



The Fireplug

Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department Newsletter

May 2016

FIELDBROOK HAS A NEW FIRE CHIEF

After serving the longest term of any Chief in Fieldbrook Fire Department's history, Richard Grissom (above right) stepped down from the Department's top position on December 31, 2015. With a rich legacy of achievements during his twelve years as Chief, Grissom is looking forward to becoming a front-line firefighter once again. Under his leadership the Department has seen some remarkable accomplishments, including the procurement of three newer upgraded trucks and a complete modernization and expansion of the fire station itself. As if running the fire department was not enough, Grissom has coached the girls' basketball team at Fieldbrook School for twelve years. He also served as a board member for Fieldbrook School and the Community Services District.

It is estimated that Chief Grissom superintended nearly one thousand 911 calls without a single serious injury to any of his firefighters. Testimony for the respect of Grissom's leadership was evident as the Chief selection is voted on annually by all department members. As elections approached this past December, however, Grissom decided to step aside saying, "It's time for some new blood."

Fortunately, that "new blood" came in the person of Assistant Chief Jack Sheppard. As a member of Fieldbrook's Fire Department for twenty-three years, Sheppard was the natural replacement. He and



Grissom both started their careers with the Department in 1993. As the fathers of both Grissom and Sheppard had also been volunteers on the Department, one begins to wonder if there isn't some family gene or DNA marker that leads to this calling. Whatever the reasons, with the high level of responsibility and huge time commitment required as Chief, our community is fortunate to have these two Fieldbrook natives willing to fill this critically important role.

The Department and its Board extends its gratitude to retiring Chief Richard Grissom and congratulates incoming Chief Jack Sheppard.

SHOULD I GET A KNOX BOX?

A Knox Box is a device that allows firefighters and other first responders to gain rapid access into a locked home or property during an emergency. These highly secure steel boxes hold a key to the premises. The fire department has a master key which allows them to open the Knox Box for access to the premise's key. This saves time for first responders and avoids forcible entry through a locked door or property gates. This system is particularly beneficial when there is only one person in the home who is in need of help and is unable to get to the locked door. A Knox Box also shortens the fire department's response time where locked driveway gates must be breached. While Knox Boxes come in a variety of models and prices, they can be of great benefit in providing unhindered access for first responders while still allowing privacy

and security. If you would like more information about Knox Boxes, feel free to call Fieldbrook Fire Department at 839-0931.

POWER LINES ACROSS A VEHICLE

"What you need to know to survive"

As power lines are often located close to our roads it's not uncommon to have traffic accidents that shear the power pole itself. This can lead to high voltage power lines making contact with the car. People have survived collisions with power poles relatively injury-free only to be electrocuted as they exited their vehicle. Knowing what to do in a situation such as this can make the difference between life and death. The rubber tires on a car keeps the high voltage electricity from grounding so passengers in the vehicle are not affected. As a general rule, persons inside a vehicle that is in contact with a power line should remain inside the vehicle until the utility company



turns the power off at the site. Circumstances may occur, however, that force passengers to exit the vehicle. In this case there is a very specific procedure you must use to get out of the vehicle in order to avoid being electrocuted. An excellent YouTube video shows exactly what steps should be taken should you find yourself in a vehicle in contact with a power line. Take five minutes to watch this video. It may save your life and the lives of others.

This Might Shock You: Downed Power Line – You Tube

WATER TENDER REPLACED

A water tender is a fire truck designed specifically to transport large amounts of water to a fire incident. These vehicles, also called tankers, are particularly crucial in rural communities not fully serviced by fire hydrants. Such is the case in Fieldbrook where hundreds of homes and structures are not within close proximity to a fire hydrant. Most residences that get water from the Fieldbrook Glendale Community Services District are served by hydrants that can supply unlimited water in the event of a structure fire. However, homes that provide their



own water from wells or creeks do not have this limitless source of water for fire suppression. In these situations water must be transported to the incident.

During structure fires in non-hydranted areas a large portable tank is set up into which the water tender dumps its load of water. Pumps are then used to supply water from the portable tank to firefighters while the tender shuttles another load of water from the nearest hydrant. The challenge is making certain the tender is able to provide an adequate ongoing supply of water to fight the fire. To assure ample water is available, Blue Lake, Arcata and Fieldbrook's fire departments have mutual aid agreements that include sending their water tenders to help shuttle water to a fire scene when needed. In the event of a large structure fire two to three tenders could be utilized to supply sufficient water to fight the fire.

The water tender Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department (FVFD) had been operating for nearly twenty years was a 1976 Van Pelt model, which

was purchased used from Twin Hills Fire District. Considered a work-horse in its day, this forty year old vehicle has exceeded its usable life-cycle. In March, FVFD replaced its Van Pelt Water Tender with a used, low-mileage 2008 Peterbilt. Purchased from Monte Rio Fire Department, this vehicle holds two thousand gallons of water and carries a portable tank with a 2500 gallon capacity. Where the Van Pelt model was only able to discharge water at a rate of 450 gallons per minute, the new tender can deliver 2000 gallons into the portable tank in less than two minutes. It also has the capability to "pump and roll" so it can serve as a self-contained firefighting unit. This feature is particularly helpful in fighting wildland or grass fires. The single rear axle on the "new" tender makes it far more maneuverable on Fieldbrook's many tight dirt roads. And while its high-end speed has not yet been clocked, it will significantly exceed the 35 to 40 MPH top speed of the retired water tender. When seconds count, these improved features reduce the time it takes to get water flowing onto a burning structure.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Since the last edition of The Fireplug was published seven volunteer firefighter have left the department. During this time, however, eight new volunteers have stepped in to fill the void. Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department (FVFD) would like to welcome the following new members to our team:

Geneva Bottger
John Bracklow
Mike Cornwell
Fay Egan
Garrett Gregory
Josh Miller
Dan Oram
Martin Tunzi

FVFD's goal is to carry twenty-two members on its roster. There are currently nineteen active volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a member we would like to hear from you. In order to be a volunteer firefighter 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 serious commitment of your time and energy

If interested, or simply to learn more about becoming a member of FVFD call Greg Aslanian at 839-7232.



DOGS AND EMERGENCIES



Like many animals, dogs' behavior and disposition can become very unpredictable during an emergency situation. The "fight or flight" phenomenon that humans experience during highly stressful circumstances also occurs in animals. Even the friendliest, docile dogs can become aggressive and unpredictable when agitated by an unfamiliar or frightening situation. Many accounts exist of medical and fire personnel being delayed in carrying out their duties by aggressive animals. Whether it's a house fire, traffic collision or medical personnel entering a home, pet owners need to keep this in mind and respond accordingly. It may simply be the dog's protective instinct coming into play but delaying first responders access to an incident can have serious consequences.

With this in mind pet owners should take action to make certain man's best friend does not become an impediment for emergency personnel.

Another noteworthy behavior of dogs and other animals is the *safe haven response*. Once rescued from a burning structure, dogs; cats; horses and other animals have been known to bolt right back into the burning building, often to their demise. While this action is counter-intuitive to humans, distraught animals may seek refuge in the area that is familiar to them. After being removed from a burning stable some years ago, several valuable race horses broke away from their rescuers and ran directly back into the burning stable. Similarly, dogs and cats inside vehicles involved in traffic collision will run from the incident in an often ill-fated attempt to seek safety. The potential consequence of this happening on a busy freeway speaks for itself. Unfortunate pet owners have shared stories of never locating their dogs or cats once they made their dash for "safety." While this scenario will not necessarily happen with all animals or at all times, being forewarned is being forearmed.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT –

"How can I keep myself and my 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.

SECOND GRADERS VISIT THE FIREHOUSE



In late January Ms. Valley's second grade class from Fieldbrook Elementary School visited Fieldbrook's fire station to learn how a volunteer fire department operates. The firefighters who assisted with the three-hour field trip were amazed with how much Ms. Valley's students had learned prior to their visit. The event began with the students being driven from school to the fire station in three of the department's trucks. The students spent the first hour in the station's classroom learning about a variety of fire safety and prevention topics. After the classroom portion was finished the students watched four firefighters get into their Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) to demonstrate how firefighters would crawl into a burning building to search for people who may be trapped.

Next, the students moved to the vehicle bays where they were divided into small groups to go through and learn what each of the Department's four trucks are specifically designed to do. There were many great questions from the students about the numerous pieces of equipment fire fighters use during an emergency. The constant drizzle of rain that day did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the group. As might be expected, the highlight of the fieldtrip was learning about "putting the wet stuff on the hot stuff." The class learned about the different water delivery sources used in fighting fire. To end the fieldtrip hoses were laid and students got to experience using a fire nozzles to knock down safety cones. Fortunately, the rain stopped

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just in time, so the students returned to school in the Department's antique open-cab 1953 Federal parade truck.

Each student received a red fire hat, fire safety coloring book and safety handouts to take home and share with their families. While a good time was had by all, we hope the experience will make these young students more safety-conscious. We hope this fieldtrip might inspire some of these young girls and boys to consider becoming members of Fieldbrook's Volunteer Fire Department some day in the future.



FVFD RECEIVES NO SRA FEES

Fieldbrook Volunteer Fire Department (FVFD) receives no funds from the annual SRA (State Responsibility Area) fee assessment. This fire prevention fee assessment is issued by the State Board of Equalization on behalf of the California Department of Forestry and CAL FIRE. The fee is assessed on owners of homes located on parcels within a State Responsibility Area (SRA). This criteria affects most California homes and businesses in rural areas including Fieldbrook. None of the fees collected under this provision, however, go to municipal or volunteer fire departments. While there have been some appeals at the State level as to the legality of this assessment, none have yet been upheld. Certain areas around the Fieldbrook Community have benefitted from brush clearing by CAL FIRE crews funded through SRA fees. While FVFD receives no SRA dollars, we are very grateful for the strong backing the community demonstrates through

the local property assessment and our fundraising efforts.