

Fire and Forest

Fire Abatement Helps All

by Chris Kramer

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With the recent election of officers on the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council I'd like to introduce myself as the new president. I'd like to keep our message going in the same positive direction that past president Mike Esnard did with this column. I will also ask other board members to contribute and write on different topics throughout the year.

Change; is it good, is it necessary, or just something we resist or accept and get comfortable with? We all encounter change in one form or another throughout our lives.

In my 30 years as a career firefighter I saw a lot of changes during that time. Personal protective equipment, power tools (think -chainsaw instead of an axe), technology and a much greater variety of training were just a few things that evolved over the years. Changes in fire service tactics and strategy along with laws and regulations imposed upon us at a state or federal level also affected our daily operations. OSHA is not a small town in Wisconsin.

Very often things like warning labels have come about because someone had a serious lack of good judgment. The next time you go to a hardware store, look at all the warnings printed on a ladder,

somewhere at some time, somebody thought an aluminum ladder was safe to put near electrical lines! And then the lawyers got involved.

So now think to our everyday lives and some of the things we have. Seat belts, helmets and child safety seats, all things we can agree, came about for a reason. Often when people choose not to follow regulatory changes there are usually consequences.

All of us who choose to own land and (or) live on this mountain bear the responsibility to maintain our property under the direction and language of Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4291. This is the law governing property fire abatement. PRC 4291 fuel reduction and required clearances serves several purposes. The obvious one is to reduce or prevent the easy spread of fire to our homes. Another would be reducing the amount of readily ignitable material slowing the spread of fire to adjacent land and structures. This is where we can all benefit from each other's abatement work. There are often unseen positive advantages to having good clearance around your home. When firefighters are assigned to do structure protection the decision to defend and protect certain properties is made with consideration for their own safety first. The next decision is the defensible space, make-up of the home and the topography of the area. Give yourself, your neighbors and firefighters a chance the next time we're threatened by a fire. Make fire abatement of your property a priority every year.