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Fireside

APPLEGATE VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT #9

2012

The Fire District's Newsletter Packed with Information & Tips. . . . Fall Issue

Welcome to our latest edition of the Fireside. This newsletter has been an on-going effort over the last ten years to assist us in communicating with our district patrons. Like many of the editions before, we have articles featuring several of our personnel, a few words from the Board of Directors, a few articles on various public education and prevention topics and an article that reports our progress with recruiting new volunteer firefighters.

In general the condition of the Applegate Fire District is strong. We have continued to manage our funds in a manner that keep us financially healthy. We continue to replace and upgrade as much equipment as we can afford, while attempting to put away a few dollars for continued replacement of those higher cost items. Our biggest challenge is and will be, recruiting an adequate number of volunteers to keep our numbers where they need to be. As you will read in a later article, last year's recruiting drive was the most successful in many years. While we may rejoice in that, statistics show that we must continue to recruit a similar number of firefighters in order to just maintain.

This fire district has a lot to be proud of; good equipment, great personnel (our most valued resource) and last, but not least, the amount of support that we receive from you the public we serve. Your support has come in so many ways – volunteering in one position or another, implementing fuel reduction projects on your land, participating in our fund raising events, planning ahead for future emergencies and supporting us financially.

For all of us here at the fire district, I would like to thank you for that continued support.

Brett Fillis, Fire Chief

Message from the Board...

As the newest member of the Board, I continue to learn about the many services that the Fire District staff and volunteers provide to our community. We're all aware of the most visible life- and property-saving services: responding to vehicle accident and home medical calls, and, of course, fighting fires. Fire prevention is another key area where District personnel help to keep us safe.

Hazardous fuels reduction, including creation of defensible spaces around homes, is an area where the District has provided assistance to property owners through grants and consultations. Participating in the Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Cooperative's "Ember Aware" Program, the District strives to educate homeowners about the need to clear areas around the home, free of material that can be ignited by hot embers carried by the wind, as was the case in the 2010 Oak Knoll Fire in Ashland. For example, roofs and gutters should be kept clear of leaves, needles, and other woody debris. Areas under decks and close to the house should be cleared of weeds and other combustible material.

Fire safety education is carried to children by District personnel visiting our schools. Children are told about fire prevention measures and what to do if a fire does happen. Kids also learn that they shouldn't be frightened by firefighters in full gear. In June, District staff took the Ember House educational exhibit to Applegate Valley Days at Cantrall-Buckley Park and talked with children and their parents about fire safety. In October, staff visited both schools to deliver Family Escape Plan lessons.

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms can provide early warning to save lives and property. Articles about smoke alarms have been published in previous issues of Fireside, and District personnel have even assisted homeowners with installation.

During my three years on the Board and two years on the Budget Committee before that, I have observed the ongoing efforts in training and community outreach. I have also seen the Fire Chief and his staff implement a regularly updated long-range plan for construction, equipment replacement, and other improvements. Your Applegate Fire District strives to provide you with the best possible service for the resources available. I am personally proud to be a part of it.

Dave Laananen, Board Member



Board of Directors

*Ed Temple
Craig Amann
Lyn Hennion
Bob Ettner
Dave Laananen*

Fire Chief
Brett Fillis

Operations Chief
Chris Wolfard
Division Chief/ Maint.
Brad Barnes
Office Manager
Carey Chaput
Shift Supervisors
*Greg Gilbert
Tailse Goodnough
Mike Kuntz*

Station 1
18489 N. Applegate Rd.
Station 2
7774 Upper Applegate Rd.
Station 3
1095 Upper Applegate Rd.
Station 4
12188 Williams Hwy
Station 5
2170 Hwy 238
Station 6
1076 Kubli Rd.
Station 7
7990 Griffin Ln.

*Check Smoke Alarms Regularly -
Replace batteries and older smoke alarms as needed.*

Fire District Water Sources

The Fire District has spent considerable energy improving our water delivery system. This has been accomplished in many ways. The number of water tenders that we operate, which is five, is only one way of delivery. The other facet is how we refill our water tenders once they are used. We have a number of sites where we have permission to access the river in various locations throughout the district. In areas that are not close to one of these major river sites, we have installed tanks, generally on private property. These tanks range between 10,000 and 12,000 gallons. To date, we have installed 21 tanks in the district and 16 of these have been installed in the last ten years. A few of these are at fire stations but most of them are on private property.

Last year we added a pump station in Applegate at the Wayside Park through cooperation of the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation who owns the park. The pump is a self-contained, diesel powered pump that can be available 365 days per year to supply water in that area should the need arise. Generally, the bulk of our water needs are handled through our water tenders and refill is done enroute back to the stations, but it is important to have various sites spread across the district for those larger fires.



Several of the tanks were recently outfitted with a float system that lets us know visually when they are getting low on water. All of the sites that do not have automatic refill capability are checked periodically and then topped off. We appreciate the private landowners that have allowed us to place these tanks on their property for everyone's potential use. We currently have tanks on Forest Creek Road, Humbug Creek Road, Griffin Lane, Little Applegate, 4 tanks scattered on Upper Applegate Road, 3 tanks on North Applegate Road, Kubli Road, Williams Hwy and 6 tanks scattered along Highway 238.



Insurance Services Office

ISO in short, is the company that rates fire departments. In most states, that assessment assists insurance companies in deciding how much to charge for insurance premiums. ISO is funded by insurance companies. The methodology that they use to measure capabilities of a fire department is referred to as the Suppression Rating Schedule. The Rating Schedule was drafted following World War II and had a few minor revisions during that time. Prior to the revision in the early 1980's, fire departments that did not have fire hydrants within 1000 feet of a building, the best rating available was a class 8. The lower the number, the better the rating and the lower your insurance premiums would be. After the change in the early 1980's, rural fire departments that did not operate off of hydrant systems could qualify for a class 6 or 7 if they could transport enough water to the fire scene, primarily using water tenders. In 1992, we qualified for a class 7 and in 2000 we qualified for a class 6.

During those years, we continued to add stations, personnel, engines and water tenders. Our rating improved appropriately. ISO is busy changing not only the rating schedule but the manner in which the schedule is being interpreted. Fire districts all over the state have seen their ratings change and this has not been an improvement. What is worse than ratings declining is that many of the fire stations that are typically not staffed with full time personnel are no longer being recognized. The Oregon Fire Service has become very concerned with these changes and the potential outcome for homeowners and have been in constant communications with the main offices of ISO in Chicago and New Jersey. Some insurance companies have gone as far as no longer following ISO and have shifted to a "historical loss" methodology, which in a number of ways is probably more reflective of a fire departments ability to fight fire. We bring this up at this time for informational purposes only and we will continue to see how this plays out in the next several months.

Prevent Flue Fires - Have Your Chimney Cleaned!
Be sure limbs have been trimmed 10' from chimneys

PLEASE JOIN OUR TEAM!!!

It is again time for our annual push to recruit new volunteers to join our Fire District 9 team. Following one of our best recruiting years in 2011, we had 14 new firefighters start in January 2012. Eleven of those new recruits are still with us. Our goal this year is again at least 14, in order to add at a minimum of two firefighters to each of our seven stations.

Even with those 11 remaining new recruits, our team size has only sustained itself. We continue to lose existing volunteers at a rapid pace, primarily through attrition: retirement, relocations, job changes, etc. Our volunteer numbers are currently the same as they were last year at this time. Recruitment has only kept up with turnover. This, of course, does not address our growing needs; and we find ourselves nearing a critical position, especially if we do not recruit equal or increased numbers for 2013.

It is a fact that some of our stations, on occasion, do not or cannot respond to 911 calls, the cause being the stations not having enough volunteers to ensure a response 24/7. As we all are aware, most volunteers have full time jobs and/or family obligations, and the firefighting team is secondary to them, and rightfully so.

The voters and/or taxpayers have always been very supportive of the Applegate Valley Fire District, for which we are ever so grateful. Voter approved tax levies and sound fiscal responsibility have helped make this district the success that it is, and hopefully what it will continue to be. In stark reality, due to the rural nature (sparse population and few commercial taxpayers) of the Applegate, it is highly unlikely that your fire district will ever be completely covered by full-time paid firefighters and officers. We will remain a combination paid/volunteer organization forever.

If this fire district, this team, this family is going to continue to be successful, we absolutely need more members.
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING OUR PRESTIGIOUS TEAM AS AN APPLLEGATE FIRE DISTRICT 9 VOLUNTEER.

Applications are available on our website www.applegatefd.com, by stopping by our Headquarters at 1095 Upper Applegate Rd., or simply give us a call at (541) 899-1050 and we will mail one out.

We anticipate starting our academy in the middle of January. Applications are due by December 31st.

Do you have what it takes to volunteer?

Have a fire extinguisher handy
and know how to use one.

Making Sense of Wildfire Terms

By Sandy Shaffer

Hot summers, low rainfall, mixed species of trees, rural homes, a checkerboard land ownership pattern in the Applegate Valley: are all factors in our fire danger equation. Since the Applegate Fire Plan was written, we've had lessons on creating a "defensible space," including "fuel breaks" and tips on maintaining that defensible space. A few years ago the "Home Ignition Zone" was introduced, and last year we heard a new phrase from the federal fire folks: "Fire-Adapted Communities."

What are these terms, and do we need all of them? Isn't a defensible space enough? How can landowners make sense of all of this and know what to do?

First let me offer a simple overview of how wildfire can affect our homes and property by defining four zones. I think this will help to sort through those "terms".

- 1. Your Access:** We need good roads & bridges that are strong & wide enough for large vehicles and also clear of flammable vegetation so that it's safe to travel on that road. If firefighters or emergency medical personnel can't get to you, your life and/or your home could be at risk. And don't forget reflective signage! *Specific regulations* on road lengths, widths, turn radius, turnouts, vegetation clearance, and bridge strengths are usually set by Counties & the State; some wildfire programs also address this. Because road materials can erode & vegetation grows back, *periodic maintenance* of your access/egress route(s) is vital.
- 2. Your Home's Building Design & Materials:** How a home is designed & built can directly affect its survivability during a wildfire. Wood siding or roofing, vents & other openings, windows, overhangs, decks, gutters, eaves; all of these features could allow fire to breach your home's construction and cause ignition. This is commonly caused by embers collecting in corners or niches (Note: 90% of homes that burn in wildfires are due to flying embers). Most wildfire programs do not address the ember issue; instead they focus on vegetation near the home. *Maintenance* of your home's construction is important to wildfire safety.
- 3. Your Home's Setting:** Whether your home is located in a forest, on a hill, in a trailer park or surrounded by dry pasture, it can still be vulnerable to wildfire. How is it located: near a road, set back from steep slopes and/or dense vegetation? What fuels are close enough to your house to cause sufficient radiant heat that the structure could ignite if those fuels were burning? Firewood, wood fencing, other homes, vehicles, propane tanks - all can help fire spread to your home. (Remember the Oak Knoll Fire in Ashland? Some homes were barely 30 ft apart.) Wildfire programs usually address vegetation in the first 100 ft. or so around the home, but not the concept of continuous lines of fuels. *Maintenance* of fuels & flammables in this area should be done annually before fire season.
- 4. Beyond the Home – Woodlands or "Out-Acres":** The condition of the rest of your property – trees, pastures or other native vegetation – can definitely affect whether wildfire reaches your home. The density, health and type of fuels of your or your neighbors' stands play a big part in how a wildfire spreads. Slope, aspect & winds also come into play. Will a fire move swiftly through tree crowns, eating up acres & spreading embers, or will it stay on the ground & move slowly through the duff layers or mowed grasses. There are *no specific regulations* on thinning your out-acres, but there are plenty of reasons. Thinned stands will usually be healthier, which means more resilience to insects, diseases, & wildfire. Removing ladder fuels & thinning stands can help drop a crown fire to the ground, slowing the fire's spread. Having fuel breaks or roads around or through your stands can give firefighters access to attack a fire & maybe save your property.

These four vulnerability zones of a rural home are a very basic way to assess your family's strong and weak points in regard to wildfire protection. Every homesite is different so no one approach is the perfect solution. Doing your own home assessment using these zones will help make you more aware of your actual situation. Having someone from the fire district come out to talk to you on your homesite is an invaluable experience.

The Terms Defined

Defensible Space: An area around your home or structure where fuels & vegetation are cleared or reduced to slow the intensity & rate of an advancing wildfire towards the structure. Conversely, this also helps protect the forest from becoming involved, should a structure fire occur. Most importantly, a defensible space provides a safe area for firefighters to do their job. Note: defensible space is designed specifically for each homesite, given the slope, aspect, type of structure, vegetation & fuels. Most wildfire programs begin with a 100 ft. radius. ***A defensible space addresses items #1,2 & 3.***

Fuel Break: An area where vegetation & other fuels have been either thinned or removed, so that a wildfire's behavior is changed. This could be removing ladder fuels & brush, mowing tall grass, thinning trees to open the crown canopy, or removing all vegetation to provide a road for safe passage. Widening the break in vegetation along both sides of a driveway makes an effective fuel break. ***Creating & maintaining fuel breaks on your property can help address items #1,2,3 & 4.***

Home Ignition Zone: The HIZ is the home and everything attached to it. Attached means either physically or by a continuous line of fuels. How can embers (from a nearby wildfire) get inside the home? What near the house can ignite & ultimately spread to the home itself? By removing flammable materials, the HIZ directly & effectively impacts a home's ability to survive a wildfire. This concept is based upon radiant heat, and requires looking at more than just vegetation (e.g. wood fencing, mulch, stacked firewood, patio furniture, etc.). Every home's HIZ is different; a thorough inspection should be done every spring by the homeowner to correct issues & do general cleanup prior to fire season. ***Creating & maintaining a safe Home Ignition Zone can address items #2 & 3.***

Firewise Communities: A proactive fire preparedness program designed to protect people & property from the risk of wildfire. Individual homeowners, local community leaders, planners, developers & local firefighters all work together to determine what efforts are needed in a defined community or neighborhood to prevent losses from wildfire. Neighbors work together to accomplish their goals & tasks, community recognition is received & celebrated, and this work continues each following year to maintain the work, insuring that their community remains *Firewise*. ***Firewise activities might address items #1,2 & 3.***

Fire-Adapted Communities: This concept is being developed by Federal fire agencies as a way to get rural communities prepared to withstand a wildfire in their area. The reason: escalating national wildfire suppression costs. Components of a FAC can address as many of the following factors and/or programs as the community needs: Firewise for home preparedness, proper building/zoning codes, evacuation plans, safety zones, local firefighting capacity, fuel reduction & forest management, cooperative fire agreements, a community fire plan, and outreach, education & prevention efforts. Quite a full palette; therefore, ***a true Fire-Adapted Community will address items #1,2,3 & 4.***

About our Auxiliary Group – The Friends of Applegate Fire District

Fire Districts are about people helping people. For most of us, life goes on from one day to the next without giving it a second thought to all the risks around us. The house fire, brush fire, heart attack, traffic accident or other threatening emergencies that always seem to happen to someone else....it takes a very dedicated and diverse team to provide emergency services.

Fire Districts are made up of people from all walks of life. When you become a part of an organization like this, you become a part of a family. Applegate Valley Fire District has a few employees, but most personnel are volunteers; Firefighters, Medics, Board Members, Budget Committee and our auxiliary group, The Friends.

Some volunteers seek valuable experience in their pursuit of a career in the fire service while others join to fulfill a need to serve their community. The Friends support all these efforts through fundraising, hosting events and providing food and water or other necessities on extended incidents. Through the success of yard sales that were held annually, they have been able to purchase much needed equipment for the Fire District. Since The Friends inception – first meeting was held Oct. 1986, they have purchased approximately \$85,000 worth of equipment ranging from Radios, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), Chainsaws, Pagers, Swift Water and Rope Rescue Equipment, Firefighter Protective Clothing and have helped numerous firefighters gain their EMT Education by assisting with financial aid for class tuition. They also host three annual events that promote camaraderie and appreciation for the firefighters and their families. These events include the Awards Banquet, a Firefighter Picnic and a Christmas Party.

It is because of the way that "Family" is woven into the culture that we have such a great retention record of volunteers, especially compared to the national average. Retention and recruitment will always be a very important factor though. Demographics show an aging group, trying to keep up with the needs of the fire district. The annual yard sale had just become too cumbersome for this group. Currently they have 24 members, of which 10 meet each third Tuesday of each odd month at Headquarters in Ruch at 6 pm to plan events.

I believe that we are not alone and other fire districts face the same challenge of trying to raise funds during these rough economic times. They need new ideas and younger blood to help move the group forward. Do you have what it takes? Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday Nov. 20th 6pm at HQ.

Make a Family Escape Plan & practice it together.
 Check smoke alarm batteries - Know two ways out of every room
 Stay low & go - Have a meeting place and stay there
 Call 911 for all emergencies

Meet a few of the distinguished members of our Fire District Family.....

We are pleased to introduce some of our newest members. Learn how these volunteers have become a part of the Applegate Valley Fire District #9 family and their reasons for looking for ways to serve and grow in the community.

By Carey Chaput



Gary DeSimone, Firefighter
Station 4 - Williams Hwy.

Gary grew up outside New York City, lived in the Northeast, and was recently living in San Francisco when he decided it was time to move his family to a rural community. After careful research, they picked the Applegate Valley as the place they wanted to live and purchased an old 36 acre farm on Williams Highway. His wife, Kim, works as a social worker with middle and high school students in Josephine County while Gary is at home to focus on getting the farm up and running again.

Since they plan to make the valley their new home, Gary was thinking about how he could give back and serve in the community. He saw signs posted by the fire department looking for volunteers and decided to fill out an application. Two weeks later he found himself as a cadet in the Firefighter Academy!

Although the academy was intense and took Gary away from his family for a few weekends and thursday nights over the course of two months, he felt it was time well spent. He thought the training was well put together and the instructors worked hard to help each cadet succeed. After academy, Gary has found the staff and other volunteers in the fire department to be incredibly helpful and professional as he continues to build his skills as a firefighter and first responder. He was especially surprised by the quickness of acceptance into the "Fire Family". He has already been responding to fire and medical calls out of Station 4, attends drill nights on Mondays, and thinks being a firefighter has been an extremely positive experience. Overall being a firefighter is both challenging and rewarding, but most importantly it is a tremendous opportunity to volunteer *locally* while seeing the immediate impact it has in the community.



Larry Buscho, Firefighter
Station 1 - N. Applegate Rd.

Larry and his wife Shannon were visiting family living in the Applegate, when they realized that their plans for retiring in Calistoga had changed forever. Finding their property, on the river and just a few miles from Dad, was too good to pass up and they put aside their building plans in CA for the Applegate. Larry & Shannon have been visiting this area for 50 years and never planned to move here. The timing was perfect as Larry retired from "Processed Piping" work, AKA Plumbing, and Shannon from 25 years of retail work with Mervins.

It was "Meant to Be" when they made their move, and it wasn't long before their neighbor, Tom Carstens, was approaching them about volunteering. The detailed and clearly presented instructions of the In-House FF Academy impressed him. He enjoyed the "Hands On" approach and felt that he was on the cutting edge, with access to everything.

He explained that you don't tend to think about fire protection until you are engaged somehow, so he enjoyed learning about the physics of fire behavior. Though he finds that learning your individual capacity and where you fit in the team as the most challenging, he has a lot of optimism for all of this all to become second nature. As he added, "The more you learn, the more you realize what you don't know" and believes that practical experience will translate to efficiency and caution.

The amount of commitment from dedicated volunteers surprised him, as did the high percentage of medical calls that we run. He is realizing that a tremendous gratification stems from that dedication. Though he did not know what to expect when he joined the team, he is certainly impressed by the conscious desire to improve things, whether it is for this district or the entire fire service. He attributes these accolades to the frame of mind of the current leadership.



Shawn Olsen, Firefighter
Headquarters - Upper Applegate Rd.

Shawn Olsen grew up in the Ruch area, attended local schools and then OSU to earn degrees in general agriculture and animal sciences. Shawn and his wife Amy live at Saltmarsh Ranch, where he is the Ranch Manager.

Shawn told me his high school U.S. History teacher is responsible for him becoming a volunteer firefighter. This teacher expressed to his students that "most everyone in the U.S. would appreciate all the freedoms we have if they served two years in some capacity (military, police, fire, etc.)." After college this message was still with Shawn, so he applied to become a volunteer firefighter as a way to learn to give of himself.

As a member of this spring's fire academy, Shawn said he found the varied personalities in his class interesting; observing that everyone was there because they wanted to help others! He liked that the course used several instructors; each had a different style and perspective on the topics.

Shawn found all of the many ways to "put out a fire" fascinating because each addressed different sides of the fire triangle (heat, fuel & oxygen). "Many tools to use to keep people safe," he told me.

Shawn did find one aspect of the fire academy training that sort of got to him – the thought of claustrophobia during a structure fire. Being an Applegater, he felt much more comfortable fighting wildfires. Shawn said he and his employers, the Weavers, now feel more comfortable using prescribed fire to manage the ranch lands, given his new training.

Shawn feels that anyone applying for the fire academy should be doing it for their community, not for themselves. It's a rewarding experience, he says, one that gives you the confidence to do your job, but also the trust to work as a team.

I think this new volunteer will use his faith and his strong desire to serve his community, and to be an asset to our fire district for many years to come.



Randi Martin, Jr. Firefighter
Station 4 - Williams Hwy.

There must be something in the water, as that Station 4 area sure does attract the coolest kind. Young, ambitious and with a great sense of leadership already under her belt, even if it is a size (2!), Randi Martin is not only the youngest of her family of 2 sisters and a brother, but she is the youngest of the fire district family.

As a sophomore at Hidden Valley with an interest in history, she is the Publicity Director of the Future Business Leaders of America, Sophomore Secretary and Captain of the soccer team. Collectively as a Jr. Firefighter, she knows how to fit in a team and learn new skills. Randi feels that the medical training has already helped her as Capt. of the soccer team by giving her the confidence to overview safety on the field with common sense.

It was the proximity to the station and watching all the action that got her to inquire about volunteering. As a student of this past academy, she felt that it was a lot to learn, but the hardest part is not being able to jump into the hot zones yet. She loves that excitement of not knowing what is next...the unexpected.

She admits that so far, this experience has been much more than expected and is so proud to be part of this diverse group that puts so much effort into helping their community.

It takes all types to volunteer and now she knows why people join their local fire departments. For her it was a natural extension of the times that she helped out the victims of the earthquake in Sri Lanka. Whether for a few years or for a lifetime, she is enjoying doing what not many other teens are doing.....putting out fires, running medical calls and getting a great education on first response for emergencies in her community. Thank you Randi for drinking that water!!!!

*Keep Tree Limbs Trimmed on Driveways
to reduce damage to fire engines-
saving our taxpayers \$\$\$*