Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____

Why did they leave? _____

Approx. what time did the fire front hit? Never got to us

What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____

What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____

How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? _____

If yes, why? _____ If no, why not? _____

Were you successful in saving your house? _____

* Kids at school out of Topanga were safe, but Parents couldn't leave & get back in with them.

Elm's School was evacuated 1st Day
2nd nite asked to leave, but
then fire was contained and
we didn't leave.

31. High in Malibu from returning.

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain.

Not sure. We were never immediately threatened, so stayed & packed & wet down roof.

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate?

No

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster? As best they could in conjunction w/ Arson Watch

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently?

Please explain your answer Very. As it moved back

into Topanga, there were trucks & crews on every street. Biggest problem was communication since we are unincorporated and don't have civic center and the media didn't know what they were talking about.

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures?

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? YES!

Can you furnish us with fire photos _____ or videos (even TV-taped) _____

Please describe: _____

Other fire documentation? _____

Further comments:

* Media should be kept out at minimum. Media was getting in when residents couldn't. Media gave out misinformation and people who were evacuated had no reliable source of info about what was burning and what wasn't.

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation. NFES

Arson Watch very important.

Thanks to all firefighters!

Newer residents need to know about alternate exit roads.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Malibu/Old Topanga Fire (Nov 2-3, 1993)

Please mail to: **Citizen Fire Investigation**
2210 Wilshire Blvd., Box 184 Santa Monica CA 90403 (310) 456-2652

Kathleen Hernandez 310 455-3278
Name (optional) Address (optional) Phone

Please specify even if you may not want to provide your address and name.
My house is/was in (please check)

_____ Serra Retreat Area _____ Sweetwater Mesa Area
_____ Carbon Mesa Area _____ La Costa Area
_____ Upper Rambla Pacifico _____ Las Flores Mesa
_____ Upper Las Flores Canyon _____ Lower Las Flores Canyon
_____ Big Rock X _____ Topanga
_____ West Saddle Peak/Pioma _____ Saddle Peak/Stunt/Tuna
_____ Monte Nido. Other, please specify _____

Did your house burn? no Was your house saved? _____
Were you evacuated? yes Voluntarily? no ~~by force?~~ wed. night
Were you at home? yes Did you try to get home? when it started (from wit)
Did road closures prevent you from returning home? no, used back roads
Were roads adequate or safe to evacuate/return or let fire fighters reach your area? only going toward valley
Did you have water? yes What time did you lose water pressure? _____
Did fire fighter units arrive to help? _____ What time? _____
What color units? Yellow trucks _____ Red trucks _____ Green trucks _____
Other color trucks? Please describe _____
What kind of fire equipment _____
Did you ask, instruct or request fire fighters to help? _____
What did the fire fighting units do (please use reverse page for more details). _____
Did fire fighting units leave? _____ If so, when? _____
Why did they leave? _____
Approx. what time did the fire front hit? _____
What % of homes did ignite as the fire front moved through? _____
What % of homes burned after the fire front had passed? _____
How much time after the fire front passed did houses burn? _____

Did you, family members, or friends stay with your house and try to save it? _____
If yes, why? more chance of saving it If no, why not? _____
Were you successful in saving your house? _____

Citizen Fire Investigation Questionnaire

Would you have remained with your house or would you have shown fire fighting units into your area to familiarize them with the neighborhood if they would have arrived prior to the firefront? Please explain. yes

Did you hear the Sheriff's Department helicopters PA system or anybody announce at any time that you would be arrested if you would not evacuate? No

I also did not hear that on any PA that I had to evacuate. The message came from neighbors that went to Center.

Do you feel that the Fire Department prepared the community for this fire disaster?

Do you feel that the Fire Department handled the fire competently? Yes

Please explain your answer. They worked very hard, and are caring individuals.

Courageous

Could/would you have saved your home if you were trained and could get past the road closures?

Would you support a certified (40-hour) citizen training course (with bi-annual re-certification) that would teach you how to make your home and neighborhood more fire-safe and how to protect your home in a wildfire provided your certificate would allow residents access in fire closure areas (under most situations) if your house and neighborhood meets certain fire safety standards? yes - Also some local coverage by knowledgeable citizens to inform people on correct street names & where fire is burning. - The media was horrible.

Can you furnish us with fire photos or videos (even TV-taped)

Please describe:

Other fire documentation? I witnessed a fire fighter backburning around his own home. This what saved his home I believe

We took in a gelded Arabian that had been hit by a fire truck on Saddle Peak. Horse was had been turned loose near the area where fire began. The horse had to be put down. A vet charged us \$250 to do this. I felt this was inappropriate as we were not the owners at the time did not know who the owners were. The horse's carcass stayed at our house for four days as no one was permitted in to remove the body.

We also had to evacuate our 2 horses Thank God for the Volunteers

We need your help. Please give a copy to your neighbor or friend! Call us if you want to talk to us directly and ask for Citizen Fire Investigation.

NFES

who so readily came to help, unfortunately we need better record keeping in the canyon as to who has what kinds of horses, and if they are easy loaders etc.