



The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

Letter from the Chief By Michael Schmitt

March 10, 2019, was the date for our clocks to be changed to daylight savings. As a reminder, that was also the time to change the batteries in all of your smoke and CO detectors. It is a classic that we all grow up with, “change the clock, change the batteries”. It is so important. If you ask just about any Fire Chief in the nation what the first proactive thing is that residents should do it is having detectors and changing the batteries twice a year.

I will spare you the statistic of how many children die every year in homes with no detectors, or detectors with dead batteries. The US still has among the highest fatality rate in home fires across the industrialized part of the world. Which is a strange statistic because in places like Germany detectors are still not all that common but residential building materials are mostly stone and concrete with only the roof frame being made of wood beams. Yet in the US about 95% of all homes have one or more smoke detectors, but of those an estimated 25% do not have functional batteries.

As your fire department we look at many things that are redundant or preventative by nature. We need and rely on redundancy in many cases. As you may know we are working on purchasing a new fire engine (yes, a long process). Buying a fire truck is a task that may sound like “fun”, and yes when it is all done and delivered it is, but it is daunting as well because so many different considerations play a major role when a fire department in the

Urban Wildland Interface purchases a fire truck.

We also have almost three times the number of calls that we are responding to now than we did 20 years ago, and the population increase in recent years in the metro area, which is expected to continue, is partly responsible for that as well.

In the City, let’s take Boulder for example, you have far fewer variations. Their trucks don’t need to carry much water, often none or only very little for “self-preservation” in case the truck itself is on fire or exposed to fire. The City, of course, has hydrants, we do not, hence our engineer training being very different than a City Fire Department’s with hydrants where the truck’s engineer never needs to know how to draft out of a creek, pond, mine or lake or figure out how to build a pond from a steady drip coming out of the mountain side to collect as much water as possible. Many City engineers

**In 2018, SFPD
Firefighters participated
in 80 calls**

Medical – 19
Structural, car, & wildland
fire/smoke reports – 8
Vehicle & Bike Accident – 18
Hazardous Conditions - 5
Automatic Smoke Alarm - 3
Other -2
Dispatched & Canceled in
Route - 25

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Chief's Report

By Michael Schmitt - Continued from Page 1

have never had to learn how to draft (suck water) with their trucks, and to save money they sometimes don't have the pump's plumbing set up for drafting.

They can consider not having something called "CAFS", CompressedAirFoamSystem which mixes compressed air with water and foam to increase the amount of water. For us, with our very limited access to water, increasing 500 gal or 1000 gal on a truck can be crucial for a wildfire or a structure fire which can take 30,000 gallons or more of water, CAFS water also helps when pumping uphill due to the additional energy release from compressed air and fighting the wrath of gravity. But that CAFS system alone, not including the pump itself which costs even more, can take \$35,000 or more on a truck in the year 2019. An expense a district with hydrants and infinite amounts of water can consider not paying, and of course it can be argued that the City can come up with those \$35,000 easier than we do. But for all districts in the WUI, while not perfect CAFS can be an important tool.

Our trucks need to have clearance to drive through deep snow (when we have it again some day!), on some of our very rough driveways, and in other cases off-road, too. They need to have Four Wheel Drive and enough wheel well clearance to be able to use aggressive tire chains, items the City either does not have to consider at all or not to the same extent. Much like the City we also need redundancy. A new truck needs to do some of the exact same tasks that other

trucks in our small fleet already do. But if a truck is out of service we of course can't accept that we don't have a truck that can respond to structure fires, so we have to have two trucks that complement each other as well as do some of the same tasks, like pumping 1500 gallons per minute. Even our cabinetry needs to be different. A City fire truck does not need to have as many hand tools for wildfires, like McLeods, Pulaskis, shovels, bladder bags, drip torches, etc. Last, but not least, a large City replaces its fire trucks about every 10 years. For reliability reasons we sometimes also must consider some of the upgrades that are available to suspension systems, engine and transmission as our engines are in service for 20-25 years, plus we have to carry more weight up steep hills in a reasonable amount of time thus a larger engine is needed. You may have noticed from driving behind one of our engines up the hill that even when working hard, they are not very fast despite upgrades.

There are so many customizations available and truck manufacturers options. Of course increase in customization increases the overall cost of the engine, but with added customization also comes future issues as the quirrier an engine is the less reliable it will be, and that is a serious concern for us. After all, we only want one engine out of service for repair and maintenance, not more, at any given time.

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* Boulder County's Emergency Alert Notification System *

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To register or to update your existing account please go to: www.boco911alert.com

CWPP Committee Update - By Abby Silver

Our CWPP planning committee got together on February 19 to review our 2018 projects and map out a list of future priorities, summarized here. Complete notes, including budget line items, can be found at <http://www.sunshine-fpd.org/downloads/CWPP-Planning-Meeting-20190219.pdf>

Slash Pile Project

We have finally made substantial progress! As discussed in previous newsletters, the district had 700+ slash piles left over from mitigation work performed after the Four Mile Fire. We had two winters in a row where disappointing snow conditions provided few burn opportunities. In summer 2018 we were able to grind a number of the remaining piles, with the wood chips being used by a local farmer. Finally, in winter 2018/19, we have had a few burn opportunities! We are currently down to less than 200 piles remaining. With some luck, we will be able to wrap this project up in the 2019 calendar year. Special thanks to Eric Bader of Boulder Tree Service for continuing to keep this project moving forward!

Fourmile Canyon Creek Shaded Fuel Break

Our current shaded fuel break project will thin living and remove fallen/burned trees across a section of the Fourmile Canyon Creek drainage between CR83 and Whispering Pines. This 11 acre project was designed to link burn areas from the Fourmile Fire. The resulting fire break should help protect the upper part of our district from a fire running up the drainage that begins at Wagonwheel Gap Rd.

SFPD contracted with the Colorado State Forest Service to flag the project boundaries and to mark the individual trees for removal. This was completed in fall 2018. In October we put together a bid package for forestry contactors and received several qualifying bids. We chose Boulder Tree Service as the lowest bidder. The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

Thanks to Alan Kirton for getting matching grant funding for this project, and the State for the funding!

Community Chipping

This popular program will be back in 2019. Boulder County is still determining whether they will be offering grant support. Our planning is on hold awaiting their conditions, but generally speaking we will be offering spring and fall chipping similar to years past. Feel free to create piles (accessible by vehicle and with cut ends facing the vehicle access) at your convenience. Actual dates, instructions and sign-up information will be emailed out a month or so before the chipping begins. If you're unfamiliar with this and want more info on staging piles, please contact Abby anytime.

Brochure for Out of Town Visitors

We have created a brochure for residents to share with their out of town visitors and Airbnb/VRBO guests. The brochure touches on the major points that folks from the wetter parts of the world might not be aware of (an example would be a heads' up not to park on dry grass). We have distributed 2 copies to each mailbox last fall, but there are plenty more available for residents with a high volume of guests. No one wants to start the next fire, so let's get the word out regarding appropriate practices in our community!

Hazard Trees Project

We are in the process of identifying hazard trees. These are dead or leaning trees that could potentially fall across a roadway, impeding egress/ingress. If you feel you have such a tree on your property, please contact Abby (abberoo@msn.com). The removal will be almost entirely subsidized by the district, and the work will be done by the Fourmile Mitigation Crew.

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CWPP Committee Update - Continued from Page 3
By Abby Silver

Hydrant/Water Capacity Projects

We are always trying to increase our district-wide water capacity, and have a number of projects that are under consideration or in process. Visit the link to the full meeting notes for details on every project. Highlights include:

Pressurized (Gravity-Fed) Wet Hydrant on CR83 near Misty Vale:

The hydrant would be gravity fed from the 130,000 cistern under Station 2 and be available to firefighters when needed. This is a complex and multi-faceted project that will need County permits, landowner permission, and contractors to install the infrastructure. The funding is allocated and the goal is to complete the project this year.

Fire Cisterns on Whispering Pines:

This is a similarly complex project currently in the planning stages. The goal is to have this project completed in 2019.

Repair Wet Hydrant at Station 1:

This project is close to completion. Thanks to Henry Ballard for his hard work!

Again, please read the full notes (see link above) for the full story. There are many more projects on our “wish list” than we have funding and/or volunteer capacity to accomplish. Many of these simply need “person hours” to get going. If you see a project you’d like to take ownership of, the answer is YES! Please contact Abby to discuss.

Thanks!!! to all who volunteer their time, wisdom, and energy to help conceive and execute these projects. And as always, we really appreciate our partnership with Boulder County and with the Colorado State Forest Service for the expertise and funding that they both provide. Thanks!!!

As always, please feel free to contact me with any input or project suggestions.

Abby Silver,

CWPP Committee Chair: abberoo@msn.com



Slash piles being burned by SFPD FireFighters.

Photo Credit: Mike Greenberg

Fire Marshall's Report - 2019's 'To Do' list for safety

By Bruce Honeyman

Before each Sunshine Newsletter Chief Schmitt and I talk about an issue that we would like to address in our Newsletter articles. Over the years I've written about a number of things, many of them concerning how our District operates. However, in all of that, the most important information that we can give is how to help prevent damage to your home from wildfires. Although I wrote about preparedness and protection a little over a year ago, we decided that enough new folks have moved into the district to warrant another reminder. Additionally, as each year passes, we think of new things to add to our 'To Do' list based on our experiences in the District as well as those of our neighboring departments. So—the 2019 'To Do' List.

There is no doubt that modern building codes, particularly those parts tailored to homes in the urban / wildland interface, make homes safer from a 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 may be 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.

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Fire Marshall's Report

By Bruce Honeyman - Continued from page 5

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 the correct value. Several years ago I wrote an article on insurance and catastrophic loss for the Newsletter. If you would like a copy, let me know at marshal@sunshine-fpd.org.

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

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!

Make several backup drives for your computer, keeping one in a safe deposit box that you periodically swap out for the one at home.

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 are ordered to evacuate—EVACUATE! Staying to protect your home not only puts your life at jeopardy but also puts additional risks on responders. If you evacuate, put a note on the door letting responders know that everyone has left.

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. You are also required by the fire code to have signage indicating how to isolate the system.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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 after each season of wood burning. This is of particular importance when burning high-pitch fuels such as Ponderosa Pine.

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

Bruce Honeyman

QuickFacts/Tips:

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 Chief Schmitt.

Septic Pumping - To prevent issues remember to have your septic tank pumped every 3 years or less.

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 interested, call or e-mail Chief Schmitt.

Donations to the District can be made at our website (www.sunshine-fpd.org).

Chief's Report By Michael Schmitt - Continued from Page 1

We are always looking for committed volunteers, whether they are firefighters or volunteer with the district in other ways that we need help with. I would like to introduce two new firefighters. First, Ethan Koehler has joined the department as our first official junior firefighter, welcome Ethan! I can't express enough how much I think of a young man or woman making the decision to join a department and learning ways to help others.

Secondly, Ethan's father Marc has also decided to join the department along with his son. Welcome Marc! I will do my best to get the entire Koehler clan to join the department before too long!

Many of you know the Koehler family, and they truly have a legacy of supporting and being close to their

neighbors and the Sunshine FPD. Both are going through our mini academy at the moment, which is taught by SFPD Officer Rick Lansky (Thank you Rick!). Of course that brings up the call for others to volunteer as well. If you are interested in becoming a Firefighter/EMT, fire truck manager or support member of the department contact me.

Marshal Honeyman and I always discuss what each of us is going to write in the upcoming newsletter. All residents should take his letter seriously and consider all items on his preparedness list.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Enjoy your spring and summer!

Chief Michael Schmitt



Sunshine Communications Volunteer needed - Congratulations to Anna Mefford on the birth of her son in January. With the extra duties Anna is no longer available to handle Sunshine's communications. Sunshine is now looking for a resident who can send out announcements, keep the Sunshine email list upto date, and update the Sunshine phone directory. This role can be split into two if needed. Please contact Anna annamefford@gmail.com and Chief Schmitt - chief@sunshine-fpd.org if you are interested. Anna will provide training.

Sunshine Fire Protection District Board News

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

Sunshine FPD has been fortunate to have had a stable board in the years following the fire. Sam Mishkin has served as SFPD Treasurer since July of 2011. Gene Fischer and Jim Peacock have served on the board since May of 2012. We should acknowledge and thank them for the time that they have contributed in supporting the district and the community. All three will be finishing their second, four year term in May of 2020. By Colorado statute, board members of special districts are limited to two consecutive terms which means that SFPD will need to replace 3 board members in the next election.

As a Special District, SFPD is a division of local government in Colorado. As such, we have a number of obligations that need to be met to ensure that we stay in good standing with the state. The board performs those functions as well as being ultimately responsible for the operations and the affairs of the district. We need to have community members get involved with board activities and become candidates to fill the positions that will be opening in 2020. Please contact Alan Kirton to learn more.

In 2019 one of the major focus items for the board will be a replacement engine for 4502 which is our 40+ year old Type 3 Engine (the white one). The board has done enough financial analysis to feel comfortable with moving forward with a lease-purchase of a new engine. The Chief has formed an Apparatus Committee to develop the specifications for the new engine. Once developed, we will then work with the manufacturer to get pricing and make the final decisions regarding the purchase.

Another focus item for 2019 is to finish up the water projects that have been in the works for several years. One project is to provide a pressurized hydrant on CR 83 by installing a buried 6" water line from the 130,000 gallon cistern at Station 2 down to CR 83. Other projects include a 15,000 gallon community cistern installation on Whispering Pines, finishing a gravity fed connection to the 10,000 gallon cistern at Station 1 and putting into service a 10,000 gallon cistern already installed at 875 CR 83.

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 surrounding districts; to the Board Members; 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 Beth Byerlein and others who 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 at 311 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

***Mitigation Tip: Be Ember Aware!** - Studies show that most homes damaged or destroyed by wildfires are ignited by embers, not the flaming front. As you are creating your defensible space and choosing building materials, consider the following: "If an ember were to land here, would the resulting fire threaten my home?" Therefore it is recommended, that you screen all attic, roof, soffit and foundation vents with 1/8 in. metal screening.

