

October 9, 2011

YOUR SAFETY IS IMPORTANT!

It has been reported that there may be members who do not understand the Crystal Lakes evacuation plan. Articles have been written in the Bugle and in the group email, notices have been mailed to each owner within the subdivision, issues addressed at each New Owners' Orientation program, and announcements made at many meetings. Steve Smalley reviewed the plan during the CLRRRA Annual Meeting this year for those in attendance, mentioning that if property owners hear the warning sirens at any time other than during the annual sounding demonstration, everyone should evacuate immediately. The group email will serve as a means of keeping members updated, when possible, should there be time for notifications and information about a developing incident. Even Larimer County recognizes and has published on their web site that there are times when additional notifications are not possible. At times evacuation actions simply must be taken immediately.

Every owner has received at least one mailing which describes the Evacuation Plan in detail. The first mailing to the entire membership was conducted as a result of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) development, and the Crystal Lakes Community Fund helped fund that mailing to each property within the CWPP. Crystal Lakes developed the first CWPP in the state. Many owners have received two mailings of the Evacuation Plan because of Larimer County's road name changes, which included "County Road 73C". CR 73C was previously known as Creedmore Lakes Road and is a main evacuation route, appearing on each route plan. Because of that name change, every property owner was informed again of the route and the new road names.

The six on-site warning sirens, which are tested weekly by Association staff, were constructed to respond to two types of evacuation possibilities. The warning sounds were selected from choices provided by FEMA, and specifically chosen to agree with FEMA recommendations for the type of incident involved. The sirens are configured so that from one to all six sirens may be activated via radio signal across the subdivision in case of an incident such as a wildland fire. The sirens operate on solar batteries, so a power failure will not impact their operation. In addition, a specific siren can be sounded to warn those in danger in case of a dam failure at Panhandle Dam. The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is updated annually for Panhandle Dam, and the CLVFD is provided with an entire procedural plan for that emergency response. The EAP is regularly reviewed, and the department practices to perform that evacuation quickly and safely.

The evacuation arrows (white arrow on a blue field) placed on each road sign are also an important part of the evacuation plan, since they indicate one way to move out of the subdivision and down to county road. Obviously there are several routes from every lot. It is the owners' responsibility to become familiar with a variety of routes. The Crystal Lakes Volunteer Fire Department trains regularly on procedures to assist with evacuation within the subdivision, recognizing that evacuation plans must be flexible because they must accommodate the individual incident. CLVFD personnel also train with neighboring departments and our Fire Chief meets regularly with county and USFS members.

Department and County officials will establish safety zones, meeting and informational sites depending on the incident. Those sites are not published prior to an event because of the necessity of establishing sites based on considerations unique to each incident.

New owners receive a special mailing of their individual emergency preparedness plan, which describes one possible evacuation route specific to their property, a list of actions they can take to help protect their property, how to notify firefighters when they have evacuated, and a list of suggested items to take with them provided there is time prior to evacuation. That list is one suggested by Phoenix Fire, which they developed while assisting with many wildland incidents in Arizona. If you can no longer find your emergency preparedness plan/evacuation plan, which we have suggested you keep close to the phone or perhaps fastened on your refrigerator, we will post a general copy of the plan (without the specific route from your property to CR 73C) on our web for you to print and post conspicuously. Go to www.crystal-lakes.org. If you would like another copy of your specific evacuation plan, come by the office and place your request. As time allows a site specific copy will be produced by CL staff and sent to you or held for you to pick up at your convenience.

Previously in this group email and in Bugle articles, members have also been encouraged to list their cell phone numbers with Larimer County so that notification can be received in case of an emergency. You may contact Larimer County's Emergency Telephone Authority at www.leta911.org. That website was erroneously noticed recently to some members as a .com site, but the above address will get you to the correct site to list your contact numbers for notification by the county in case of an emergency or community alert.

If you have questions, I encourage you to take the time to get answers now. I am happy to discuss any of the evacuation plan questions you may have. I know CLVFD Chief Kelly is also willing to answer your questions. You may contact me at crystal-lakes@crystal-lakes.org, or Chief Kelly at mkelly@clvfd.org. Larimer County provides brochures and an excellent booklet on Emergency Preparedness. The office has some copies available for handout, or you can stop by the county offices in Fort Collins, 200 W. Oak, on the second floor, to pick up a copy. Please be informed and stay safe.

I'll keep you posted,
Jody