



JUST THE FACTS - Using Cal Fire for Fire Safety Inspections on Member-Owned Properties

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A suggestion was posted online that we should use Cal Fire to handle fire safety inspections of member-owned property in PML. The short answer is that Cal Fire does not have the resources or staffing to conduct inspections within our community.

Cal Fire has a volunteer program called VIP or Volunteers in Prevention. In recent years, our fire safety staff has participated in this program so that we could utilize some of the Cal Fire training and resources to augment our fire safety program. This was with the understanding that Cal Fire would inevitably take action against the owners of properties that were in the worst condition, who have not responded to PML.

Unfortunately, the program did not work out after hundreds of inspections and follow-up inspection letters. We finally asked Cal Fire to consider taking action on the 10 worst properties. The outcome was poor and no property owners received a fine for non-compliance. The main issue was that Cal Fire did not have the staff to pursue enforcement in our community. They are focused on fighting the wildfires taking place all over the state.

As a result we discontinued our participation in the Cal Fire VIP program and focused on improving our own Fire Safety program. We updated our rules and the Board of Directors adopted them. We hired additional inspectors and restructured the entire team so that instead of sending out hundreds of enforcement letters to members, with no real follow-up, we focused on communication and educating members on the importance of making their property fire safe. This year to date our PML Fire Safety team has performed over 1,000 inspections and enforced on 350+ lots. They have

fielded or made over 1,500 phone calls and interacted on a personal level assisting homeowners countless more.

We still follow Cal Fire regulations and utilize whatever resources they are willing to provide. We just know that they are under a tremendous strain and lack of staffing and resources. Hopefully they will receive the funding they need to protect our community when a fire threatens us. Until then, we will continue to pursue our own fire safety program.

For more information regarding Fire Safety in Pine Mountain Lake, please contact our Fire Safety Coordinator, Joe Milani at (209) 990-5260.