

New & Improved Emergency Phone Tree Coming Soon

Many of you attended the October 2004 community meeting to kick off the development of our Colestin & Hilt Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Several residents volunteered to work together on the Phone Tree Task Group to implement an emergency notification system. The Emergency Phone Tree might be used to notify residents of threatening fire, of dangerous or missing persons, of escape routes or safety zones in the event of wildfire, or to refer residents to appropriate radio/TV channels or other information outlets for further updates.

The Emergency Phone Tree is not likely to be used very often, but we want it to run quickly and accurately in the event of an actual emergency. To this end, the Task Group has established a policy that requires the phone tree to be exercised a minimum of one time per year. The notification system might occasionally be activated for important non-emergency events serving the dual purpose of providing pertinent information to the residents and exercising the tree. Initially, the Task Group expects two or three trial runs to gather cell phone and work numbers and to work out the bugs. The Task Group would like to time these trial runs. Prior notice will be given to those at the bottom of each tree to call back to a central local to give time elapsed info.

Some of you may be familiar with the community phone tree which has existed somewhat informally for several years. The new system is substantially different in that all residents participate on some level. The Trees are ordered first by who is usually at home, then alphabetically. Every one person will be responsible to call two others.

In event of an emergency, Fire Department personnel will establish a concise, clear script to be used for every phone call. The script will include:

1. Type of incident
2. Location of incident
3. What to do

If you cannot reach a live person, "Jane Volunteer", leave a message on Jane's machine. Include the 3 basics and state that you will complete Jane's phone tree obligation. Now make the two calls that would have been Jane's responsibility. Do not stop making calls until you have spoken with a live person.

Remember, passing basic information around quickly is the goal. It is important not to tie up the phone lines with personal conversations.

Finally, every resident will be provided with a copy of the tree to which they've been assigned. A refreshed copy will be sent annually after feedback from the exercise is incorporated. Please plan to keep your phone tree with your phone to that it's immediately available in case of emergency.

Thanks to all the volunteers helping with this project and to all Colestin and Hilt residents for your cooperation in helping us enhance our emergency preparedness.