



The Fireplug

Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department Newsletter

May 2021

HELP US, HELP YOU

How quickly first-responders can get to an incident often determines the outcome of the call. Whether for a medical emergency, down power lines or fires, time is often critical. Specially designed computer software programs with GPS guidance and map books help us locate the site of the emergency. However, unforeseen issues can cause delays in response-time by first responders. Below are some things residents can do to ensure a timely response to their 911 call.

Make certain signs with the address of your property are clearly visible. Depending on the location of your home, more than one sign directing our crews may be helpful. This is particularly important for properties off paved roads or with multiple entries or exits.

Ambulances and fire vehicles are considerably wider and taller than passenger vehicles and pickup trucks. Keeping the vegetation and overhanging branches on your roadway trimmed can avoid damage to emergency vehicles and lessen our response time.

Locked privacy gates can also cause significant delays. There are several methods the department can use to accommodate privacy gates and your personal security while still allowing quick access into your property by first-responders. Any of our officers will be happy to discuss the different options available that will not compromise your security and privacy.

Bridges leading to a residence must be able to handle the weight of our vehicle, some of which weigh around 60,000 pounds. This should always be considered when installing a new bridge or reinforcing an older style bridge.

Homes located outside the areas served by fire hydrants may be required to have a 2500 gallon water storage tank specifically for fire suppression. These tanks require a standpipe with an appropriate male valve compatible with standard fire department hose fittings. The location and functionality of these stand pipes is important. These systems can be installed after-the-fact without great expense. Again, our officers are available to meet with you to inspect your current system or discuss the feasibility of installing a new system.

For those of you who have fire hydrants on or near your property keeping them visible and accessible is greatly appreciated. During the spring and summer months some fire hydrants become completely hidden under tall growing grass. It takes quite a few hours for our personnel to weed-wack the 41 hydrant in the Valley. If homeowners can trim a ten foot circle around the hydrants serving their property, it would be greatly appreciated.

While these issues are by no means all-inclusive they are some of the most frequent obstacles we encounter. If you are unsure about any of the protective measures mentioned here or if you would like to have a comprehensive assessment of your area we would be happy to do so. Leave a voice mail message with a call back number on our answering machine **(839-0931)**. We will contact you to schedule an appointment.



VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS NEEDED

Fieldbrook Fire Department is seeking men and women interested in joining our all-volunteer department. Most people are surprised to learn that nearly three fourth of all firefighters in the United States are volunteers. With the exception of our country's military, there is no greater, longer-running expression of volunteerism in U.S. history than the volunteer fire service. Almost seventy-five percent of the nation's 1.1 million firefighters are volunteers, and two-thirds of all fire departments are volunteer. Since the days of Ben Franklin volunteers have been serving communities where round-the-clock, paid personnel would be financially prohibitive. It is estimated the service volunteers provide saves U.S. taxpayers about \$37 billion a year.



In order to become a member of the Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department, you must:

- ✓ be at least eighteen years of age
- ✓ have a clean criminal and driving record
- ✓ be in good general health and physical condition
- ✓ be drug-free
- ✓ be able to make a commitment of your time and energy.

While members receive no payment for their service, all training; equipment; uniforms and insurance is paid for by the department. In addition to learning a valuable set of new skills, the greatest reward comes from the comradery you develop with the other department members and knowing you are providing an invaluable service in helping your community and your neighbors.

If you are interested in learning more about what being a volunteer entails, please leave a message on the department voice mail at 839-0931 with your name and phone number. A department officer will call you back. You can also drop by the firehouse any Monday night between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. to learn more about volunteering. We meet every Monday except holidays and during the month of December.

DEFENDING YOUR HOME AGAINST WILDFIRES

Don't be lulled into believing vegetation fires don't occur in Humboldt County. They do; and they can move quickly, consuming homes and structures in their paths. The importance of maintaining 100 feet of defensible space between your home and burnable vegetation cannot be overstated. The 100 foot defensible space is the gold-standard for protecting your home against wildland fires. Designing and maintaining the area around your home in a fire-safe manner can significantly increase the chance of your home surviving a wildland event.



REMINDERS FOR KEEPING YOU & YOUR FAMILY SAFE

Seven times each day someone in this country dies in a home fire. Fire experts agree that people may have as little as two minutes to escape a burning home before it is too late to get out. In contrast, a poll shows that 62% of Americans mistakenly believe they have at least five minutes or more and 18% (nearly one in five) believe they have 10 minutes or more.

It's been said the best way to fight fire is to never let it start in the first place. With this in mind the following facts, cautions and reminders are being offered for you and your family's personal safety. Take some time to review these periodically. Remember, just because we know better doesn't mean we do better.

- ✓ Every household should develop a fire escape plan. Practice it with your family several times a year and at different time of the day. Your plan should include a place outside for everyone to meet. Make sure everyone knows where the meeting location is.
- ✓ Install smoke alarms on every level of the home. Test them frequently and replace batteries each year.
- ✓ During power outages (which Fieldbrook residents experience frequently) never use candles; rather use flashlights and/or battery operated lanterns.
- ✓ If you own a two story home, make certain there is a chain-drop escape ladder available on the second story and that everyone knows where it is and how to use it.
- ✓ Do not overload wall outlets with too many splitters or appliances. This is especially important in homes with older wiring.
- ✓ Whenever possible purchase appliances such as hair curling irons and clothes irons that turn themselves off automatically after non-use for so many minutes.
- ✓ Periodically clean the ducting from your clothes dryer.
- ✓ Have a fire extinguisher readily accessible in your home and your vehicles and know how to operate them.
- ✓ Clean and inspect wood stove pipes on a regular basis.
- ✓ Always use metal containers to dispose of ashes when cleaning wood burning stoves. Cool ashes on top can be hiding hot embers underneath.
- ✓ Do not use extension cords with appliances that draw a large amount of electricity like heaters and dryers.
- ✓ Stored 9-volt (rectangular) batteries can be dangerous. The positive and negative posts are close together. If a metal object touches the two posts of a 9-volt battery, it can cause a short circuit which can generate enough heat to start a fire. Put tape across the two terminals when storing or disposing of these batteries.
- ✓ Never cover electrical cords with a rug or carpet.



Defensible Space is your property's front line defense against wildfire. Creating and maintaining defensible space around your home can dramatically increase your home's chance of surviving a wildfire and improves the safety of firefighters defending your property. 100 feet of defensible space is required by law.*



*For more information on creating defensible space and legal requirements visit READYFORWILDFIRE.ORG

TWO ZONES MAKE UP THE REQUIRED 100 FEET OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE:

ZONE 1: 30 feet of Lean, Clean & Green

- 1 Remove all dead plants, grass and weeds.
- 2 Remove dead or dry leaves and pine needles from your yard, roof and rain gutters.
- 3 Keep tree branches 10 feet away from your chimney and other trees.

ZONE 2: 30-100 feet of Reduced Fuel

- 4 Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- 5 Create horizontal spacing between shrubs and trees.
- 6 Create vertical spacing between grass, shrubs and trees.

Use Equipment Properly to Keep from Sparking a Wildfire

- 7 Mow before 10 a.m., and never on a hot or windy day. String trimmers are a safer option (vs. lawnmowers) for clearing vegetation.



VERTICAL SPACING

Large trees do not have to be cut and removed as long as all of the plants beneath them are removed. This eliminates a vertical "fire ladder."



HORIZONTAL SPACING

Create horizontal and vertical spacing between plants, the amount of spacing will depend on how steep the slope is and the size of the plants.

COMPRESSOR FUNDING MET

One of the most challenging skills a firefighter must acquire is the use of an air-pack, known as an SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus). An SCBA is a device firefighter utilize when entering a smoke-filled building or encountering hazardous toxic fumes. Similar to a scuba tank used by deep-sea divers, an SCBA provides pure air to the firefighter from a tank worn on their back. The air in the tank is compressed to approximately four thousand pounds per square inch. A regulator and hose transfer this air from the tank to a mask which is sealed tightly around the firefighters' face, mouth and nose. The SCBA delivers a 20 to 30 minute supply of clean air allowing the firefighter to operate in an environment which would otherwise be hazardous or lethal. The on-demand air supply is unlike breathing under normal circumstances so proficiency using an SCBA requires extensive training and practice. When the air has been consumed the tank is refilled using a sophisticated, high-tech compression system. As FVFD does not have such a system the department has had to rely on Arcata and Blue Lake fire departments to refill the tanks. This, unfortunately, has limited the amount of live SCBA training available to our firefighters.

Realizing the benefits of having a compressor on site, a campaign began two years ago to raise the forty-thousand dollars necessary to acquire this system. Through the generosity of several local businesses and individuals this goal has been recently met and a compressor for Fieldbrook Fire has been ordered. The Department would like to thank the following businesses and organizations for their generous contributions:

State Farm Insurance	\$20,000
Coast Central Credit Union	\$8,000
Chuck Chojnacki & Mariea Brown	\$5,000
Mad River Rotary	\$1,000

Our appreciation also goes out to the many individuals and the FVFD Auxiliary whose combined \$11,000 in contributions made this acquisition possible.



DOWNED POWER LINES

With the windstorms that occurred in early February, many powerlines were severed by falling branches or, in some cases entire trees blowing over. On the worst day of the storm FVFD responded to over half a dozen calls for downed electrical lines. While the loss of electricity to our homes is certainly an annoying inconvenience, a far greater concern is the threat to life these downed powerlines present. For your safety and the protection of others you should always consider



a downed line as still being charged or “live.” Even when a powerline has been snapped in two it may be charged and any contact with it can be lethal. Since water conducts electricity, attempting to put out an electrically-generated fire with a garden hose can also result in death. Our fire department has neither the training nor equipment to deal with powerlines. Our responsibility is simply to keep people and vehicles a safe distance from the scene until PG&E arrives. Only after PG&E has shut down the power will we attempt to clear debris and get traffic moving again. The road will be shut down only when there is a safety risk or threat to the well-being of fire department members or citizens. When a road has been shut down it is critical that all traffic, auto or pedestrian, obey the closure. Usually a road closure includes flairs or warning tape and a firefighter stationed at the point of closure. The firefighter will provide you with the best information we have as to when the road will re-open. In some instances with multiple lines down there may not be enough fire personnel to be at every location. In such a case barricades, flares, signage, and emergency tape will make it readily apparent that a road closure is in effect. Do not go beyond the barriers until you are told it is safe to do so by law enforcement or fire personnel.

Never, under any circumstance should private individuals attempt to cut branches or limbs in order to free electrical lines. Powerlines across fences or on cars are often still charged and making contact of any sort with the fence or vehicle can cause instant death.

MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS

For several years the fire departments of Fieldbrook, Arcata, Blue Lake, Westhaven and Samoa have agreed to assist one another when any of these departments are in need of additional equipment or personnel to address a major incident. The commitment of reciprocal support between these agencies is codified in a mutual aid agreement signed by each department chief. This arrangement assures greater safety for the firefighters and the wellbeing of residents of the respective communities. Each department makes every effort to send reinforcement personnel when requested. However, the Agreement stipulates that backup personnel shall respond only when there are enough firefighters available to also cover their home-district. The first first priority of these departments is always to their own community. To maximize efficiency working together the departments hold joint-training sessions when possible.

Because of the mutual aid agreement you may on occasion see Fieldbrook fire trucks in any of these areas as you may also see the equipment of other fire departments, here in the Valley.

YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE FIELDBROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

These men and women spend countless hours protecting and serving our community.
Next time you see any of them, why not say, **"Thanks for your service."**

Name	Years of Service
Roy Sheppard	41
Joe Mello	29
Cam Appleton	27
Jack Sheppard	27
Richard Grissom	27
Ross Costa	22
Esther Kilian	17
Greg Aslanian	17
Gia Carozzi	16
Chis Appleton	15
Frank Bush	14
John Bracklow	6
Josh Miller	6
Danny Oram	5
Geneva Bottger	5
Tim Broadman	4
Bruin Hinton	3
Brandon Anderson	3
Jessup Miller	1



There is no telling what FVFD volunteers will encounter when they respond to a 911 call.



HELPING YOU TO PROTECT YOUR HOME



Though a passenger vehicle may navigate this driveway without a problem, it presents a significant challenge for a fire truck or ambulance. Keeping overhead branches and side-brush trimmed back will lessen the time it takes first responders to reach you.



For houses not near fire hydrants, a standpipe and a fire suppression water tank (above) can make all the difference.



Live practice-burns provide the best possible fire suppression training for firefighters. Since practice burns don't happen frequently, multiple fire districts usually participate in these drills.



Without access to a hydrant water must be delivered to the fire scene and dumped into a porta-tank for use by firefighters. Since time is of the essence, volunteers practice this scenario frequently. Neighboring fire departments are called upon to help relay water during an actual structure fire.

Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Dept.
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