



# The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

## Letter from the Chief By Michael Schmitt

Many of us still remember the years when our wildfire season had a beginning and an end. As we all know that has changed for just about every year in the last fifteen years. Fire Departments and their firefighters in Colorado and elsewhere in the American west now must be prepared for a wildfire year-round. Our snow pack is well below average and the forecast for the spring and summer shows that dry conditions will likely continue.

There are of course things that you can do to prepare your home and property to defend it against wildfires, and to prepare yourself as well:

⇒ Provide your emergency contact and medical information and make it easy to find for firefighters and medical first responders.

⇒ Remove all pine needles and other flammable debris off the roof. In case of a fire nearby the incoming embers cannot have anything to ignite on the roof or the rain gutters.

⇒ If you are unsure if any fire

restrictions are in place and notice campers in the woods or cars pulled over having a camp fire call 9-1-1. Dispatch is trained to contact us accordingly and they can make the distinction for you. As a resident you are a great tool at preventing the spread of a fire whenever you are outside or driving through the canyon or taking your dog for a walk. Numerous fires in the area have

started this way in recent years, and I can speak for any department in Boulder County that we will never mind a false alarm, in fact they are preferred over a real situation. Every year we get toned for a fire that turns out to be someone sandblasting, getting their barbeque going or a cloud oddly reflecting onto the hillside as happened very recently. We are very happy when we go to it and realize that it is a false alarm. Call whenever you think that you see a fire.

⇒ Do not call firefighters, the Chief, Deputy Chief or Fire Marshal if you are trying to report an emergency. By doing so vital time is lost and whoever you call needs to then go and call 9-1-1 anyway. Always call 9-1-1 directly, it ensures the fastest and optimally coordinated response including other agencies.

Continued on Page 2

**In 2017, 23 SFPD  
Firefighters participated  
in 81 calls<sup>1</sup>**

Structural, car, & wildland  
fire/smoke reports – 25

Vehicle & Bike Accident – 21

Medical – 17

Hazardous Conditions - 5

Search & Rescue - 4

Open Space Incidents - 4

Automatic Smoke Alarm - 4

Other - 1

<sup>1</sup> The total call volume for 2015 was 56 calls. The total call volume for 2016 was 75 calls.

## Chief's Report

By Michael Schmitt - Continued from Page 1

⇒ If you haven't done so contact Wildfire Partners or a competent contractor to help design and create a defensible space around your house. Once it is done it will increase the chances of survival of the home significantly and only require a reasonable amount of maintenance annually which includes but is not limited to keeping trees limbed and grasses short.

⇒ There should be no opening at your house where embers can land and accumulate. Also ensure that windows are closed when you are not home.

⇒ It is a good idea to tell a trusted neighbor or friend where your important items are, such as insurance papers and important personal items. Additionally, where your pets are of course, they are family members after all.

⇒ We need to know where your cisterns are. A wildfire gets hectic, and it may not be only Sunshine firefighters responding that would know where your cisterns and underground propane tanks (for shutoff) are. If you place a sign at your cistern (which we would appreciate very much) please also include the gallonage and place it high enough so that it can be seen even with snow on the ground. Some Sunshine residents have done a great job at this, and firefighters that don't even know the property can easily find the much needed water source.

⇒ If you have a fire department sprinkler connection, cistern, solar shut off or underground propane tank access, please make sure that it is not overgrown by vegetation and clearly visible to arriving firefighters.

⇒ Keep flammable materials from your house. Take cushions and upholstery from your deck inside your house when you are not home, remove firewood from your house and from under your deck. That is not where it should be stored.

⇒ Always feel free to contact Fire Marshal Honeyman and myself. We are here to help.

I would like to welcome residents Charlie Weinberger

and Mike Abiezzi as new firefighters to the department. They have gone through the process of joining and have already started their training.

They are a great addition and will make our department better with their personality and professionalism.

But as a volunteer department we always need additional help. Not everyone that becomes a member is required to be an axe-swinging, hose-shouldering firefighter. Whether you are mechanically inclined and would like to learn how to care for fire engines (it's like playing with the real-life versions of the toys you may have had as a child or stole from your sibling!) or are able to assist in the many other ways that make up the fire department. Administrative help, as board members, training support, or even taking a firefighter home that dropped off a firetruck at a shop and needs a ride home. It is one sure way to get to know your neighbors, learn an honorable skill that supports people you care about or add yet another item to your own personal legacy is becoming involved in your community. The fire department is as involved as it can get, and can be very rewarding. Contact me at 303-246-4519 or [chief@sunshine-fpd.org](mailto:chief@sunshine-fpd.org) to request information.

Special Thanks and shout out to Abby Silver and Alan Kirton for their continuous work on the CWPP Committee, it has a direct and positive impact on our district's safety. Please read Abby's update below. From a fire perspective particularly the Hazard Tree Removal and the Cheatgrass Educational Event are very important for our residents to consider.

I would also like to thank our firefighters and support personnel for all the work they do on a weekly basis. We would not have a department without you.

Chief Michael Schmitt

## CWPP Committee Update - By Abby Silver

Our CWPP planning committee got together on February 27 to review our 2017 projects and map out a list of future priorities. We recently received a new grant from the State of Colorado for almost \$25,000 for thinning and chipping projects. Thanks to Alan Kirton for another successful grant application!

### ONGOING PROJECTS:

#### Community Chipping:

Our two 2017 chipping events were well received as always. 25 households participated in the Spring event, and 23 in the Fall event. Thanks to Boulder County and the State for grant funding!

**2018 DATES:** We will be offering this free service again this year with Spring chipping the week of June 4-8 and Fall from October 22-26. Once again, our friends from Fourmile Mitigation will be our chipping contractors. As usual, announcements will be sent out closer to the dates.

#### Slash Burn Project:

This project is not moving forward as we had hoped. **Therefore, will not be accepting any new slash piles into the existing program and we don't anticipate offering this service in the future.** Please consider other options for dealing with your future slash disposal (chipping, hauling) or plan to deal with your own slash burning. **We are committed to dealing with the slash piles for all the properties that are currently signed up for the project.**

This project began in 2017, with 760 burn piles staged throughout the district. As of the end of February 2018, we have only had a single appropriate burn day (in Feb 2017) when 54 piles were burned. Unfortunately, the weather has not been cooperative; first of all we must have at least 5 inches of snow accumulated on the ground. Once that happens, there are other considerations like wind, general dryness, weather forecast, etc. that need to be considered before we could initiate a burn.

This was an experimental approach to dealing with hard-to-reach slash. Due to our slow progress, we are taking a multi-pronged approach going forward:

- We are still hoping that ideal burn conditions will materialize this season.
- We are investigating chipping/mulching and hauling options to being in the spring/summer, possibly involving a partnership with Boulder County and/or other outside contractors in collaboration with Eric Bader's company.

#### Sign Project Maintenance:

We intend to drive through the district in the spring to check the house number and maintain as needed.

#### Pressurized (Gravity-Fed) Wet Hydrant on CR83:

SFPD has been investigating a pressurized fire hydrant on CR 83 near the intersection of Misty Vale. The hydrant would be gravity fed from the 130,000 cistern under Station 2 and be available to firefighters when needed. This project is currently in the planning stages, with an estimated budget of \$30,000. We hope to make significant progress in 2018.

#### Fire Cistern on Whispering Pines

SFPD has also been investigating a fire cistern located on Whispering Pines. This project is currently in the planning stages, with an estimated budget of \$41,000. The goal is to have this project completed in 2018.

### NEW PROJECTS

#### Shaded Fuel Break Across Upper Portion of Fourmile Creek:

We received a \$12,000 match in our most recent grant to create a shaded fuel break (thinning project) on 11 acres across the Fourmile Canyon Creek drainage that runs from the Sunshine town-site down to Wagonwheel Gap Rd. The fuel break will thin stands

Continued on Page 4

CWPP Committee Update - Continued from Page3

By Abby Silver

of trees that were not directly impacted by the Fourmile Fire and will link together areas that were previously burned.

**Hazard Tree Removal:**

The Committee has allocated \$5,000 to removing standing roadway or powerline hazard trees. We will offer a 90% contribution, with the homeowner contributing 10%. This would include dead or dying trees that would pose a community hazard if they fall/blow down. We will be sending out more specific information about this project once we get it finalized.

**Cheatgrass Educational Event:**

We are planning to schedule a presentation by Boulder County Weed Officer Steve Sauer in June to discuss how to manage/eradicate Cheatgrass. This non-native noxious weed is highly flammable and spreads “like wildfire” (pun intended). More information will be disbursed once plans are finalized.

**Wildfire Partners Partnership:**

The Committee has allocated up to \$10,000 for 2018

**Save the Date:** Spring Community Chipping  
June 4-8, 2018

to support homeowners’ participation in Boulder County’s Wildfire Partners program. Please visit their website at wildfirepartner.org for more info on the program. We will offer to reimburse any homeowner who signs up for the program for 50% of their application fee. In addition, we will provide funding to cover 50% of the homeowners’ share of the cost of any forestry work (Wildfire Partners pays 50% of the total cost) up to a combined project total of \$5,000. In other words, we’d kick in up to \$1,250 toward a \$5,000 defensible space project. We will be sending out more specific information about this once registration details are finalized.

A giant thanks to Boulder County, the Colorado State Forest Service, and the State of Colorado for partnering with us and providing grant funding to help finance our mitigation efforts!

For more detailed information including financials, please see the minutes from our CWPP Planning Meetings:

<http://www.sunshine-fpd.org/About/SFPD-CWPP.cfm>. As ever, please feel free to contact me with any input or project suggestions.

Abby Silver,

CWPP Committee Chair: abberoo@msn.com



Four Mile Fire Fighter Shanti Leasure practicing infant CPR as SFPD Fire Fighter Lin Ballard evaluates his technique.

Permission received by Shanti Leasure for SFPD newsletter

## Fire Marshall's Report - 2018's 'To Do' list for safety

By Bruce Honeyman

It has been two and a half years since I last wrote my Spring To Do List and it keeps getting longer! There is no doubt that modern building codes, particularly those parts tailored to homes in the urban / wildland interface, make homes more safe from fire. The standard reference on defensible space has been the Colorado State Forest Service publication *Protecting Your Home From Wildfire* (FIRE 2012 -1). However, as you read through defensible space information, ask yourself the following question: if no firefighting resources can reach my home (and this is likely in a large fire that overwhelms our ability to respond), can my home survive unattended? **In other words: is my home stand-alone safe?** In general, structures burn either by materials that carry the fire to the structure or by intense radiative heat. So, looking around the area near your home, ask the question: **What can carry the fire to my house?** A great resource is Wildfire Partners (<http://wildfirepartners.org/>). Give them a call and, for a modest fee, they will give a great assessment of your home's wildfire defensive status.

Some other things to think about for wildland fire mitigation:

★ If the trees closest to your home ignite, will the radiant heat be sufficient to ignite your home? The answer can be complex and depends

on multiple factors including window type, your siding and so on. Get an assessment (e.g., Wildfire Partners).

★ Keep 'oily' shrubs and trees away from the house (Juniper is oil in the form of a tree!)

★ Have bushes and forest litter crept back over the winter; is it time to widen the zone of thinned vegetation; have new ladder fuels arrived? A weed wacker may be your best tool for maintaining defensible space. As a general rule, dried vegetation (grasses, shrubs, etc.) will produce a flame length 3 times the fuel height.

★ Keep roofs clear of debris: all of those pine needles that accumulate over the winter need to be cleaned from gutters.

★ Check to see if roof shingles blew off during the winter Chinook winds: these need to be replaced.

★ Enclose porch floors, roofs and attic openings (this will help keep wind-blown firebrands from getting into your home).

★ Dispose of slash from thinning. There maybe time to do this by burning before the snows go. However, you'll need a permit from the County, so apply now—plan for several weeks for the County to process the request.

★ Be sure to follow the SFPD and County guidelines for burning.

★ Don't park vehicles in tall, dry grass: hot mufflers can start fires.

★ Stack firewood uphill or on a contour and at least 15 feet away from buildings.

★ Get rid of trash that accumulated over the winter.

Ideas for general emergency preparedness:

★ If you are new to the District, let us know! We are a small District and would like to know about our neighbors' needs and concerns. We're here to serve you.

★ Make sure that your home insurance is at the appropriate level: 2/3 of homes destroyed in the Four Mile Fire were **underinsured**. Get an estimate of the cost to replace your home from a builder who is familiar with the costs of building in the foothills. **Don't rely on your insurance agent to give you a correct value.**

★ Take an hour and make a video of your home's contents and then put that video in a safe deposit box.

Continued on Page 6

## Fire Marshall's Report

By Bruce Honeyman - Continued from page 5

- ★ Check your policy to make sure that you are appropriately covered for things like firearms, electronics, art or collections with substantial monetary value.
- ★ Think of the documentation that would be difficult to replace (e.g., your Social Security card; key financial paperwork) and put that also in a safe deposit box. Our 'fireproof' safe was destroyed in the Four Mile Fire, so beware!
- ★ Select a family 'rendezvous' place where you can gather in the event of an area-wide emergency where you will know to go without contacting each other (e.g., a friend's house in town).
- ★ Practice family fire drills: know the best exits from your home.
- ★ If you have a residential sprinkler system and haven't had it looked at for a while get a certified technician to make sure it's in good working order.
- ★ If you have a residential sprinkler system for your house, please let us know if you have a fire department connection and its location. If you don't know if you have such a connection, call us and we'll check it out for you.
- ★ If you have a cistern for fire fighting water, make sure that it is full, that the fittings are in good shape and that the access is maintained. If it is a cistern put in as a requirement for site plan review, you are required to maintain it in good operating condition. We'll be happy to assess and test the cistern if you ask.
- ★ If you have a solar power array at your home, we need to know how to isolate it, so give us a call.
- ★ If you have a buried propane tank, provide us with a means of locating it when the access to the tank is under snow (e.g., a flag sticking up several feet).
- ★ Put emergency contact and medical information in a location that is easy for firefighters and emergency medical personnel to find. Pharmacies sell plastic information holders, usually emblazoned with a big red cross, that you can attach to the refrigerator door. If you have a living will or Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR), make sure that they are easy to find by emergency responders. Good locations include the refrigerator door, as described above, or with your collection of medications.
- ★ Think about those items that are precious to you (e.g., family photographs) and keep them organized for quick and easy access if you need to quickly evacuate your home. In an emergency, you may have only a few minutes to gather belongings. Scanning photos is relatively inexpensive and there are many businesses in town that will create digital copies for you to put in a safe-deposit box.
- ★ Make sure that emergency responders can locate your house: your fire department address marker (the green plastic strips) should be in good shape and visible from the road. Many seem to have blown down during the severe winds of the last few months. If you need a new one, or are unsure if your current marker is adequate for the task, contact us. Remember that some of our mutual and automatic aid responders (e.g., AMR and adjacent fire districts) may not be as familiar with our District as we are.
- ★ Trim branches along your driveway to facilitate moving our equipment to your home (our largest pumper, 4501, is 9 feet wide and 11 feet tall).
- ★ Check the batteries on your smoke detectors. **Smoke detectors save lives!** Get a CO (carbon monoxide) detector, too.

Continued on page 7



**Fire Marshal's Report**  
by Bruce Honeyman - Continued from page 6

★ If you are going away on vacation, try to remember to park vehicles away from likely routes of emergency access. If you have a turnaround at your home, leave it free of vehicles so that we don't need to back down your driveway when we leave.

★ Make sure that your fire extinguisher is charged and is located for easy access. A good place for an extinguisher is just outside the kitchen. Extinguishers need to be serviced yearly! If you don't know the proper way to use an extinguisher, contact us and we'll be glad to show you.

★ Have flashlights with fresh batteries at convenient locations in your home.

★ If you have a gate on your driveway, make sure that we are up-to-date on the access code.

★ Clean out your garage and storage areas! Properly dispose of hazardous materials.

★ Have your fireplace chimney inspected and cleaned.

If you have any questions about emergency preparedness, please do not hesitate to contact us. Have a safe and fun Spring and Summer!



Michael Johnson practicing backing up an engine on the church road. It is just short of one mile and has a vertical gain of 440'.

This can also be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIoffweYUio>

**QuickFacts/Ideas:**

- Remember that in Sunshine Fire Protection District you need a **burn permit** for **fire pits** and **bonfires**. If you have a question about a burn permit, please contact the Fire Marshal, Bruce Honeyman, or the Chief.

- This is a great time to volunteer: one of the basic skills courses, S130/190 (basic wildland firefighting), will be offered by the County in a few months.
- If you would like to volunteer, call or e-mail Chief Schmitt. We need all sorts of help, including station maintenance and mechanical skills for truck servicing, in addition to firefighters.
- Donations to the District can be made at our website ([www.sunshine-fpd.org](http://www.sunshine-fpd.org)).

## Sunshine Fire Protection District Board News

Alan Kirton – Chair, Sam Mishkin – Treasurer, Jean Gatza – Secretary, Gene Fischer, Jim Peacock

In 2018 Sunshine FPD will hit a significant milestone. Besides being 49 years old, it will also be the first year since the 2010 Fourmile Canyon Fire that the district's tax revenues will reach their pre-fire level. In the years directly after the fire, tax revenues were down by almost 50%. Capital purchases had to be tightly controlled, and the district relied on grants and donations from the community to get the equipment needed by our firefighters and EMT first responders. The district will still need grants and community donations going forward, but we are finally in a position to begin looking at replacing some of our aging fire apparatus.

Board elections will be held on May 8<sup>th</sup> this year. There are two board positions open for the election. Since Jean Gatza was appointed to the board, Colorado law requires that position to be up for election. In addition, Alan Kirton's four-year term will be ending. A community notice was sent out on February 16<sup>th</sup> regarding the process to be elected to the board. If we have more than two candidates, then a May election will be held for these positions. If not, then the elections will be canceled.

As always, we are grateful to the people who volunteer their time to the district. Thanks to the Officers, Firefighters and EMTs who respond to emergencies in Sunshine and in several of our neighboring fire districts; to Abby Silver for being the Chair of the CWPP Committee and running many of the district's mitigation projects; to Jen Lansky for publishing the newsletter and pulling together the district's emergency call statistics; to Anna Mefford for managing the Sunshine communications, sending out community notices and publishing the Sunshine Directory; to all the people that pull together the Community FEST and other district events during the year.

As a reminder, board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month, at 7:30 in Station 1 on County Rd 83. Community participation in these meetings is welcomed and encouraged. The Sunshine web site provides access to the board meeting minutes and Treasurer's reports. Feel free to contact board members if you have any questions or concerns about what's happening in the district.

### **\* Boulder County's Emergency Alert Notification System \***

**Important Message to existing members:** We have just completed a software upgrade; which requires all pre-existing members to validate their user name and refresh their password. This is a one time only need.

The Boulder County Emergency Alert Notification System is now offering severe weather alerts. Boulder County residents and guests now have the ability to sign-up for free severe weather alerts through a new Smart Weather service. This service is an add-on to Boulder County's emergency alert notification system, Everbridge.

To register for these alerts or to validate your existing account please go to:

**[www.boco911alert.com](http://www.boco911alert.com)**



**SFPD OFFICERS**

Chief - Michael Schmitt  
(303)246-4519  
chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Chief - Henry Ballard  
(303) 449-8619  
deputy-chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Fire Marshal - Bruce Honeyman  
(303) 704-0162  
honeyman@stanfordalumni.org

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President - Alan Kirton  
ajkirton@ionsky.com

Treasure - Sam Mishkin  
(914) 525-9464  
sammishkin@gmail.com

Jim Peacock  
jwwpeacock@gmail.com

Eugene (Gene) Fischer  
genefischer@yahoo.com

Jean Gatz  
303-444-8379 (h) 303-884-8890 (c)  
jeangatza@yahoo.com

**COMMUNITY WILDFIRE  
PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)  
COMMITTEE**

CWPP Chair - Abby Silver  
(303) 442-1253 abberoo@msn.com

Website: www.sunshine-fpd.org  
SFPD Phone # 303.789.7731

**District Resident Email Group**

**and**

**Fire Department Notices**

If you are NOT receiving email from either or both the Sunshine community email group as well as the Sunshine Fire Department email group (which is only used by the Chief and Officers for emergency or important notifications) please email **BOTH** [annamefford@gmail.com](mailto:annamefford@gmail.com) & [chief@sunshine-fpd.org](mailto:chief@sunshine-fpd.org). Also, please contact **BOTH** emails whenever there is a change to your email address so that we have updated information.

**Please Welcome  
our Newest SFPD  
Firefighters:**

Charlie Weinberger  
Mike Abiezzi

**Are you ready to Volunteer for SFPD?**

We are always looking for dedicated individuals to become Fire Fighters, station cleaners and organizers, event managers/support, and equipment managers. Please contact Michael Schmitt at [chief@sunshine-fpd.org](mailto:chief@sunshine-fpd.org) if interested.

**Calendar**

**April:**

- 4 Medical Training - 6-9 Four Mile
- 10 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ station #1
- 14 Wildland Refresher - SFPD 8-5 PM
- 26 Classroom Training -Fire Attack 7 to 10 PM

**May:**

- 2 Medical Training 6 -9 @ station #1
- 8 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Station 1
- 12 Live Burn training 8:30 AM - 12 PM @ Training Center
- 24 Classroom Training -Fire Attack 7 to 10 PM

**June:**

- 6 Medical Training 6 -9 @ Four Mile
- 9 Structure Fire Response 8:30 - 12 @ Sugarloaf Station #1
- 12 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 p.m. @ Station 1
- 28 Classroom Training Ropes & Tools 7 -10 @ Four Mile

Comments or suggestions for next newsletter contact:  
Jennifer Lansky at 303.442.2709 or [jen@lansky.cc](mailto:jen@lansky.cc)