

Hillsdale NET leader is looking for volunteers to help during emergencies

By Janet Goetze
The Southwest Portland Post

Lisa DeGraaf is looking for more good people to help their neighbors in times of emergency. In January, she became head of the Hillsdale Neighborhood Emergency Team and Brett Matthews joined her as associate team leader.

Volunteers throughout the city may join neighborhood teams, which are trained by the Portland Bureau of Emergency Services to aid their own families and neighbors in case of a severe winter storm, flood, major earthquake or other disaster.

A new concern for Hillsdale is wildfire. Last September, sparks from a downed electrical wire ignited dry brush near Terwilliger Parkway and Capitol Highway, sending flames up the hillside and smoke throughout the area.

The Fire Bureau doused the flames fairly rapidly, but Glenn Bridger, who lives in a *cul de sac* where smoke drifted, brought the question of fire danger to the Hillsdale Alliance earlier this year. The Alliance includes representatives of several neighborhood organizations who meet quarterly to discuss issues important to Hillsdale.

With much of the neighborhood developed on hillsides with thick brush, temperatures gradually rising and *culs de sac* without escape routes, Alliance representatives agreed that residents need more information about

how to protect themselves from fire.

DeGraaf talked to staff at the Fire Bureau's Station 5 and learned a video and other information are available for residents. In addition, she said, the bureau has specially trained mobile wildfire units to fight blazes like the one Hillsdale saw last September.

Bureau personnel also can advise residents on creating "defensible space" around their homes. This means moving flammable material such as firewood, tree limbs, recreational vehicles and boats away from the house. Fire-resistant roofs, siding and decks also are advised.

After pointing out to firefighters that residents need safety information, DeGraaf said, "It's on their radar, and they are ramping up a bit of their outreach."

The Hillsdale NET, she said, will follow up and add information about emergency teams at the Hillsdale Farmer's Market and other gatherings.

DeGraaf joined Hillsdale's team after reading about the program in a newspaper article more than a year ago. She took the 30-hour training course which includes first aid, radios and communication, and search and rescue of people in collapsed buildings.

In the training, she also learned how the Bureau of Emergency Services, the Fire Bureau and other agencies communicate and coordinate activities during emergencies.

Techniques for safely rescuing



On Sept. 11, 2014, crews from Portland Fire Bureau's Station 5 responded to a wildfire on Southwest Capitol Highway near Terwilliger Boulevard. (Photo courtesy of Portland Fire & Rescue)

people or putting out a fire are part of the training to protect volunteers, she added.

"You don't put yourself in danger," she said, because an injured volunteer couldn't help neighbors.

Volunteers who successfully complete the initial training are required to volunteer a total of 12 hours a year to remain team members.

The hours could include taking new classes or participating in outreach activities, DeGraaf said, as well as attending volunteers' informational meetings.

"We all share information," she said. "It's a communal type of program."

DeGraaf lived in Milwaukie before moving to Hillsdale about four years ago. However, she previously lived in Colorado where wildfires, she said, "always are an issue."

"Because it's green and lush, you think wildfires wouldn't be a concern here," she said. "But that's not true anymore." NET information is available at this website: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/pbem/31667>.

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