

La Habra Heights Fire Watch Operations Manual (Rev. 11 June 2010)

Purpose of La Habra Heights Fire Watch, Inc. (LHHFW)

Our Reality – Our Challenge: The City of La Habra Heights (“LHH”) covers 6.20 square miles of rolling hills, valleys and canyons in the arid Puente Hills of Los Angeles County bordering Orange County. Since incorporation in 1978, through the dedication and focus of many individuals on our LHH General Plan, we continue to maintain a “small town” atmosphere even though being located between two large, heavily developed counties.

The community is a wonderful mix of open space with equestrian, bicycle and hiking trails and residential areas of modest to moderate sized dwellings with a growing number of large homes.

Our City is a rural community of 6,000 residents living on mostly acre or larger lots with no sidewalks or streetlights and with the majority dependent upon septic systems. Residents have encouraged avian and animal husbandry and the growth of avocado, citrus, fruit and nut tree groves and other gardening;

As a rural residential community, La Habra Heights offers very limited revenue to the operation of the city and residents must pay special fees for road improvements and paramedic/fire department service

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This is a lifestyle we wish to maintain though it does pose challenges. Of those challenges, fire safety has been the greatest. We continue to support a small professionally led/volunteer-staffed (mostly fire academy graduates) fire department with fire fighting equipment and personnel based in the center of town.

LHH has East and West orientations with the furthest Westerly city line 5.6 miles from the most easterly. Many of our streets and roads are narrow, winding and have varying widths, making the passage of larger vehicles, such as fire engines, problematic and sometimes compels emergency equipment to be routed on larger streets and highways.

Although this is a wonderful tradition, our local fire fighting resources are limited, as there is only one active fire station and a limited number of staff to serve the entire City. With Whittier Blvd., Harbor Blvd. and Hacienda Road carrying increasing numbers of cars, emergency response times to the outer borders of the community can be lengthy.

Our Challenge – Our Response: Fire Watch is a dedicated group of individuals that has organized to provide added patrols to high risk areas throughout the community. Our mission is to educate and promote active participation in fire prevention and mitigation and to provide area wide communication related to hazard risks to life and/or property and communicate the status of existing incidents.

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Our plan is to patrol the canyons, hills, interior and perimeters of the City and communicate any suspicious behavior or fires to the Sheriff or Fire Department immediately. While waiting for the Fire Department to arrive, some members (those that are appropriately trained) may be able to extinguish a small fire they might encounter.

We understand that a very small fire, controlled early, can be prevented from becoming one with the potential to destroy property and/or injure people or animals. The more individuals we have watching out for us, the safer our community will be. This will help support the efforts of our dedicated Fire Department.

1. **LHHFW Organization**

- a) California Fire Safe Council: La Habra Heights Fire Watch represents the California Fire Safe Council (CAFSC), (<http://www.firesafecouncil.org/about/index.cfm>) for our area. The CAFSC is a coalition of government and private entities with the common purpose of mobilizing citizens with regard to wildfire prevention and education.
- b) Membership: LHHFW membership is open to any person who is interested in furthering the Mission of the organization and is divided into two categories, **Full and Associate**. Membership is particularly encouraged for

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individuals residing in La Habra Heights, CA and adjoining cities where wildfires in La Habra Heights could create a common danger.

Full membership is limited to those who own or have been assigned a qualified UHF radio in the 440-512 MHZ range and call signs are issued to those individuals who thereby assume certain reporting responsibilities.

Associate members are those who wish to participate in LHFW programs and activities but choose not to be assigned a 2-way radio..

- c) Directors: Directors were initially selected by the organizers. They can be removed and replaced by a majority vote of the board or as otherwise provided in the Bylaws.

There are presently four directors authorized, and three seats are filled as follows: George Edwards, Doug Rees and Greg Steffle. One director position is vacant.

- d) Officers: Greg Steffle currently serves as Chief Executive and Executive Director, George Edwardz as Secretary, Julie Ragozzino serves as Treasurer and Doug Rees as a Director.

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- e) Members: Full and Associate members carry out the mission of the organization as agreed during monthly general meetings, to which the general public is invited.

- f) Legal Structure: California domestic not for profit corporation. Principal place of business (Operations & Accounting): La Habra Heights Fire Watch Inc., 1642 Fullerton Road La Habra Heights, CA 90631 (voice) 562-483-4800 (facsimile) 951-943-0263. Principal place of business (Legal & Tax) c/o Greg Steffire, 8600 Banana Avenue, Fontana CA 92335 (909) 355-4120.

- g) Funding: The LHHFW program funding depends upon donations of money, items or in kind participation, fund raising activities, grants and sponsorship by interested parties. Donations are accepted and documented by the giving of a Deed of Gift acknowledgment.

- h) Tax Exempt Status: Federally tax exempt 501.(c)(3). Stated Purpose: “This corporation has been formed for charitable purposes, to educate and promote the active participation of residents and other interested groups in the City of La Habra Heights, California and surrounds in matters of fire and personal safety.”

Preventative activities and communication will be used to mitigate the risks of wildfires and other possible threatening

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incidents (such as earthquake and personal assault) within the city. In cooperation with local authorities, a group of active volunteers will patrol the city and report upon matters bearing upon fire and public safety.

2. LHHFW Communications Network

- a) Mobile Radio Network: La Habra Heights' cellular communications are spotty at best. Consequently, in order to permit mobile volunteers the ability to report on matters affecting fire and public safety, La Habra Heights Fire Watch has constructed and operates a mobile radio network consisting of four repeaters and numerous UHF hand held radios, preprogrammed to permit easy instantaneous communication among members and with proper local public or private agencies when needed.

- b) Emergency Alert System: Emergency (EAS) alerts for the La Habra Heights area are carried on the Fire Watch repeater system. These alerts include, but are not limited to: national weather service, Los Angeles Sheriffs Department, Orange County Sheriffs Department, the California Office of Emergency Services and other state and national agencies needing to communicate emergencies.

- c) Mobile radio system: RADIO FREQUENCIES (Updated: 8/15/08) Modern scanner recommended (N= Narrow band,

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W=Wide band). Each hand held radio is programmed with the ability to connect to a telephone direct dial system. {See, attached Exhibit]

(1) Repeaters: La Habra Heights Fire Watch/Fire Safe Council:

Heights 1 461.8875 (N) D 516

Heights 1A 461.8875 (N) D 516

Heights 2 461.8875 (N) PL 151.4

Heights 3 461.8875 (N) Powder Canyon B/U D 516

Heights 4 462.3875 (N) Lukens/Santiago Peak D 703

2) LHH Fire Department: (453.3875 (N) D131 33.740 (W)

3) LHH County Water District:: 47.880 (w)

4) Los Angeles County Fire Department:

Blue 1 470.5625 Response

Blue 2 470.4375 LA Backup

Blue 6 470.4125 North of Skyline

Blue 8 470.5375 Countywide Dispatch

Blue 13 453.6750 La Habra/LHH Response PL 151.4

Frequencies may change (refer to website for updated information).

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- 5) Call signs for LHHFW members:
- 00-99 Fire prevention/patrol equipment
 - 100-199 LHH Residents
 - 200-299 La Habra residents
 - 300-399 CERT (emergency)
 - 400-499 associated members
 - 500-599 reserved
 - 600-699 training/temporary
 - 700-799 LHH Fire Department
 - 800-899 reserved
 - 900-999 Law enforcement

d) Interoperability of 2-way radio network with private or public agencies.

Integration to local, state and Federal radio networks and ensuring interoperability with both Digital P25 and analog radio systems will be encouraged to provide for the reporting of immediate threats to life and or property or during a local and/or emergency condition.

Network Access will be provided per request by the network controller or La Habra Heights Fire Watch Board member where no MOU is in place with the agency or organization needing to communicate urgent messages via the La Habra Heights 2-way radio system.

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We encourage interoperability with, among others: City of La Habra Heights, La Habra Heights Fire Department, American Red Cross Orange County and Rio Hondo Chapters, City of La Habra, La Habra Police Department, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, its DCS (Amateur Radio) unit and Los Angeles and Orange County Fire Safe Councils.

e) Recording of 2-way radio traffic on La Habra Heights Fire Watch Network.

All two-way traffic on Heights 1-4, including talk around (direct) transmissions, are subject to recording, review and archiving.

f) Policy on Radio Programming

No UHF 2-way radio will be programmed to transmit on unauthorized frequencies by the La Habra Heights Fire Watch or its agents, unless authorized by the agency requesting interoperability. LHHFW will not permit any unauthorized communications.

g) Official Website

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The La Habra Heights Fire Watch will maintain: www.LHHFIREWATCH.com to provide and communicate information to further its mission of prevention of fire and life threatening incidents in and around La Habra Heights. Our website contains information and referrals for our members and the general public which the board has determined are consistent with our mission.

Content on the website is screened and approved by the Board as suggestions for additions are received. As Fire Watch is apolitical, we only carry references to news as a public service and with full attribution.

h) AM Radio Station 1690 (La Habra Valley)

La Habra Heights Fire Watch Inc. is licensed to operate an AM TIS (Traveler Information Station) transmitter within the rules and regulations set forth by the Federal communications commission. The transmitter is designed to provide local weather conditions including Red Flag warnings that can affect travel in and around the La Habra Valley. In addition the TIS system is used to communicate event information such as parking and local areas of interest. EAS (Emergency Alert System) warnings and orders for evacuation are to be transmitted if the need arises. Network access to the system is currently provided to County, State and Federal agencies.

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i) EAS system for La Habra Valley and Heights

The La Habra Heights Fire Watch radio network participates on a voluntary basis in the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Alerts for the County, State and Federal government are to be transmitted at anytime via a special 2 tone pre-alert to LHHFW members as is anyone with scanners capable of receiving UHF radio transmissions. EAS transmissions meant for the La Habra Valley or Heights will be made available to the local cable operator and national direct from satellite broadcast providers on a per request basis. EAS messages will be broadcast on TIS transmitter AM 1690.

3. LHHFW Policies and Procedures:

Fire Watch volunteers are encouraged to work with a patrol partner. Volunteers should check in by radio when commencing patrol and in thirty (30) minute increments until the patrol has concluded and so noted to the FW dispatcher on duty by radio.

Volunteers are NOT to place themselves in danger.

Volunteers are to contact and report to appropriate authorities any suspicious behavior; suspected fire incident(s) or other threatening incident that, in their view, deserves the attention of authorities.

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Volunteers will use the Emergency Contact list prepared and distributed by LHHFW. Volunteers are encouraged to delegate follow up to LHHFW members who are actively monitoring their initial report where appropriate.

Volunteers should only attempt to manage a fire or incident that is within the scope of their training and only AFTER alerting LHHFD or LACO Sheriff Department by radio. Once authorities arrive, volunteers will take any further direction from the responsible officer on scene. If the responsible officer believes that a volunteer's assistance is no longer needed, he/she should clear the area and call in his/her report to the LHHFW dispatcher.

Volunteers shall NOT attempt to respond to any fire, medical or public assistance calls intended for Emergency Services unless specifically requested to do so by the proper authorities.

If volunteers come upon a situation that requires medical attention, the volunteer may assist, with the permission or implied permission of the victim or responsible party; however, the volunteer is to radio for help prior to rendering aid. When assisting, offer only help that is within the scope of your training.

Once authorities arrive, volunteers will take further direction from the responsible officer on scene. If the responsible officer believes that a volunteer's assistance is no longer needed, he/she should clear the area and call in his/her report to the LHHFW dispatcher.

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4. **LHHFW Outreach**

a) Phone tree:

LHHFW supports the establishment and maintenance of a telephonic means of delivering emergency information throughout La Habra Heights via a phone tree (a compilation of resident phone numbers provided to an established managed group of volunteer callers.) They will extend notification by phone, continued consecutively until the listings have been notified.

b) Reverse 911 technology:

LHH Fire Watch supports the establishment and extension of reverse 911 technology throughout La Habra Heights to be managed by the appropriate safety agency. Once such a system becomes active in La Habra Heights, the Fire Watch phone tree will be adjunctive only.

c) Listing of Risk Sensitive Residents:

LHHFW supports the compilation and maintenance of a listing of residents who require special assistance or care

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during evacuation and/or whose homes are so located as to make conventional fire rescue difficult.

d) Large/specialty animal evacuation:

LHHFW supports the compilation and maintenance, if feasible, of a listing of the owners of large or specialty animal breeds that require particular care to evacuate. Where possible and prudent, LHHFW will coordinate such listing with other LHH animal oriented organizations: Highland Riders, 4-H and the Lost Animal Network.

5. LHHFW Community Patrols

a) Patrol Types:

Definition: The volunteer's act or assignment of a person or persons to patrol an area (by foot, bicycle, horseback or vehicle) for the purpose of identifying emergency conditions or suspicious behaviors and, where reasonably warranted, to report same to the appropriate authorities and area occupants who may be affected by the situation.

b) Type 1 Patrol:

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Basic inspection patrol -- foot patrol, bicycle, equestrian and vehicular. Volunteers will announce that they are commencing a Type 1 Patrol and the general area being patrolled. Volunteers will carry their radio during the duration of patrol. This type patrol is normally done as an adjunct to other life activities such as shopping, traveling to and from work and the like.

If time permits take circuitous routes to your destinations in order to cover more area. Type 1 Patrol Equipment: Mobile-radio; Phone/Radio List; Volunteer LHHFW Manual; Fire Extinguisher (*); First Aid Kit (*).

c) Type 2 Patrol:

May be activated at any time. Type 2 Patrol will be activated if personnel are available, where the LHHFD is expected to be on call for an extended period of time or there is reason for several consecutive calls (i.e. widespread disaster).

Duties/Equipment/Skills:

Patrol areas of LHH that are at high risk of fire danger;

Patrol with partner wherever possible;

Report as specified in Type 1

Fire Extinguisher

First Aid Kit

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Gloves/Eye Goggles

Hard Hat

Map of City / LHH Fire Map

Radio/Phone List

Volunteer Manual

Mobile Radio

e) Type 3 Patrol:

May be activated at any time but will be activated, if personnel are available, when the fire threat is high or extreme. Additionally, where the LHHFD is expected to be on call for an extended period of time or there is reason for several consecutive calls (i.e. widespread disaster), Type 3 Patrol will be activated as personnel becomes available and a LHHFW Dispatcher monitors.

Duties/Equipment/Skills

Patrol in the FW Patrol Engine with a partner is specifically for areas with high risk of fire threat ignition. Volunteers will be qualified in operation of engine.

Maintain consistent radio communication with activated dispatcher. Accept direction of other volunteers on patrol as relayed and summarized by dispatcher.

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Report to dispatcher any identified emergency conditions and render aid (only after reporting proper authorities) that is within the skill set of the volunteer.

Aid: First Aid; AED; CERT.

Volunteers will be trained in use of Patrol Engine equipment. Use flame retardant clothing, masks, hats, gloves. Use tools: shovels, axe, hammer, bolt cutters (see, onboard inventory list).

For each incident reported, volunteers will prepare a Fire Watch Incident Report. One copy is to be maintained in a Master Incident Report file chronologically.

6. Fire Related Incidents

a) Patrol & Observation

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The La Habra Heights Fire Watch organization patrols, reports on conditions and communicates urgent EAS messages 24 a day 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

b) Mission during incidents

The Fire Watch **primary mission is prevention.**

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During an incident or noteworthy event, the mission will change to reporting and/or communicating lifesaving information. Members will be allowed to utilize the 2-way radio network to report on and from the incident and provide eyewitness news reports in order to inform residents of La Habra Heights through wire and broadcast news services.

An incident or noteworthy event is determined by the La Habra Heights Fire Watch Board members, or its assigned public information officer. Incidents are not limited to within the boundaries of the City of La Habra Heights but extend to its adjacent areas.

7. Evacuation information dissemination

No order for evacuation will be transmitted unless authorized by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department or local law enforcement agency charged with issuing the evacuation order. The La Habra Heights Fire Watch will assist as directed to communicate the order via its 2-way radio network and AM TIS radio transmitter, phone tree, or any other available means.

8. Red Flag (Watch) Warning

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- a) Policies and procedures: Once LACFD, National Weather Service or LHHFD declare a Red Flag warning, the LHHFW Network Coordinator will enter the message into the LHHFW radio system which will thereafter repeat hourly until the warning or watch has expired.
- b) Alerting methods: LHHFW Mobile Radio System; LHHFW Website will be linked to Los Angeles County Fire Department Fire Danger Analysis Forecast.
- c) Cooperating agencies: Los Angeles County Fire Department, La Habra Heights Fire Department; National Weather Service (NOAA). Los Angeles County Sheriff Department, La Habra Police Department.
- d) RAWS: RAWS stands for Remote Automatic Weather Station (satellite telemetry). LHHFW will actively pursue the establishment of a RAWS station within the city. (see, <http://www.fs.fed.us/raws/raws101.shtml>)

9. Recommended Practices

- a) Wildfire Preparedness Information/ Public Safety

LHHFW will collect and disseminate information related to wildland fire prevention and safety within La Habra Heights.

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LHHFW will provide examples of prevention activities around homes that show “what right looks like. “

LHHFW, in collaboration with the LHH fire department, support the fire prevention effort and road clearance program.

10. Resource Guide

LHHFW will maintain a and frequently update a resource guide to assist homeowners in locating information, materials or equipment used to protect residential property, residents and animals.

LHHFW will provide informational public programs that introduce experts in wildfire preparedness and other safety measures to members and the general public.

11. Emergency Activities Planning & Preparation

LHHFW will collect, maintain and provide information for actions homeowners may wish to consider taking when threatened by a wildfire, initial earthquake and after shocks, and other emergencies.

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With fire department oversight, LHHFW will develop fire hazard zone maps that depict high hazard areas and areas with difficult access and egress.

With fire department oversight and cooperation, LHHFW will identify safe travel and evacuation routes and safe refuge areas.

LHHFW will assist public authorities and others in the development of LHH evacuation plans. LHHFW will attempt to identify special needs residents that may be unable to evacuate on their own and to make such data available in the event of emergencies.

LHHFW will assist public authorities and others in the development of an animal evacuation plan.

12. Fire Support Activities

In conjunction with the LHH fire department, LHHFW will develop emergency activities that support the fire department's fire fighting effort.

13. Other Safety Support Activities

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LHHFW will coordinate pre-agreed emergency support activities with the LHH fire department, LACO Sheriff Department, and related governmental and community organizations.

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