

Fire chief agrees to tone down

Reaffirms her '05 order to limit loud air horns

BY TOM CARTER

REKINDLING their three-year campaign to reduce noise pollution from fire trucks, the slow-burning residents of the Tenderloin got yet another promise from the fire chief that she would tune it down a notch.

Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White tacitly agreed at a public meeting in March to enforce her general order of October 2005 to abate noise, her response then to public griping over ear-splitting air horns and sirens. Now, 2½ years later, she's responding to the same old complaint.

The chief said the department wanted to be a good neighbor, but didn't specifically say she would re-emphasize that order.

But two weeks after the March 20 meeting, Hayes-White said Deputy Chief Richard Kochevar had

"reiterated" the order to the department. So Battalion 3, the 1067 Post St. station that is the main focus of complaints, got the message. The station sends its response vehicles through the Tenderloin down Hyde Street. Last year its sole engine answered 7,439 calls, more than any station in the country.

In a phone interview April 2, Hayes-White told *The Extra* she knew the original order had been effective because complaints dropped. "We figured no news was good news," she said.

But noise complaints started picking up again late last year, despite reminders at battalion counseling sessions to tone down. She said no personnel had been reported internally for excess siren noise, an infraction that could lead to discipline.

The order, with her emphasis in boldface, acknowledges that "excessive use of apparatus air horns has adversely impacted members of the public...Until further notice, air horns are not to be used as a primary response warning signal. Air horn activation is to be limited to **'extreme'** (high risk) circumstances, **using short blasts only.**"

Hayes-White showed up in the Tenderloin with seven department officers at the Community Leadership Alliance meeting in the Antonia Manor called to find "solutions" to Fire Department noise, according to CLA announcements. The chief had attended the February meeting of the Lower Polk Neighbors when it addressed the same issue.

"Many of you are becoming familiar faces," the chief said, scanning the crowd of 30.

CLA Director David Villa-Lobos,

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FOOD AID



PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

Empress Hotel residents shop for free food at the weekly market designed for them.

SRO shoppers

Empress Hotel — pioneer in a growing trend

BY TOM CARTER

GEORGE Johnson was once like a character in the Jack London short story "Love of Life," the guy who narrowly escapes starving to death, then always overeats to make up for his deprivation.

Johnson, homeless and miserable off

and on for 10 years, typically gorged himself at free dining rooms, then stuffed his pockets with food because he didn't know when he'd get his next meal.

Not anymore. Every Thursday, as a resident of the Empress Hotel on Eddy Street, Johnson has his pick of free food that will last him for a week in his room that's handily equipped with a microwave.

"I don't have to stuff myself and think that tomorrow I won't have enough to eat," Johnson says, as he waits in the lobby to unload a Food Bank truck delivery.

Johnson partakes at the Empress, which is what the Food Bank's Deanna Sverdlov calls "the model pantry" among SROs. A pantry is a large, varied load that the Food Bank delivers to a site for distribution. By having a designated shopper, an SRO such as the Empress can add food items of its residents' choice on a weekly shopping spree at the Food Bank warehouse. It means more choice, less waste and it's gaining favor among the supportive housing SROs and the city department that helps fund them.

The Food Bank requires that at least half of the SRO's residents avail themselves of the giveaway and the hotel must have volunteers willing to undergo a brief training to learn about the Food Bank.

The Food Bank, operating on food and cash donations in its mission to end hunger in the city, distributes 28 million pounds of food a year through a network of 500 nonprofits — from senior services and soup kitchens to day care centers and children's recreation programs. The Food Bank makes 220 weekly and monthly pantry deliveries.

Sverdlov, a senior program coordinator,



Roberta Goodman (right) shops at the Food Bank for Empress residents.

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