

The Role of the Department of Safety in our Community

By Natalie Trujillo, Director of Safety

The Department of Safety is a Pine Mountain Lake operation that fulfills the public safety needs for the Association and members alike. We are staffed by one Director, two Sergeants and 12 Safety Officers. All of our Safety employees are Guard Card certified by the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, which was made mandatory by California state law.

Our fifteen staff members process approximately 15,500 vehicles through the Main Gate each month, answer 4,000 phone calls on average per month and respond to countless calls for assistance.

The Safety Department is housed in two separate buildings, the former Pine Mountain Lake Firehouse and the Main Gate. The Main Gate operates the guest lane window, the pedestrian window and provides continuous observation of the property owner lane should ever a problem arise. The Firehouse was converted to house the Director and Sergeant's offices along with a storage area.

The Pine Mountain Lake Campground is also managed by the Department of Safety. We are responsible for answering questions regarding the Campground and booking reservations for property owners and the public. Safety Officers also patrol the Campground, post and remove reservation signs, operate the dumpstation and assist campers as needed.

Although we are not members of law enforcement, Safety Officers do practice repressive patrol techniques which aim to deter such crimes as burglary, theft and vandalism. We staff the Main Gate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round. The role of Safety staff is to assist and augment local agencies during emergencies, but we are not emergency medical technicians, paramedics or sworn peace officers. At one time the Department used the title of 'Security' instead of 'Safety.' A change in title was enacted in order to reflect the public safety focus of the Department. We are committed to providing members and guests of Pine Mountain Lake with excellent service of many varieties. Some of the services we currently provide are:

- Operating the dispatch command center and Main Gate
- Greeting and screening incoming traffic
- Assisting members with a variety of questions, including requests for service and/or assistance
- Verifying property owner information and issuing guest passes
- Providing courtesy calls for property owner's guests that do not have passes
- Maintaining records of all incidents reported to the Safety Department
- Booking found property and releasing to verifiable owners
- Regulating temporary resident registration and associated fees

- Notification of special circumstances to non-resident property owners, i.e. water breaks, tree hazards, etc.
- Notifying agencies of emergency situations requiring their response
- Responding to emergency situations and providing secondary support to emergency agencies
- Opening, closing and conducting checks of all amenities
- Conducting daily and weekly special residence watches
- Patrolling all residential areas
- Responding to a variety of incidents involving suspicious circumstances and/or persons
- Hazard identification and containment
- Reporting law violations to the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office
- Conducting welfare checks
- Responding to amenity and residential alarm calls
- Intervening and addressing residential disturbances
- Enforcing Association parking restrictions
- Providing transportation for members in need of assistance
- Providing vehicle jump starts
- Property owner complaint mediation and resolution
- On-scene enforcement of Association CC&Rs and Resolutions
- Issuing courtesy notices and working in conjunction with Community Standards
- Investigation of member or Association property damage
- Inspecting roads for ice and/or hazardous conditions
- Dead animal retrieval and disposal
- Dog impoundment and safe-keeping
- Dog disturbances and barking dog complaints
- Leash law enforcement
- Dog Registration and tag issuance
- Monitoring tennis and pickleball courts
- Scheduling tennis and pickleball reservations and issuing court passes
- Gate malfunction inspection and resolution
- Investigation of gate follow throughs, tampering complaints and damage
- Collecting Campground fees and booking reservations
- Monitoring Campground activity
- Dumpstation operation
- Supplying Moore Brothers garbage bags
- Selling fishing licenses
- Off-season boat registration
- Weekend gate card issuance
- Traffic control at vehicle accident scenes
- Assisting the Tuolumne County Sheriff's Department as needed
- Event management
- Emergency Evacuation Plan implementation and response

Although we encounter a wide spectrum of questions from property owners, there are several specific questions that seem to come up more often than others. I will attempt to broadly paraphrase and answer a few of those pointed questions below.

Why do I need a PIN number? Don't you know I am who I say I am?

The Main Gate receives hundreds of calls per day from property owners all over the state of California and other areas of the country. Properties within Pine Mountain Lake also change ownership from time to time over the years. It would be a very daunting task for officers to learn

to recognize every individual property owner's voice. Therefore, your PIN number authenticates that it is in fact, you, who is calling and not a person without property owner rights or worse, an imposter. We operate using a process similar to that of a utility company or credit card company. Pieces of information, including your unit, lot, last name and PIN number, are used in conjunction to confirm your identity which allows us to quickly and efficiently assist you.

My neighbor's dog barks constantly and every time I call the Main Gate to report it nothing seems to get done.

Investigating a barking dog complaint is a process in which several steps are involved. A Safety Officer, upon receiving your complaint, will respond to the known area or suspected area if an exact location is not provided. The officer will then listen for the barking dog and confirm the exact unit and lot the dog is barking at. If the officer is unable to hear a barking dog within a reasonable period of time he or she will have to depart the area. If the dog is located, an Officer will need to complete a fixed post for a continuous thirty minute period, as defined by Tuolumne County Ordinance 6.04.365.

Once we confirm a barking dog violation, an officer has several options. The Officer can make contact with the property owner and issue them a verbal warning, especially if problems with their barking dog have not occurred in the recent past. The officer can make contact with the owner and issue them a Courtesy Notice of Violation, thereby notifying the property owner that their barking dog has become a nuisance. The officer can also issue a Courtesy Notice of Violation if the property owner is unavailable. A barking dog cannot be quieted if the owner is not home at the time of the violation, but compliance, in writing, can still be requested. In many instances, the PML Community Standards Specialist, Suzette Lafranchi, will take over enforcement proceedings in order to secure compliance from members with barking dogs.

Why are my guests being asked to show identification at the Main Gate?

Any person entering Pine Mountain Lake through the Main Gate guest lane without a pass will be asked to show identification, such as a California driver's license, to the Safety Officer at the window. This provides Safety Officers with the opportunity to quickly look up the guest's entry pass using the correct name and spelling of each and to quickly confirm their status as a guest permitted to visit your residence. Asking for photo identification further prevents solicitors and unannounced guests from just showing up on your doorstep. It is not meant to harass or challenge the legitimacy of any guest arriving at Pine Mountain Lake, but instead enables us to quickly and accurately check guests in.

I have a complaint about my neighbor. Are you going to reveal my identity to them?

When a property owner calls the Main Gate to report a violation of any variety, they will be asked for their unit and lot, last name or some other type of identifying information. This is recorded along with the details surrounding the complaint. We use this information to better assist the member, whether it means contacting them in the future with further details or at the very least making a record that such an incident occurred and what the outcome may have been.

Although the Covenants Committee may formally request this information, we do not informally disclose reporting party information to anyone.

I just called the Main Gate about the power outage/water break/phone line disruption and they did not have any new details to give me. Why is this?

It is always recommended that members contact the service source first before contacting the Main Gate. Although we do try to stay abreast of developing situations, there are times when we are unable to gather any specific information beyond what is available to property owners. There are also occasions, during severe weather storms for example, that the Main Gate is so inundated by phone calls that we are unable to contact the service provider for the most up-to-date information. Sometimes the outage or disruption is localized to one residence, in which case the member needs to contact the service provider directly for assistance. For reference purposes: PG&E's main number is 1-800-743-5000, Groveland Community Services District can be reached at (209) 962-7161 and AT&T's customer service number is 1-800-288-2020.

Matters of a Domestic Nature

Property owners sometimes contact the Safety Department looking for intervention in domestic dispute and violence situations. Safety Officers are here to fulfill a need within the public safety realm of Pine Mountain Lake and are unarmed civilian officers that have not received training to mediate unpredictable domestic issues. In the eyes of the law we have the same enforcement capabilities as an ordinary citizen. Providing civil standbys and interceding in domestic matters is outside the boundaries of our jurisdiction as Safety Officers.

I would never presume to advise, or instruct my staff to advise, a member on when it may be necessary to involve the authorities. Each situation is different and only those involved have the information necessary to make a judgment call on whether or not to involve law enforcement. While domestic disputes do not necessarily constitute a crime, domestic violence is a crime and should be handled by trained law enforcement officers. Law enforcement personnel have the ability to provide safety for the victim(s) involved, make arrests as need be and assist victims with additional support services. The Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office can be reached by calling their non-emergency number at (209) 533-5815 or by calling 911 for an emergency if you are ever in need of domestic dispute or violence assistance.

The role of a Safety Officer can oftentimes be a thankless one. We are the resource that is called out to ask parties to cease, dogs to remain off the golf course and generally to enforce the CC&Rs and resolutions adopted by the Association. We never aim to ruin anyone's fun but we are here to maintain Pine Mountain Lake law and order.

Did you know?

In 1973:

- There were only 337 homes built in Pine Mountain Lake.
- Pine Mountain Lake had its own fire department and ambulance.

- The Campground charged \$1.00 per day, \$5.00 per week and \$15.00 per month to camp.
- The 25 mile per hour speed limit was adopted.
- The very first woman was hired by the Department.