

Board of Directors
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Los Altos, CA

September 11, 2019

Subject: Fire escape for Blackberry Hill Road residents

Dear Board Members,

The Blackberry Hill Road neighborhood recently met with representatives from the Santa Clara County fire department. We didn't talk about what to do if there is a fire. We talked about what to do **when** there is a fire. It was a tad terrifying.

Our homes are on a hillside comprised largely of flammable brush, much of it in the Midpeninsula Open Space, and only accessible via a road that is too narrow in spots for a fire engine and a car to pass.

We were advised to come up with another way out.

As it turns out, an old dirt road on Midpeninsula property might do the trick but it's overgrown now so we aren't sure.

It would be very much appreciated if you could please scout this road to see if it can become our fire escape route. This just might save some lives.

Respectfully,



Cathy Del Masso



Los Gatos, CA 95030





Midpeninsula Regional
OpenSpace

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

GENERAL MANAGER
Ana M. Ruiz

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Pete Siemens
Yoriko Kishimoto
Jed Cyr
Curt Riffle
Karen Holman
Larry Hassett
Zoe Kersteen-Tucker

September 25, 2019

Cathy Del Masso
Los Gatos, CA 95030

Re: Fire Escape for Blackberry Hill Residents

Dear Cathy Del Masso,

Thank you for your letter and appearing before the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) Board of Directors (Board) on September 11, 2019. As you were made aware at the meeting, the Board has directed the General Manager to assign staff to perform an initial analysis of your request. More specifically, staff will be looking at the feasibility of opening an escape route from the end of Blackberry Hill Road to the Kennedy Trail in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve.

Staff will shortly contact you directly to discuss potential options. One known viable and recommended option at this time is for the private property owners to work on Blackberry Hill Road to provide better clearance and pullouts for vehicle passage where feasible. Additionally, homeowners are advised to clear vegetation around their homes and harden their houses against fire. Midpen provides Defensible Space Permits for homeowners to complete the recommended 100 feet of clearance for structures that abut Midpen lands. Regarding road maintenance and road brushing, the responsibility is typically set forth in a road agreement or, in the absence of an agreement, financial responsibility for road maintenance is based on proportional use of the road. Staff is available to work with you and your neighbors if you are interested in pursuing additional vegetation clearance through the approximately one-half mile of Blackberry Hill Road through Midpen property.

We appreciate the community coming together to seek opportunities to enhance wildfire safety in the wildland-urban interface. We look forward to our continued discussions.

Sincerely,

Pete Siemens
Board President