

Aeneas Valley Fire District Newsletter

November 2008

This newsletter is an unofficial publication whose intent is to communicate with and inform the public on items of general interest. Every effort is made to insure the accuracy of the content, but if discrepancies occur between official paperwork and this newsletter then use the official source first.

Fire district information on website: Steve Bower, a property owner in the Lyman Lake area, has added a section of fire district information to his personal website. This is not an official fire district site, just an interested citizen providing information about the Aeneas Valley in general. The district does not control the content or layout of his site. He is posting meeting minutes, newsletters, pictures and other stuff about the district, along with a link to current fire danger and burning restrictions for Okanogan County. Check it out at www.aeneasvalleywa.org.

Grant activity: Two grants requests were submitted earlier this year to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). One was for a 3,000 gallon water tender, the second for assorted equipment and PPE (Personnel Protective Equipment). A reply was recently received for the water tender grant eliminating us from further consideration, basically due to low callout volume. We face a lot of competition here because the winners pay only 5% of the total cost. We are at a big disadvantage because we're a small district with low callout volume, no critical industry, minimal infrastructure and a small population to protect. **Breaking news:** we just received an email from FEMA indicating we needed to fill out and submit a direct deposit form. Note that this is not the official award yet, just a very good indication that it's coming. The grant covers radios, PPE, hose, connectors and fittings, emergency light bars and a high pressure pump. The total grant request is for \$37,775 but the district pays only \$1,838 of that amount.

New vehicle: DNR has donated a 1992 International diesel powered 1200 gallon fuel truck to the district with about 2,000 miles on it and is in excellent condition. We still need to assess what it would take to bring it into service as a water tender.



Upgrading engines and PPE: The commissioners recently approved spending about \$4,300 of our Cayuse Fire earnings for necessary additional PPE to equip our firefighters and to add fittings and equipment to our engines to increase firefighting capabilities. Some of that PPE money will not be spent if it's confirmed we got our requested FEMA grant.

Winter firefighting plan: How are we going to fight fires this winter? Well that depends on the weather and temperature. The simple answer is we will carry water until it is no longer safe for the engines/tenders to do so, after that we show up and provide whatever services we can. Our engines or tenders are not designed for very cold weather. The complex answer to this question would take a lot more space and may be covered at a later date. In all our research we have not found a department anywhere that has solved the cold weather problem by any means other than sending the engines out for a very limited time from heated buildings.

SCBA training: Six firefighters recently completed SCBA training (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus). It's a big milestone in becoming certified to fight structure fires or anything else that might involve toxic fumes, such as car fires, hazardous materials or meth labs.

Use of district vehicles: There've been several questions lately about the use of district vehicles by district personnel. Simply put, all use is for official fire district business and logged as to date, times, crew, destination and purpose. Most uses involve non-emergency excursions for such things as training, fueling up, maintenance, meetings, temporary strategic relocations, equipment work sessions, scouting for lightning started fires etc. Vehicles are brought along in many cases for speedier response if we get called out to a fire while out on another activity in the valley, especially during high fire danger times. The necessity of each trip is looked at from a cost/benefit/risk viewpoint to make sure we are making the best use of our limited resources.

Bang for the buck: Just what did district taxpayers get when they signed up to start this fire district? Assuming all tax money due this year was paid it would bring the total taxpayer contribution for the district's two year existence to about \$20,000. Compare that with over \$320,000 in volunteer generated district income (\$83,000) and equipment donations by DNR and other districts. A 1700% return on investment is a windfall in anybody's book!

New safety officer/treasurer: Ken Thompson, who has been serving as secretary and treasurer for the district, has taken over as safety officer for FD16. Ken was formerly a Regional Safety Officer for the US Geological Survey in charge of nine western states. He will remain on as secretary. Lucy Bauer, who worked at a bank for 10 years in various capacities, has stepped forward as the new treasurer. Thank you Ken and Lucy.

New bulletin board in use: The districts bulletin board is now in operation and is located at 404 Aeneas Valley Road. It is a large wooden board with red trim. This board will be used to post fire district information such as minutes and newsletters. We will continue to post information on the community board at the corner of Cape Labelle and Aeneas Valley Road as well.

Aeneas Valley store reopens: For those that may not be aware, we have a store in the Aeneas Valley again. Terry and Brian Racy are the new owners and reopened on September 10. The new hours are 9am to 6pm seven days a week. The store is located at 1165 Aeneas Valley Road and carries gas, diesel and propane. Terry, who used to run the Co-op in Tonasket, has added additional fresh and organic choices to the usual convenience store items. The new phone number is 486-4214.

Who are the newsletter staff? Mort Yanow submitted this question. Our names are not part of the newsletter because we feel that attaching our names detracts from the intent. First it tends to frame this newsletter as just the opinion of a select few, which it is not and the staff can change at any time. Stating the authors names can also give some the feeling that egos are involved, which we wish to avoid. Please focus on the message, not the messenger. This month's staff happens to be Yvonne Kennedy and Mike Woelke.

That completes our second newsletter. We are still really looking forward to your comments and questions. To subscribe, ask questions or make comments please send an email to "avfdnews@amerion.com". Questions can also be sent via mail to "Okanogan FPD 16, PO Box 645, Tonasket WA 98855-0645". Remember, you probably won't get the answer to any questions you have if you don't ask! Sorry but this newsletter will only be distributed via email or bulletin board as it's not a fire district funded activity. A limited number of paper copies will be available at the fire commissioners meetings.