

Aeneas Valley Fire District Newsletter

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.

Year end wrap-up: While predictions this year would be a very bad fire season luckily did not come to pass we still had a total of 30 call-outs (up 6 from last year). That we earned only \$1,419 dollars contracting on DNR fires validates how this HOT fire season fizzled. Quick district response kept those fires that we did fight small. The year will end with 23 firefighters, 21 of whom carry a DNR red-card. Our fire vehicle count remains at 6 (3 wildland engines, 1 structural engine and 2 water tenders (1,200 and 3,000 gallon respectively)). Another wildland vehicle is being worked on and should enter service in the spring of 2011.

Winter Tips: Several preventative measures can be taken to make these months more enjoyable:

- Have a 5 to 10 lbs. ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher available in your home and read the instructions on how to use the extinguisher and where to place it.
- Have your drive way cleaned and your address clearly posted so emergency services, EMS, Sheriff's deputies and Fire personnel can make it in to assist when called.
- Be sure to change the batteries in your smoke alarms and be careful on the chair or ladder.
- Have your chimney inspected and if necessary cleaned or repaired each spring.



Grant activity: Our 2009 AFG grant award of \$59,233 (we pay 5%, DHS pays the other 95%) allowed us to purchase wildland and structural clothing for 25 firefighters. Our AFG grant request for a \$166,000 water tender was denied. In 2010 we made another AFG grant request for a fully equipped commercially built pumper unit to complete a type 4 wildland engine for \$59,000, which was not approved. We are awaiting word on a Washington State Phase II grant request to allow FD 16 to build a pumper unit for a type 4 engine. Total grant value is \$24,555 with the district responsible for half of that. However, using our own labor and some district owned equipment, actual cost should be \$5,817. A decision is expected in January. Through another state operated program we



plan on receiving a surplus 5-ton military vehicle to mount that pumper unit on once we get another donated vehicle into active service. That should hopefully occur in a few months. FYI – the pictured structural gear runs about \$1,800 per firefighter. Add in another \$400 for wildland gear and you have a cost of about \$2,200 to clothe just one firefighter. While they amount to an incredible amount of work, grants are an absolute necessity for us to succeed as a fire district!

Annexation meeting: A commissioners work meeting was used earlier this year to discuss with the public the annexation of additional area into the fire district. While lightly attended a presentation of

the annexation process was given, followed by an open question period. Annexed area landowners will see the first fire district levy in their spring 2011 tax statement.

Fire Department Resources: The recent fire district annexation tripled the size of the district with much of that gain being in more difficult to access areas. To reduce our response times the fire department is working on both expanding our resources and distributing them more evenly throughout the district. This is complicated by the need to stage our equipment at secure, easy to access locations with sufficient firefighters living in that vicinity to mount a consistent significant response to incidents. While difficult to do, we are still working towards this goal.

Fire Info Day: Due to insufficient lead time Fire Info Day was cancelled for this year. It has been changed now to Memorial Day for 2011. This removes it from a potentially much busier July 4th holiday. Please put it on your calendar. It's a chance to see what we have to offer, and to talk to firefighters, the chief and commissioners about what is going on in this district. Why? Because this is your chance to get straight answers. Keep in mind that of all the rumors we've heard about the fire district we have yet to hear one that is true. Find out for yourself. The Forest Service and DNR will also be invited to participate.

Promotions: To broaden the Fire Department command structure for redundancy purposes and achieve better fire line results five firefighters were promoted this year. Bob Bauer was promoted from Lieutenant to Captain while Glenna Jones, Shannon Garoutte, Yvonne Kennedy and Tom Hoffman were promoted to Lieutenant. Congratulations to these very deserving individuals.

Medical Aid Unit: Our plan to get a fire department medical aid unit up and running is currently in limbo status. While working on getting the unit licensed and in service we came across information indicating significant pending changes to the state regulations governing this. Until this is clarified the project is on hold to avoid potentially wasting district funds.

Thank You AVCA: We would like to thank the Aeneas Valley Community Association for pledging over 900 dollars to assist the fire district in a special project. The money is going towards purchasing 2 additional radio frequencies for future use in setting up a radio repeater system within the valley. The purpose is to extend our radio reach and significantly reduce dead zones. It might also allow us to separate command and operations radio traffic or provide separate communications when dealing with multiple simultaneous incidents in the valley. Exact use it yet to be determined.

Thanks also to OCDEM: The Okanogan County Department of Emergency Management, headed by Scott Miller has, since our inception, supported us in many ways, from programming radios and pagers (thanks here to Walt Stalder), to supplying us with pagers and Homeland Security handheld narrow band radios that were surplus to the counties needs. They also boosted emergency radio coverage in the valley by contributing a radio repeater that is available to Law Enforcement and HAM Radio operators for emergency use. Thanks guys, you are a great group to work with.

That completes our sixth newsletter. We're still 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 mailed to "Okanogan FPD 16, PO Box 645, Tonasket WA 98855-0645". This newsletter will only be distributed via email or bulletin board as it's not a funded activity. A small number of paper copies are available at the monthly fire commissioners meetings. A private website with meeting minutes and newsletters is at www.aeneasvalleywa.org. Click on "Fire District Info".