

La Selva surf-rescue team disbanded — but not gone

By LANE WALLACE
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Reasoning that its volunteer surf-rescue team was no longer functioning as it had been, Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District directors voted last night to officially disband the group.

The action doesn't mean there won't be people available for surf rescues. Four full-time Aptos-La Selva firemen are trained in surf rescue and will be free to respond to calls when off-duty, and the State Department of Parks and Recreation has two full-time and three part-time lifeguards for state beaches in Santa Cruz County.

Fire Chief Al Forbes said the board took its action because directors "didn't want to give the impression" that there was an active surf-rescue team.

The team, formed in 1979, was made up of volunteer firefighters from the La Selva Fire District. But when the La Selva District merged with Aptos last year, the volunteer contingent was done away with.

That left the surf-rescue volunteers with only aquatic emergencies to respond to. In the last 3½ years, there have been 18 surf-rescue calls, Forbes said. "In all honesty, there isn't enough action to keep a guy going" with interest in the training, he said.

On at least three occasions in the last year, Forbes said, there were calls for the surf-rescue team that didn't get a response.

Forbes said of 18 calls since 1984, 15 were on state beaches.

The fire district had dis-

cussed the possibility of a deal with the State Department of Recreation in which the state would have taken over the pager system (used for surf-rescue calls) and the district's truck and surfboards.

The state also asked for \$2,600 from the district for maintaining the pager system. The board rejected that proposal and will keep the truck and surfboards.

Tom Blalock of the State Parks and Recreation Department's Aptos office noted that the five lifeguards have 20 miles of state beaches to patrol. "It's a limited resource," he said.

The four firemen with surf-rescue training will have pagers to receive surf rescue calls while off-duty, but the fire district will not require them to go.

"They'll be just like another surfer," said Forbes, who estimated that "98 percent" of surf rescues are done by surfers.

The district will continue to respond to medical emergencies at the beach, but on-duty

firemen will not go into the water, Forbes said.

In another matter, fire directors voted unanimously to appeal a decision by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) to add the Redwood Heights area off Freedom Boulevard to a proposed annexation in the Day Valley area.

Residents of the Day Valley-Cox Road area, which covers about 500 homes, had applied for annexation to the fire district.

LAFCO, which has the power to amend annexations, added the Redwood Heights area, west of Freedom Boulevard, to the annexation.

Forbes said the fire board opposed the annexation because the roads and water supply are "very marginal."

Forbes said there had been no response from residents of Redwood Heights, an area of 12 to 15 homes and some unimproved land.