

Aeneas Valley Fire District Newsletter

This newsletter is an unofficial publication intended 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 stats: Despite the potential for fires there were only 10 callouts so far this year. However a lot of work went on in the background. 3 vehicles were brought into service, including a rescue vehicle, and work on a fourth will be completed in time for next fire season. A decision on implementing a medical aid unit was made. There are a number of things in motion that will be covered in the next newsletter. All things considered this was a very productive year for us.

Excellent year for contract income: This is our second best year in renting out our fire services. DNR was our biggest customer with \$17,195 for work on 3 fires. The Family Faire also hired us for fire protection for a weekend. There are those who think we should not be providing this service but the fact is **our contract work made the next two items possible**, thereby directly benefitting District residents.

Medical Aid unit plan approved: In October, commissioners approved a plan for a Fire District 16 Medical Aid Unit. Although it's in the early stages we could see an Aid Unit for the district as early as August of 2012. This would mean an EMT with equipment to provide aid and basic life support would be available within the district 24/7. The program will not raise taxes for residents and we will not bill for services. District 16 will provide services in addition to, and in cooperation with, those provided by Tonasket EMS. We'll be providing updates as the Aid Unit plan progresses. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Yvonne Kennedy at 486-8359 or Karen Kenyon at 486-1229. (made possible by contract income!!) **UPDATE: Washington State House Bill 2141 has been introduced that would impose fees for EMT certification and allows the state to assess license fees for EMS vehicles. This is part of the states plan to fix their budget deficit. FD 16 opposes this bill but we have no idea yet on how much this would impact our Aid unit.**

2 Structure engines purchased: We acquired 2 structural fire engines from Spokane District 4 for use in structural and wildland fires for \$5,000 total. They are older engines but have been well maintained. The exciting news here though is that given the right conditions they can be used to lower (better) the WSRB insurance



rating for areas of the district. When we activated our first structural engine it **lowered the insurance premiums \$200 to \$450 per year** for residents **within 5 road miles of it**. The conditions are that we have to have a heated space for them and 4 firefighters living within 5 road miles of the each fire engine. **SO here is an opportunity to help yourselves**. Help us find a heated space for a fire engine. We figure the optimal placement would be in the 4-5 mile area of Aeneas Valley road and also down around the general store. Other areas would be considered though. The district will not be able to afford satellite stations for quite a number of years so we are looking for help from our district residents to help us help you. Contact Mike Woelke (486-1386) if you would like to discuss this further. (made possible by contract income!!)

Rescue vehicle in service: We are implementing a rescue vehicle for use in the valley. While it is not fully equipped yet we do have a Hurst Tool (“Jaws of Life”) on board and a number of our firefighters have been trained in its use (courtesy of FD 4 (Tonasket)). As budget permits we will be adding a winch, specialized tools and equipment, generators, lighting etc. to round it out.

North Okanogan fire repeater planned for Tunk: Courtesy of FD 4 (Tonasket) and Scott Miller, Okanogan County Emergency Manager, there is a plan being worked to get a radio repeater on Tunk Mountain for use by north Okanogan County fire districts. It would benefit our district immensely in that it would provide greater coverage during initial attack to relay local coordination and mutual aid traffic. Assuming approval, we are probably looking at a spring implementation. Tonasket has generously offered to cover the costs of the repeater while other participating districts (us included) would pick up the yearly maintenance costs.

Web site in development: We began development of a District website. No estimated completion date yet. Once we settle on a design the bulk of the data can be loaded in a short amount of time.

Personnel: Commissioner Sam Wright resigned in December. Rick Baker was nominated to fill his position and was approved. Much thanks to Sam for his hard work in this difficult post. Rick is well qualified and experienced and will be a great asset to this district. Earlier this year Tom Hoffman was promoted to captain to fill the position vacated by Bob Bauer when he became chief. Tom has spent many years in the fire business and brings lots of experience and expertise to the job.

Volunteer hours Refinement: Detailed tracking over several months show our volunteers donate between 300 and 600 hours a month (depending on the month). Using just the very conservative 300 monthly results in 3,600 volunteer hours per year (or the equivalent of 1.8 full time employees).

Why aren't we moving faster?: There seems to be a general perception that anytime we announce our intention to do something it takes an extremely long time to get it done. Well there are a lot of reasons for that. Most importantly, we are an ALL VOLUNTEER district with a very small budget. A lot of our available budget and labor hours goes into simply supporting existing capabilities. When we consider a project we have to work within a lot of limitations. To name just a few: budget, availability of (the right) volunteers, priority in relation to other projects, availability and timing of training, weather, legal requirements/changes/constraints, availability of equipment,and the list goes on. A lot of planning and research goes into each project before we even begin. A good example of how a project can go is the Medical Aid unit that began several years ago. Then the requirement was we needed people trained as Emergency Responders. Two of our volunteers acquired the Red Cross training certification to instruct the course and a number of firefighters took the training. Shortly thereafter we heard of impending changes to those requirements and the project was put on hold pending the outcome. Now we must have trained EMT's instead of Emergency Responders with someone on call 24/7. This will greatly increase our costs. 2011 was a good year for contract income so that money became available and training of EMT's will begin in early 2012. With anything new we also have a learning curve to go through. No telling what'll happen on the way through the certification process (now the state wants to tax EMT certification and EMS/Aid unit vehicles via pending legislation (House Bill 2141 – impact is unknown at this time).

This completes our seventh 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”.