

Hey Martha - Look out your window! Fire on the Arastra Preserve!

Summary of the Saddle Mountain “Defense Perimeter”
Team Response Aug. 8, 2012, 4:10 – 6:30 p.m.:

CERT IC and ECC member Dru Anderson KG6LAD;
Saddle Mountain Block Captain Martha Bowden, CERT;
Photos courtesy of Nick Hughes,
All of the above are Saddle Court, LAH, Neighbors.

Thanks to Mtn. View EC Jerry Haag at K6GAC;
ECC Associate Rick Ellinger KJ6NU for their participation on
respective ham frequencies

Aug. 8, 2012 Arastra Preserve,
~ ½ - 1 mile North, LAH Saddle Court



The Event

From: DruAndersn@aol.com. **Sent:** Thursday, August 09, 2012 9:38 AM

To: Carl Cahill; mike.sanders@cnt.sccgov.org; dmcmlan@pacbell.net

Subject: Information report: Arastradero preserve brush fire 8/8; ~4:15 p.m. - ~ 6:30 8/9/12

To: Carl Cahill, LAH city manager; Mike Sanders, LAH Santa Clara County FD preparedness training; Duncan MacMillan KI6VMY, chair, LAH Emergency Communications Committee

From: Dru Anderson KG6LAD and a CERT supervisor, LAH. CC: Martha Bowden, block captain, Saddle Mountain. Rick Ellinger, KJ6NU; Rich Larsen & Gary Waldeck, LAH city council.

This is an information report on the brush fire that erupted around 4:15 last night on the Arastra preserve **about ½ - 1 mile north of** Los Altos Hills - Saddle Mountain area.

Response to the fire was quick, thorough, and well coordinated by several fire agencies.

Our neighborhood response and ham radio action - **brought together several forms of quick & effective communication.**

AND a passing bicyclist spotted a suspicious person; reported it to FD personnel on scene; the person was detained, and later arrested and charged with arson.

(Please recall that our concern on Saddle Mountain is recollection of the Liddicoat fire ~ 26 years ago that destroyed some 20 homes and originated on Arastradero Road – by ARSON - hence, Saddle Mountain folks are VERY alert to smoke in the Arastra preserve area.)

“It takes a neighborhood’ – and individual responsibility – to support our town’s Emergency Preparedness.” TRAINING – and common sense - are a real advantages!!

Summary Report

1. I spotted the fire – several smoke plumes - at about 4:20 from my north-facing large kitchen window as I was preparing early dinner. I started to call 911, but opened my door and heard a swarm of fire sirens, indicating help was on the way.
2. Immediately, I turned on the ham radio to our local repeater net at 146.745 **but could not find anyone on it.** I then on 2nd radio called SPECS net at 145.270 and found **Mtn. View EC Jerry Haag at K6GAC** who reported that Palo Alto and Woodside FD were responding and it was about 5 acres.
Note: K6GAC typically monitors the frequency, as well as the police/fire scanners at the Mtn. View Fire/Police HQ.
3. I called and alerted Marsha Bowden, my Saddle Court neighbor and our Saddle Mountain neighborhood block captain.
4. She immediately sent out an "alert" on a network we've created up here Saddle Mountain through www.nextdoor.com.
Our neighborhood residents who've signed up (we have ~ 20) immediately received email and phone alerts - if they've set up that capability. I have included her final message - when things were under control, and it gives information about www.nextdoor.com.

Summary Report cont' d 1

5. Within 3-5 minutes, Martha and I walked to the end of Saddle Court where we had a birds eye vista of the fire, flames, and rapid spread westward toward Foothill Park, and into a ravine area beyond the ridge that we could see - toward Los Trancos Woods.
There were several, separate smoke plumes – in fact, the fires turned out to be Arson.
(Post script: an Alert Bicyclist notified a fire official of a suspicious person, who was detained, then later arrested. See Palo Alto Daily on-line news for details).
6. Within minutes, the fire spread rapidly up the ridge and west. Within ~ 20 minutes, we heard and saw incoming helicopters and planes, CDF, coming in from the southwest. After a minute of "scoping", the planes started runs with fire retardant drops; one helicopter landed on the upper area where the fire trucks were on the Arastradero preserve service access road - other trucks were coming in the back way on the service access from the Alpine Road/Arastradero side. The first helicopter then took off toward Searsville lake, then followed water bucket dumps by the 2 helicopters. Through field glasses I could see a ground crew at the western edge of the progressing fire.
7. At 4:40, I went back to my house and heard ECC associate member Rick KJ6NU on local frequency. Rick lives further up Page Mill Road, heard sirens and saw smoke. We exchanged observations. Rick made local phone calls to Town Hall, to folks in Los Trancos Woods, and tried to reach activity on the Stanford repeater.
8. 1 hour later, the bulk of the smoke and flames were under control; Martha sent out through www.nextdoor.com a message at 6:30 alerting neighbors that things were under control, but to "please keep a watch."
9. Rick KJ6NU and I closed the local LAH; I went back to SPECS to Jerry K6GAC and closed out messaging.
10. I returned home to my salmon dinner that I had been preparing when I spotted the fire in the first place.

Summary Response, cont' d 2

Lessons:

- In summary: Rick, Jerry, and I would like to encourage ALL hams who hear sirens nearby, who see or smell smoke, or who might feel quakes or shakes to **please turn on your local and/or SPECS frequency**. Usually, someone is monitoring at least SPECS, and if not, a phone tree can immediately get created, using your latest roster.
- I also want to recognize our informal internet tool www.nextdoor.com, and to our **block captain and CERT Member Martha** for her quick response to my phone call, and to carrying out the "alert" message system that we have locally set up.
- If any of you would like to know more about our local "information process" that we've informally evolved (a lot of it just darn good neighboring), please let me know.
- 73, Dru Anderson KG6LAD, CERT IC team
- Post Script: I thank Nick Hughes, neighbor and Foothill College Student, who stood with us in the monitoring and took pictures that you'll appreciate of the air support team fire fighting sequence.

Summary Report, about

www.nextdoor.com

Martha Bowden posted re: Fire under control

Date: 8/8/2012 6:24:06 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time

"Still some smoke in the area. CAL Fire will watch it overnight. For those of you facing the fire, if you see a lot more smoke, call 911.

You can set up your (nextdoor.com) account to have text Alerts sent directly to your phone. Under your name, select Settings, then Mobile Notifications and type in your cell phone number. You can select to get only "Urgent alerts" which are 110 characters."



Arastradero Preserve Fire

August 8, 2012

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Post Thoughts:

- **Don't be Scared – BE PREPARED!**
 - If you have an amateur radio, and you are an ECC member: Turn it on during fire or storm season – monitoring when we can is a part of our emergency team preparedness responsibility. Use phone tree or text “alerts” as supportive alternatives.
 - If you see, hear, smell, or feel “something amiss”, start a process – whether turning on the news, or trying to reach a ham frequency. BE INFORMED.
 - Consider supportive systems – such as nextdoor.com – for you and your neighbors. EVERY piece of the communication system can be key to EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION and appropriate response.
 - Don't overreact - maintain calm, recall your training, and keep your response process current and informed.

City Appreciation

- Aug. 9: Great work Dru and Martha!

This is an excellent example of how CERT training enables residents to respond to an emergency!

Very impressive.

Thanks, Rich Larsen, Mayor

- Aug. 9: Thank you, Dru,
... for the detailed report on the brush fire yesterday and thanks to Martha for promptly getting the alert out to the neighborhood. A good example of self reliance.

Carl Cahill, LAH City Manager