

Green Sheet



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Code probers picked; inspections to resume

Fire inspections will be resumed by Aptos firemen this week.

The decision was made Tuesday night by the district's board of directors after a seven member committee was established by the board to examine the inspection procedures used by firemen in checking commercial buildings.

Led by board vice-chairman Stewart Davis, the committee will be comprised of seven members—Davis, director Don Eddlemon, two representatives from the Aptos Council of Improvement Associations, two people from the business community, Aptos fire fighters association president Jim Kerr and Fire Captain Bob Thompson, who wrote the inspection manual now being used by firemen.

Last week, nearly 200 people turned out for a public meeting on the department's code enforcement and complaints centering on the inspection of the Poor Clares convent. Tuesday, just two residents not connected with the fire department showed up at the meeting.

Formation of the committee was proposed by board chairman

Richard Duchscher. The meetings, under a recently-amended state law, are public. The first meeting will be held Tuesday, Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m. at the Aptos fire station.

The department is now faced with a March 15 inspection by the Insurance Services Office to see if the district has improved service to the point that it can qualify for a lower fire insurance rating. Since the board ordered inspection suspended in mid-December, firemen have been worried that they won't be able to complete the commercial-type inspections before the ISO engineers arrive.

Chinn now feels that if the weather remains good, the inspections can be completed in another two weeks.

The department is still going to be graded down on the fire prevention program, not because of present inadequacies in the inspections or records, but simply because the ISO requires three years of records for maximum credit.

"We'll be hit fairly heavily for not having three years of records," Chinn said Wednesday. For commercial insurance

purposes, the district is rated at class 9 and merchants are paying staggering fire insurance bills. Residents are formally rated at a class 8 because the department has shown that it can furnish 200 gallons of water for 20 minutes at a suburban, residential fire scene.

Chinn hadn't planned on an inspection for another two years, a period he felt the district could drop to a class five. But he was approached by ISO engineers who will be grading Scotts Valley soon with the idea of inspecting now, dropping the commercial insurance rate, and then a partial inspection two years from now when the water supply has been improved, giving further credit.

The best rating Chinn hopes to receive from the March inspection is a class 7, which results in significant commercial fire insurance premium decreases.

Davis said the first thing his committee will be doing is "examine the existing policies and procedures on fire inspection."

He rejected a suggestion by Duchscher that they should also look again at the fire code. "It

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Fire code

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seems that a lot of people had no personal questions about the inspections, but had questions about the code itself," Duchscher said.

Davis replied: "The code has been studied by a five member committee from the Council of Improvement Associations," adding that he doesn't think there was any purpose in studying it again.

"The committee might look into the existing problems, what really happened, what the public thinks happened, and then institute some acceptable public relations measures.

"As a second step, the committee should see that the fire department is complying with the fire inspection manual." Written by Thompson, the manual "is designed to provide direction and guidance for members of the fire department in the performance of their fire prevention duties."

Three major objectives for the firemen are spelled out in the 43 page manual:

—Acceptance of the challenge of fire prevention to each (member) of the department and conscientious fulfillment of this obligation.

—Equitable enforcement of the Aptos fire protection District Uniform Fire Code by all members of the department.

—Maintenance of the maximum degree of fire safety in all parts of the fire district through good judgment, initiative and diligent application to duty.

The introductory section of the manual concludes with one statement: "Fire prevention enforcement can be accomplished through engineering and education. We have something to sell. Let's sell it to our community and be proud we helped make it a safer place to live."