



The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

Letter from the Chief By Michael Schmitt

Dear Sunshine Residents,

2023 is full steam ahead. 2022 ended with the “Sunshine Fire”, or to some, it may be remembered as the “Sanitas Fire”. Fires can be named by the first person in command that is on scene or by dispatch, and we will hear both names for the foreseeable future.

We can always talk about prevention. There are many things you, as homeowners, can do. And while some of you are definitely seasoned mountain residents, many of you are new to the canyon, and it is crucial that you follow and implement good standards to protect your home and those of your neighbors, and most importantly, yourself and your family. From a safety perspective, mountain living is very different from City living. The old-timers among you will

agree with that. While we had a very strong response to the recent fire in Sunshine Canyon, with about 60 engines from the metro and mountain areas responding, we are fully aware that we also were lucky that this did not occur at a different time of year. I did take pictures and post them on our Instagram account of fire next to

snow, on an eastern aspect.

It symbolized the changes to our environment and, consequently, the fire behavior and frequency over the last 20 years quite well.

This fire could have happened anywhere in the district and anywhere in the County. We refer to every home as an “ignition source”. Because homes have so many possibilities to start a fire that are too numerous to list here, we like to see that everyone has the right amount of smoke detectors, the correct type, and the correct placement. Early detection is everything, and that includes the time we have to organize a response from other agencies to assist us in fighting

In 2022, SFPD Firefighters participated in 130 calls¹

Structural, car, & wildland
fire/smoke reports – 8

Vehicle/Bike Accident – 16

Medical/Medical Assist – 45

Hazardous Conditions - 2

Other - 4

Dispatched & Canceled in
Route - 55

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¹ The total call volume for 2016: 75 calls, 2017: 81 calls, 2018: 80 calls, 2019: 103 calls, 2021: 104 calls.

Chief's Report

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a fire once that is about to or has extended to the wildland.

Many times we come to false alarms and check the expiration date (on underside of every detector) just to find out that it is well past its life expectancy and throws false alarms. Some detectors need to be replaced every 10 years, but others depending on the type of sensor and whether it has a built-in CO detector, will need to be replaced every 5 to 7 years. If it does not show a date and you can't find a record of it, replace it. Smoke detectors don't only need to be sufficient in numbers because they need to detect a fire early in different locations around the house; they also need to be audible for the occupants to hear them. As loud as they are, if you like to listen to music on a nice set of noise-canceling headphones, you will not hear the detector that is at the opposite end of the hall in a room with a closet door (this is where hardwired and connected detectors have an advantage). My sister-in-law and her husband were painting portions of their house 20 years ago. The smoke detectors were taken down in those rooms and the rags used for painting ignited through spontaneous combustion. The entire home was consumed by fire as a result. This is rather common and we have had a handful of those types of fires in our canyon in the last 10 years that started similarly. Rags and paper towels soaked with a flammable liquid like gasoline, alcohol, turpentine or other flammable liquids should be in a dedicated steel bin and not within a minimum of 3 feet of any combustible materials. Back to detectors.

The proper placement is of course decisive for the efficacy of smoke detectors. The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) recommends a smoke

alarm in every bedroom, outside of sleeping areas and every level of your home including the basement (or crawlspace if you have wiring or furnaces etc in that space for example). Place them high on the wall, within a foot of your ceiling, and don't have them too close to your cooking area, bathroom (shower steam) or your laundry to avoid false alarms.

Test your alarms monthly and replace batteries every six months. It's cheap insurance. Another cheap piece of insurance are escape ladders for those homes that do not have obvious pathways for egress on all sides on every floor.

And now, when the unfortunate does happen that you have a fire you are helping your neighbors by having mitigated your property just as much as they will have helped you by mitigating theirs if they have a fire that starts at the home. Thinking about fire prevention is very much a communal issue in our environment, which is why it is very important for homeowners to follow CWPP and Wildfire Partners guidelines and recommendations (and wherever possible and applicable, go beyond), and also to be active whenever possible (please read Abby's contribution in this newsletter!). And if you can, come to the CWPP meeting in March.

Mitigation on the Sunshine/Sanitas Fire, both close to the home that was the origin as well as further up on the hill, significantly helped in containing the fire. We love to see well mitigated and contained homes and properties!

One month after the fire in December, we responded to a well-involved structure fire in Pine Brook Hills

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Chief's Report

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that, thankfully, was surrounded by lots of snow and speaking of prevention. We strictly enforce our burn permit process by putting out the fire or remains and requesting the Sheriff's Office to write a ticket. Why? Because incorrectly performed pile burns or recreational fires are a common cause for fire starts. In December alone we had one in lower Sunshine Canyon outside of our district and one multi-acre fire in the Boulder Mountain Fire district from burn piles that were not handled correctly. In both instances the piles contained the heat for days and even a week, with insufficient snow surrounding both at the time of the burn, and grass was again able to carry a fire and did so. I can't count the number of times that I have seen common sense rules ignored. The County and SFPD clearly state in both our permits (which are both required) under what conditions it is permitted to have these burns. Pile burning may sound like an easy task, but in order to do it right one has to follow a number of important steps and be diligent about them. If you are planning to burn piles or have a recreational fire or a fire pit that you plan on using please get in touch to get a permit. As anyone that has a permit in our district will likely agree, it is not to prohibit that activity but to make it safe and have a site visit to make recommendations to make it better. We spend our personal time happily to make sure that we don't get a large or small fire because something entirely preventable. Get in touch if you have any questions at all.

We have some new members in the department, and I am very excited to see each of them flourish in their own way. Nicole Esplin has agreed to become our dedicated grant writer. SFPD has never had such a person dedicated to grants! We have always had

people who did a tremendous job at grant writing for us, but they also did other tasks on top of it as well. Alan Kirton is one of those people, and the list of items that we were able to purchase because of Alan's grant writing is long (thank you, Alan!). Grant writing is becoming more important with every year that passes. It has a direct impact on how effective and safe we are on scene, and I feel fortunate to have Nicole on board. It very much deserves its own position and, therefore, person. Many of you will know her from walking her Golden Retriever Sunny here in Sunshine Canyon. Thank you for stepping up, Nicole!

As far as new firefighters go, we are in the fortunate position to select who we take on. Because of the work it creates, we hire new firefighters now only at the beginning of the year. Of five candidates that were interviewed Spencer Powlison, Braedon Blumfield and Zach Chupa have been chosen as our new firefighters as they all bring different skills and interests to the team. Spencer is already going through the structure fire academy. He agreed about a day after being accepted into SFPD to go to the academy, which is a three-month commitment. Braedon, Zach, and Spencer will take on the wildland fire academy in the spring as their next step. Welcome to the department!

We have lost a long-time resident, board member, and firefighter with Don Dick, who passed away earlier this year. Don was a great neighbor and friend to many. When you have a healthy and balanced community, you really depend on a set of people that take on whatever is necessary and do so with

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integrity. That isn't just referring to fire department members but certainly extends to other institutions in the canyon (cemetery, school house, to name a couple). Don did that and was even around when the old station was built in the 1960's. He spent decades helping the department into what it is today and was a passionate first responder. I recently told a firefighter that whatever you do now, you do also to set up the future members of the department and the

community for success. Don was an integral member and has certainly helped us to be where we are today with his contributions to the department, and for that and his sense of humor that came with it, we will always be thankful.

Regards,

Chief Micheal Schmitt

SFPD Mitigation Funds Are Available for Home Hardening

Multiple scientific post-wildfire disaster studies have shown that embers and surface fire are responsible for the majority of home loss during all western wildfires. There are many simple steps that each of us can take to make our homes more resilient, and SFPD wants to help!

The CWPP Committee, with board approval, has allocated funding to support improvements to the wildfire resiliency of homes in our district (home hardening). This is designed as a partnership with Boulder County's Wildfire Partners program. Homeowners who join Wildfire Partners will receive a report detailing the vulnerabilities of their structure(s) and the defensible space around them, as well as a list of mitigation measures. Any SFPD taxpayer who joins the Wildfire Partners program for the first time will be eligible for up to a \$1000 match from SFPD toward either forestry work or home retrofits that are required or recommended on their Wildfire Partners report.

Examples: If home retrofit work (like creating a gravel border around the home or patching holes in siding) costs \$1000, you could receive \$500 from this fund; if it costs \$2200 the homeowner could receive \$1000. If forestry work costs \$4500 and Wildfire Partners provides their maximum of \$2000 toward this work, homeowners could receive an additional \$1000 from SFPD.

Please visit www.wildfirepartners.org for more info on the Wildfire Partners program. Please contact Abby Silver (abberoo@msn.com) with any questions to or apply for SFPD reimbursement. Receipts will be required, and homeowners' time does not count.

CWPP Committee Update -

By Abby Silver

CWPP Planning Meeting:

Every year, all community members are invited to participate in our annual planning meeting. We will review projects from 2022 and plan projects for 2023. All are welcome, and if you have input but are unable to attend, please share that with Abby ahead of the scheduled meeting. Agenda for the meeting will be available on the SFPD website before the meeting. The minutes and project list from the meeting will be available on the SFPD website starting in late March.

WHEN: Tuesday, March 21st from 7:00-8:30 PM

WHERE: Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81741565007?pwd=bVZsSHlQc2hVVWhNVXFsUzFWYW4rQT09>

Meeting ID: 817 4156 5007

Passcode: 879151

Spring chipping is coming soon:

Spring chipping will be taking place from June 5-9 (weather dependent as usual). Please keep your eyes peeled for emails from our Sunshine Fire communications starting in early May with details on staging piles and how to sign up. If you plan to start working on this sooner and have any questions about specifics on how or where to stage your slash, please reach out to Abby (abberoo@msn.com) for more information.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Document Update:

Alan Kirton and Abby Silver have been working throughout 2022 with a group of colleagues from neighboring Fire Protection Districts to create a CWPP document. Four Mile, Sunshine, Gold Hill and Sugarloaf FPDs are taking a novel approach in creating a joint document. Partnering with our neighboring districts will increase resilience and make our

4-district consortium a more compelling candidate in the competitive grant process.

What is it? The CWPP is a document that performs a wildfire risk assessment and outlines the most effective, specific measures fire districts and communities can take to best engage in wildfire risk reduction, ensuring that our communities are as prepared as possible when wildfires occur.

Why do we need a new one? A lot of new wildfire mitigation project funding is becoming available from State and Federal grants. Most of these grants require the applicants (yes, us!) to have a CWPP that was written within the past 10 years. Our last CWPP was written in 2013 and will be 10 years old this year.

Resiliency: Fire doesn't know district boundaries. Working to moderate fire intensity in our neighboring districts is a solid strategy in preventing high intensity fire from spreading to Sunshine.

Grant Funding: A strong motivator is that after many years of receiving grant funding through the State for our projects, none of our grant applications have been funded for the past several years. Grants have become focused on large, landscape scale projects which are difficult for a district of our size.



Cistern revegetation on CR 83

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CWPP Committee Update - Continued from Page 4

By Abby Silver

Survey Results:

Thanks to the 59 people who filled out our Community Survey in fall 2022. Since that represents over 1/3 of households in our district, this seems like a good sampling of community knowledge base and priorities. Some of the highlights:

- Most know we have a CWPP but few are intimately familiar with the document.
- Top concerns about a wildfire are home loss (47%), community fracturing (13%), ecological damage (10%) or a combination of the 3 (17%)
- Most (83%) of respondents think their own home is well mitigated.
- Most (58%) also thought their neighbor's home was well mitigated (18% no, 25% unsure)
- Most (78%) of residents have a "Pretty Good" or "Strong" understanding of how to make their home defensible against wildfire
- Pretty much everyone is doing some forestry work on their property for fire mitigation.
- Most residents spend some time looking for and maintaining their home hardening (weeding the noncombustible zone, checking for gaps in siding, cleaning gutters, etc)
- Most residents felt there were some things they could be doing (same list as above) but aren't checking regularly.
- The top 3 obstacles preventing doing more are: time, money, physical ability.
- Almost everyone supports tree thinning in support of wildfire risk reduction depending on the specifics.
- The results were mixed on supporting slash/pile burning as a mitigation measure.
- Most respondents are willing to contribute time, money, or labor toward wildfire mitigation projects in the community.

Almost everyone (90%) felt prepared to deal with an evacuation. Most people have evacuated or practiced and are familiar with evacuation routes. **IF YOU DO NOT FEEL PREPARED FOR EVACUATION, PLEASE REACH OUT TO SFPD FOR ADVICE!**

When asked for specific recommendations of additional projects, some of the suggestions included:

- An egress route to the north from County Road 83 (multiple mentions)
- Fuels breaks – creation and maintenance – along Sunshine Canyon Drive (corner of CR 83, miles 3-4 SCD, general)
- Fuel break and/or thinning along the Fourmile Creek corridor (multiple mentions)
- Additional cisterns/water resources (proposed repeatedly)
- Camping restrictions (particularly at Sunshine Saddle)
- Appropriate signage (no camping, no parking, no smoking, etc)
- Forest management in Fourmile Canyon
- Removing felled logs throughout the community
- Ensure that gated egress routes will be unlocked during emergency events
- Maintain egress routes

Thanks!!! Abby Silver

CWPP Committee Chair: abberoo@msn.com

Burn Permits for Bonfires & Fire Pits:

Remember that **every year** in the Sunshine Fire Protection District you need a new burn permit for **fire pits** and **bonfires**. If you have a question or need a burn permit, please contact our Fire Marshal Michael Johnson (775) 790-2662 marshal@sunshine-fpd.org, or Chief Schmitt.

Sunshine Website and Community Directory**SFPD Communications:**

To receive SFPD email communications or to update your email address for both urgent and non-urgent SFPD business please contact chief@sunshine-fpd.org. SFPD communications may include announcements, evacuation information, safety concerns/issues, CWPP, and fire department information. The SFPD announcement emails will not be used for conversations/discussions.

Directory:

The Community Directory is available on our Sunshine website. To make changes or for instructions and password please email directoryupdates@sunshine-fpd.org. It is password-protected for security. This directory is for just our community, please do not share it outside of our community and protect our secure access. Help us by keeping this information updated with your information.

Sunshine Community Forum:

As a way to keep our Sunshine community connected, we created a special Google Group called the Sunshine Community Forum. It's a private group that allows all our neighbors to post non-commercial topics and respond to others, (lost dog, bear sighting, help finding a contractor, questions about our community, etc.) If you would like to join this group or more instructions on how to post to this group, please contact John Bauer at JRBauer01@gmail.com.



Truck maintenance: Oil and fuel filter changes by Sam & Malachi

Fire Marshal's Report

By Michael Johnson

When I first started thinking about the Fire Marshal update for the Spring newsletter, the Sunshine fire in mid-December naturally came to mind. It's recent, there are plentiful topics for discussion, and I feel a great deal of gratitude and pride for being a part of such a giving and incredible group as the Sunshine FPD. At some point in the response, I realized that nearly every member was engaged in the fire.

However, another aspect of mountain living also recently came to light. The California Bay Area, specifically downtown San Jose, was my home prior to Sunshine Canyon. After a decade of living there I could only say I casually knew one of my neighbors. There's a distance we seem to impose in those communities where neighbors are nearly on top of each other. It's like the physical proximity replaces personal connection and community, leaving a vague and loose familiarity with the neighbors that lacks any real intimacy.

The contrast between my former home and my new one was once again made clear about a month after the Sunshine fire. One of our firefighters was training for the

annual physical qualifier taken by all wildland firefighters. It's a test of stamina and strength: carry a 45-pound pack for 3 miles in under 45 minutes. I've taken it with and without preparation, and I vastly prefer the former. The firefighter was carrying a weighted vest on the Sanitas trail when he slipped on a patch of ice, going down hard. He self-extracted and made it home, likely working off adrenaline. Upon arriving home, he started getting a better appreciation for how badly injured he was and decided to call 911.

Members of Sunshine, 4 Mile, AMR, and possibly other departments responded to a routine medical call. The firefighter was evaluated, loaded into an ambulance, and taken to the hospital. The totality of injuries only became clear over many days. Worry kept his family in the ICU and scrambled to deal with everyday life chores. Weeks later he was released home to continue his recovery.

At this point I am again reminded of what it means to have and be a part of a community. One that

looks out for each other, that's willing to get involved and lend a hand. In preparation for his return, a meal train was set up so the family wouldn't have to worry about cooking. Firewood delivery was arranged. Recliner chairs were loaned by the fire department because he likely would be unable to lie in a bed for several weeks. Other tasks dealt with, by friends, neighbors, and strangers alike. The community response brought me, again, a deep sense of gratitude for being a part of this wonderful neighborhood. It's not just the fire department, but everyone who lives here that makes this a wonderful neighborhood. So, thank you, to everyone who helped and who wanted to help - you're part of what makes this place special.

With deep appreciation,
Michael Johnson

* The above was written with permission from the firefighter involved, who I already see hiking his way through recovery.

Wildfire Readiness Tips

- * Create a 3-5 ft. non-combustible “vegetation free” perimeter around all structures and always keep wildland grass cut to a max height of 4 in. within 30 ft. of all structures.
- * Ensure your roof has a Class A fire rating
- * Remove branches that hang over the roof
- * Keep wood piles at least 30 ft away from your house and uphill from any structures
- * Make sure gutters and the top and underside of decks are always clear of flammable debris.
- * Screen all attic, roof, soffit, and foundation vents with 1/8 in. metal screening.

Sunshine Fire Protection District Board News

Alan Kirton – Chair, Dan Fischer – Treasurer, Jean Gatz – Secretary, Cathy Shoenfeld, Dick Smith

The SFPD Board holds deep gratitude for Chief Schmitt and all the firefighters who skillfully responded to the December fire – as well as responding to calls and emergencies all year long. We are so fortunate to have dedicated neighbors working to keep us, our homes, the forest, and the community safe. Thank you all.

More gratitude is in order. The 2022 fund-raising effort was a great success raising over \$23,000! We were able to purchase necessary equipment for the new engine and several other safety items. Your donations really make a difference in equipping our firefighters, engines, and stations with what they need to function well. Thank you all for your on-going generosity.

SFPD Board Positions

Three SFPD Board terms are ending in 2023. Dick Smith, Secretary and Dan Fischer, Treasurer have self-nominated to serve another term, this time for four years. Cathy Shoenfeld has decided not to serve on the board again but will serve our district in other ways. It has been an absolute pleasure serving with Cathy and we thank her for her thoughtfulness and

dedication to the district. Pat Noyes has self-nominated to join the Board for a four year term. Since there was one vacancy and one new volunteer, we will not need to hold an election this year and have formally cancelled the election process. Thank you to all our Board members and new members for their continued support for our district.

Survey Results

Thanks to all of you who returned our survey in January concerning your interests in community events and volunteering. Sixty six residents returned the survey and have provided a wealth of information and ideas for our community. You had some GREAT ideas for future events and fun. Many of you said you are willing to help in a range of duties, and we will be reaching out to you in the coming months. We will be looking for a few ‘leads’ to coordinate efforts around events, special projects, and other important tasks.

Look for a full summary of the survey results and ideas by email soon! You’re going to love some of the ideas!

Understanding the Sunshine Fire Protection District Budget

As a property owner in Sunshine, you might wish to know how we are funded, and how those funds are used. It is also helpful to see why additional fundraising is important. SFPD's primary source of funding is an 8.48 mill tax levy applied to all properties in the district. In 2022, this tax generated \$123,500. An additional \$51,850 was generated by a 3.56 mill level dedicated to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for wildland mitigation, water supply improvements, signage and egress route creation and maintenance. Other sources of revenue include donations and grants. Donations totaled \$23,100 2022; no grants were received last year.

Last year was an unusual year for us as we purchased a new fire engine for \$502,100, which was the first major equipment purchase in several years. \$121,300 of that amount was paid in 2021 for the advance cost of the chassis. The engine purchase was funded from our Capital Reserve Fund, which is built up over multiple years for such purchases. We also paid \$28,000 out of the operating budget to equip the new engine -- most of which was covered by the \$23,100 in your donations. Thank you for helping to make those purchases possible!

Income for 2023, including CWPP, is estimated to be \$198,600. Additional funding will be drawn from CWPP (\$6,900) and Cistern Fund reserves (\$9,200).

We are counting on a minimum of \$15,000 estimated from your donations and \$10,000 in grants and miscellaneous income. Our total operating budget is \$214,600.

District expenses in the 2023 Budget include:

General and Administration - insurance, utilities, and building maintenance: \$45,740 SFPD is an all-volunteer district and no funding is spent on salaries or benefits except for firefighters participating in paid State or Federal sponsored events.

Operating Expenses - repairs and maintenance, non-capital equipment and training: \$69,100 (includes \$25,900 for Wildland Mitigation).

Capital Expenses – major equipment purchases and project expenses: \$64,300 (includes \$40,000 for Water Supply Improvements).

Transfer to Capital Reserve: \$35,500. This will begin replenishing the Capital Reserve for future major equipment needs.

I welcome your questions or comments!

Dan Fischer, Treasurer
fischer_dp@outlook.com
Sunshine Fire Protection District

Have you noticed browning trees on your drive home?

Tree mortality is being triggered by pollution from the road. Dust, chemicals sprayed on for dust abatement and ice control plus general exhaust pollution all contribute. If a tree is on your property and you catch it early you could try watering or feeding. In SFPD, once they're fully brown (ie they're totally dead and saving isn't possible) we recommend cutting them asap so they won't blow down onto the road.



SFPD helped extinguish a structure fire in Boulder Mountain Fire Protection District in January. Photo of Ben Hogan.

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

This system allows residents of Boulder County to be notified of emergency situations including mandatory evacuations notices in a variety of ways including on their **cell phone**, home, and work phones. This can be sent to you by text messaging and e-mail. You will receive time-sensitive messages for your chosen locations such as home, work, school, and family. YOU pick where you pick how.

To register for these alerts or to validate your existing account please go to: **www.boco911alert.com**



FireFighter Eric Bader working the Sanitas fire.
Photo Credit Chris Rodgers/Code 10 Photography



2003 photo of Fire station #1 on CR 83 prior to burning down in February 2006 due to a boiler issue. All trucks were saved.

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 -
Michael Johnson (775) 790-2662
msrshal@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Fire Marshal -
Paul Hourihan (303) 551-3443
pthourihan@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President - Alan Kirton
ajkirton@ionsky.com

Treasure - Dan Fischer
fischer_dp@outlook.com

Cathy Schoenfeld
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Dick Smith
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Jean Gatz
jeangatz@yahoo.com

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

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

**Fire Department & Community
Event Notices**

Our directory and email list are always a work in progress. If you have updates/changes to this list, please email directoryupdates@sunshine-fpd.org with any changes, deletions, or updates. Help us by keeping this information updated with your information and your neighbors who are new to the area.

SFPD's Website:
www.sunshine-fpd.org

SFPD Phone #
303.786.7731

Are you ready to Volunteer for SFPD?

We are always looking for dedicated individuals to become auxiliary department members as Quartermaster, grant writers, station cleaners and organizers, event managers/support and equipment managers. Please contact **Michael Schmitt** at chief@sunshine-fpd.org if interested.

Calendar**April:**

- 5 Medical Training - 7-9 PM
- 8 Practical Training - 8AM -5 PM (Wildland Refresher)
- 11 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ station #1
- 27 Classroom Training - 7 to 10 PM

May:

- 5 Medical Training 7-9 PM
- 9 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ Station 1
- 13 Practical Training 8:30 AM - 12 PM
- 25 Classroom Training -Fire Attack 7 to 10 PM

June:

- 2 Medical Training 7 -9 PM
- 10 Practical Training 8:30 - 12 PM
- 13 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM. @ Station 1
- 22 Classroom Training 7 -10 PM

Comments or suggestions for next newsletter contact:
Jennifer Lansky at 303.442.2709 or jen@lansky.cc