

Mt. Erie Fire Dispatch

A Community Newsletter of the District 11 Mt. Erie Volunteer Fire Department • Fall 2007

Residents Respond to District Survey

—by Pat Cummings



Pat Cummings
Commissioner

In the last newsletter, the district sent out an informal questionnaire asking the residents of the district five questions. Of the approximately 1,800

questionnaires sent out, 100 were returned. Our thanks to all of you who spent the time and effort to fill out and return these questionnaires. The results are listed on page six.

Almost everyone submitted a comment. People expressed concern about everything from political considerations to actual technical aspects of the department. Some asked about our relationship with the City of Anacortes, and why we did not merge with them. The two entities, District 11 and the City of Anacortes, operate under two completely different state statutes, and are taxed differently. The city fire service would not be able to merge with the district. The city would have to apply to have its fire service annexed by the district.

The question of why we are involved in search and rescue, when the Sheriff's Department is legally charged with it, was also raised. Rural fire districts are charged with

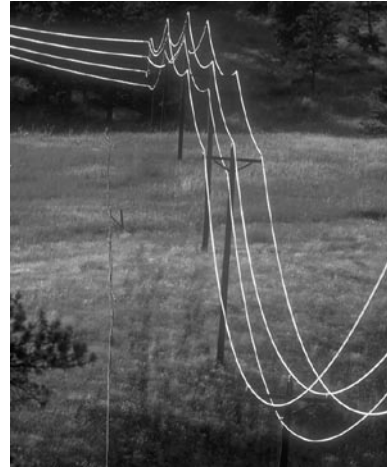
continued: see Survey, page 6 >

Winter Winds Bring Power Line Dangers

Winter is the season for downed power lines, and residents should review safety guidelines in case they encounter downed lines near their homes or along the roads.

Frank Martin, from Puget Sound Energy (PSE), recently spoke to the Mt. Erie volunteers about power line safety. He began by reminding everyone that our bodies are more than 75 percent water, and electricity loves moisture. So, his advice is that you stay a minimum of ten feet away from all power lines, and keep any equipment you may be working with at least ten feet away.

PSE averages at least one car versus pole accident per week. Frank advises that if you are involved in a car vs. pole accident that drops lines across your car, remain in your car until advised by PSE or other emergency responders that it is safe to exit. If the car is burning, you need to get out quickly without touching the car and the ground at the same time. Frank recommends that you sit on the edge of your car seat, facing out with the door open and your feet on the edge of the car floor. Take



off your coat, so it doesn't catch on the car. Cross your arms across your chest, then quickly jump from the car to the ground. Remember do not touch your car and the ground at the same time. After exiting, walk away while shuffling your feet, so they are both on the

ground at the same time, until you are a safe distance of about 100 feet from your automobile.

If you should come across downed power lines while driving, you need to stop at least 100 feet away from the line. A downed line

continued: see Power Line, page 5 >

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meet the Department	2
Chief's Comments.....	2
Department Open House	3
Alarm Responses	3
Training Notes	4
Song of the Siren	5
Driveway Gates	5
First Year's Firefighter Costs	7
Meet Our Newest Volunteers.....	7
Fidalgo School Visit	8

Chief's Comments —by Mike Noyes

COMMISSIONERS

Noel Johnson, Chairman
Pat Cummings
Dan Yount
Della Howard, District Secretary

VOLUNTEERS

Mike Noyes	Fire Chief/EMT
Bob Parmley	Asst. Chief/FR
Terry Bowen	Lieutenant/EMT
Kevin Bradshaw	Firefighter/EMT
Calvin Bridges	Firefighter
Rick Bunzel	Firefighter/EMT
Devin Curley	Firefighter/EMT
Angela DeMonte	Prob. Firefighter
Billie Harris	Firefighter
Jake Huntley	Firefighter/EMT
Jim Irving	Firefighter/EMT
Tim Irving	Firefighter
Amanda Jonasen	Firefighter/EMT
Gary Kramer	Firefighter
John Lewis	Firefighter/EMT
Shaunee Lunz	Firefighter/EMT
Jeff Marrs	Captain/EMT
Cheri Noyes	Lieutenant/EMT
Hope Noyes	Prob. Firefighter
Kevin Noyes	Lieutenant/EMT
Kirk Patterson	Firefighter
Donny Smith	Firefighter/EMT
Vince Streano	Public Information Officer
Doug Thompson	Firefighter/EMT
Nate Yount	Firefighter/EMT

EMERGENCIES

Dial 911

BUSINESS CALLS

(360) 299-1281

STATION LOCATIONS

Fire Station 1
Dewey Beach
14825 Deception Rd.

Fire Station 2
Lake Erie
4214 Wildwood Lane

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Vince Streano

NEWSLETTER DESIGN/PRODUCTION

Baypointe Graphics

The Mt. Erie Fire Dispatch is written and published by the volunteers of the Mt. Erie Fire Department.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey in our last newsletter. Your input has provided me and our staff with a sense of how we are doing in providing service to you. Your comments regarding how we do business and how we can improve were read and taken to heart.

It has been 13 years since we asked for a levy increase. Unfortunately, we will need to do this again soon. Replacement of fire apparatus and aid vehicles, maintenance to our buildings, and the need to hire staff to respond during the day have all forced us to this point.

Currently, during the hours of 6 a.m. to about 6 p.m., very few of our people are available to respond to your emergencies. How few? One, or maybe two people, are available, and on rare occasions there are none. Our mutual aid assistance (other fire departments) experience the same difficulties, at times, if they do not have paid staff. In order to enter a burning structure to rescue people you must have a minimum of three properly trained firefighters on scene.

What can we do to correct this? The short-term solution is to get more people to serve as volunteers. With that said, it takes about two months to process and train a new member to a level to safely respond to alarms, in a support role, and to provide basic first aid. It then takes another three months, of about eight hours a week, to train a volunteer to enter a burning building.



We meet at 7 p.m. on Mondays at our fire stations. Please stop by, meet the volunteers, and join. You can also email us at info@mteriefire.com, and I will send you information about joining. I am looking

at many options to solve our daytime coverage problem and will have an initial plan for the Board at our January meeting.

This was another summer with only one small brush fire in the Community Forestlands. Thank you for your diligence in preventing wildland fires in our district. We remained dry when most of the county received rain or moisture of some type.

In our last newsletter we asked that you clear the property around your house and buildings of vegetation to keep wildfire away from your house. We understand that some of you may not be able to do this without great effort and cost. There are many other things you can do. You can keep brush trimmed back from your driveway, and use a sprinkler system in your yard to keep the lawn green. A clean roof and gutters can lessen the chance of a fire getting started. Please consider, when you need a new roof or are replacing your siding, using non-combustible products. This can do as much as clearing your land to help us protect your house. Anything you do helps, and it is appreciated.

Last, but not least:

Please clean your chimney!

Thank you.

To learn more about becoming a fire department volunteer, join us at one of our Monday meetings, held at 7 p.m. at our fire stations. Or, email us at info@mteriefire.com.

Community Turns Out for Annual Open House

Mt. Erie Fire Department volunteers polished the engines, swept the floors, and even baked cookies to prepare for their annual open house, held October 14. The community responded with a steady stream of visitors throughout the afternoon.

Children got to visit with Smokey the Bear and Sparky the Fire Dog, and were also able to climb into the driver's seat of the three fire engines on display. Informational displays were set up inside the fire hall, and volunteers were present to answer any questions from community residents.



174 Alarm Responses from January 1 to October 1, 2007

FIRE: 50

Automatic Alarm	1
Structure.....	2
Chimney	1
Vehicle.....	3
Brush.....	2
Illegal Burn/Smoke Investigation	18
Mutual Aid Given.....	19
HAZMAT	3
Other.....	1

MEDICAL: 82

Medical.....	78
Rescue	4
Other.....	0

VEHICLE ACCIDENTS: 31

Auto.....	24
Boat	4
Other.....	3

PUBLIC SERVICE: 11

Public Assist.....	5
Tree/Pole Lines Down	4
Utility Problem	1
Other.....	1

Training Notes —by Jeff Marrs

Since the last newsletter went out, Mount Erie Fire Department has continued to stay busy with training. This fall we have one firefighter going through the academy. Angela DeMonte joined our department a couple of months ago, and she is nearing the completion of the academy. Once completed, she will have put in 200 hours of basic training to be a firefighter. Along with sending students to the academy, our department sends an array of instructors. The academy staff consists of several firefighters from throughout the county who give their time to teach new recruits the skills they need to become a firefighter. The academy would not be possible without these folks, and I can't thank them enough for the work they do.

Earlier this year we sent seven firefighters to the Emergency Medical Training (EMT) class. Amanda Jonasen, Thomas Curley, Jake Huntley, James Irving, Nathan Yount, Shaune Lunz, and Rick Bunzel all graduated from the class and are certified as EMTs. EMTs provide the initial patient care when you call for medical aid. Medical calls account for nearly 80 percent of the calls we respond to. With these seven graduates, over 70 percent of our firefighters are trained as EMTs. This helps ensure that the best level of care is provided if you need medical care. Good job to all of you.

As the end of the year approaches, we continue to train on a regular basis. By year's end our firefighters, combined, will have

logged several thousand hours in training. Every year the hours and requirements continue to increase, and our firefighters continue

to exceed the standards. I am very proud of the hours our firefighters put in every week, training to ensure that they are providing you with the best level of service when you call for help. If you are interested in becoming a firefighter or would like to learn more about what we do, please stop by on a Monday night at 7 p.m., at one of our stations, or give us a call at (360) 299-1281.



Mt. Erie volunteers practice controlling fuel spill fires at the Tesoro Refinery's practice fire facility.

Song of the Siren

—by Vince Streato

can energize the ground, depending on the moisture in the soil, up to 100 feet from the line itself.

Lines that you believe are dead can be re-energized from a number of sources. Computers at PSE can automatically try to re-energize lines after a failure. People with improperly connected home generators can energize a line when they start up their generators. So Frank advises you stay at least 100 feet away from any downed lines, even if you believe they are dead.

He told a story about someone who was a quarter mile away from a downed line, but touched a strand of barbed wire. He was killed instantly because the power line was touching the fence a quarter mile away.

.....

A downed power line can energize the ground, and seemingly dead lines can be re-energized unbeknownst to you. Stay at least 100 feet away from downed lines.

.....

Frank mentioned that kite string can become energized if your kite gets caught in the lines. If this happens, you should call PSE and they will retrieve the kite for you. Do not just leave it hanging in the lines.

If a tree comes down across lines near your house, or if lines are down, you are advised to immediately call 911 and PSE to report the incident. Remain in your home until advised by PSE that it is safe to exit. You never know what areas may be energized by the downed lines.

Electricity travels at the speed of light. One wrong step, and it could kill you.

For 54 years, the siren atop the Dewey Beach fire station called volunteers to action. Nearby residents awakened many nights to the lonely wail, only to fall back asleep, knowing their faithful volunteers were protecting their community.

However, during the past four months, the siren has fallen silent. Technology is to blame. Police and fire departments throughout the county have been upgrading their radios and radio frequencies. These upgraded radio frequencies often triggered the siren unnecessarily. In order to stop the false alarms, Mt. Erie Chief Mike Noyes decided to turn off the siren until the upgrades are complete.

Chief Noyes feels the siren still fills a need. "There are times when a volunteer doesn't have a pager, or the pager's battery may have died. In these instances the siren is the only way a volunteer knows there is an emergency," stated Chief Noyes.

The siren was originally installed atop the fire station when the district was formed in 1953. It was purchased as surplus from a department in Seattle. Initially, volunteers were called to the station by a combination of a phone tree and the siren. The fire dispatcher would call a volunteer, who would initiate

a phone tree to call the other volunteers. Then, the first volunteer to reach the station manually turned on the siren. Within ten years, an automated Plectron system was installed whereby the dispatcher could automatically sound the siren at the same time the Plectron sounded at the home of the volunteers. The Plectron worked if the volunteers were within hearing distance of the unit, but if they were outside the home, it was still the siren that called them to duty.

Twenty years later the volunteers were issued personal pagers, which could be carried with them at all times. These pagers were a major upgrade from the Plectrons, but it was still felt that the siren was necessary in case a volunteer forgot his pager, or the pager battery was dead.

Chief Noyes believes the siren is still important to not only alert the volunteers, but to remind the community about the service of their volunteers. He also said that when the siren is upgraded and reactivated, it will be set to run for only 30 seconds, instead of the previous two minutes.

Sometime in the next few months, expect to hear the siren again, and know that your volunteers are responding.

DRIVEWAY GATES BLOCK EMERGENCY ACCESS

Many communities and private residences are placing gates at the entrances to their properties. This can greatly reduce the response time of emergency responders if we do not have an access code or a key to override the system. The Mt. Erie Fire Department uses a lockbox system that can be placed on your gate to allow access specifically for emergency responders to pass through your gate. Please call Chief Noyes at 299-1281 to discuss placing a lockbox system on your gate to allow access in a possible emergency.

first response for all search and rescue operations, and are usually first on scene. Their personnel are engaged in victim extraction and medical services as well as the process of the physical search.

Someone asked why we would need a tax increase, if the purpose of the merger was to give improved service at less cost. The merger would save money over a long period of time. The cost for the district to maintain its current level of service, whether we merge or not, will require a levy increase in the future.

Several people who responded voiced concern about the lack of information they received on the issue of the merger. The district has only entered into discussions with Fire District 13, and is in the process of exploring a merger as one option for the future. Neither

district has committed to merge, or filed any paperwork to commence a merger. Merging two Title 52 Rural Fire Districts is a complicated procedure.

Most respondents seemed satisfied with the present level of service from the department, but also expressed a desire for a stronger daytime response, especially regarding medical emergencies. The county presently uses a 25-cents-per-thousand EMS levy to contract with several agencies to provide round-the-clock paramedic response. The agency contracted to respond to District 11 is the Anacortes Fire Department. Realizing that merging is only one option open to the district, the commissioners have directed the chief of the department to submit a plan giving District 11 a paid, daytime, five-days-a-week response.

The commissioners have also directed the chief to submit a cost projection for the next six years, at the present level of service. We hope to have these projections presented within the next six months.

The burden of new taxes was also on everyone's mind. The past has shown that Fire District 11's commissioners have never felt the need for a large cash reserve. District 11 has run a fiscally prudent district, and has not asked for a lid lift (raise in tax levy) in 13 years. Our tax levy cost is one of the lowest, per thousand of property value, in the state. Should the commissioners feel it necessary, we will go to the citizens and ask for the finances needed to continue services.

The results of the survey are listed in the box below.

Survey Results . . . Merging Fire Districts 11 and 13

1. *Would you be in favor of a new fire district formed by the merging of Fire Districts 11 and 13?*
YES: 65 NO: 25
2. *Would you be in favor of paid fire department personnel available for daytime response, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday?*
YES: 60 NO: 30
3. *Would you be in favor of paying an additional 12 to 15 cents per thousand to finance the proposed merger?*
YES: 65 NO: 29
4. *How would you rate the present fire and emergency services you receive?*
EXCELLENT: 36 GOOD: 39 AVERAGE: 3 FAIR: 2 POOR: 0
5. *What one area of fire service are you most concerned about?*
FIRE: 40 MEDICAL: 35 WILDLAND FIRE: 14 SEARCH & RESCUE: 1 HAZ MAT: 0

First Year's Costs of a New Firefighter



Initial Processing
and Physicals.....\$ 200

Initial Structural
Fire Protective
Equipment\$2,000

- Helmet: 200
- Coat: 900
- Pants: 700
- Gloves: 50
- Boots: 150
- Flashlight: 50

Initial Wildland
Fire Protective
Equipment\$ 700

- Helmet: 50
- Shirt: 50
- Pants: 100
- Boots: 250
- Fire Shelter: 250

Basic Fire
Academy.....\$1,000

Wildland
Firefighter Basic
Training.....\$ 100



**Grand Total:
\$4,000**

Meet Our Newest Volunteer Firefighters

KEVIN BRADSHAW

Kevin Bradshaw, 30, was born and raised in Oak Harbor. Kevin always wanted to be a volunteer, but thought he didn't have the time. That is, until his best friend was killed in a motorcycle accident while riding with



Kevin. "I didn't have any idea of what to do," remembered Kevin. After the accident Kevin joined the Summit Park Volunteer Fire Department, then switched to Mt. Erie about six months ago. Kevin is married to Ronda, a nurse at Island Hospital. They have two boys, Jai, nine years old, and Keller, 20 months. Kevin has his own company called Eco-Blasting Unlimited. His company uses eco-friendly media to blast and clean any surface.

ANGELA DEMONTE

Angela DeMonte, 31, is our newest volunteer. Angie moved to Anacortes in July of 2006 when her husband, Andrew, was transferred to Whidbey



Naval Air Station. Previously, the couple had lived in Virginia Beach, VA. Angie and Andrew have three children: Araminta, 11, Jasmine, 9, and Nicholas 5. Angie always wanted to be a firefighter. But standing just 4' 11", she assumed she wasn't tall enough. However, she met training officer Jeff Marrs, and Jeff convinced her to give it a try. Angie and her family like the outdoor activities found in the local area, and enjoy biking, hiking, and camping.

DONNY SMITH

Donny Smith, 39, was born and raised in Torrance, California. While growing up, Donny couldn't decide between being a fireman or a policeman. His



next door neighbor was a fire captain in Los Angeles, and his father had many friends with the county Sheriff's office. When Donny finally decided on fireman, he joined the Palm Springs Fire Department as a volunteer. Eventually, Donny left California and settled in Granby, Colorado. He joined their volunteer department, and was there for 2-1/2 years before moving to Anacortes and joining Mt. Erie. Donny has his EMT certificate, his Wildland Two certificate, and is rescue certified.

Fire Prevention Week at Fidalgo School

Seven Mt. Erie volunteers paid a visit to Fidalgo Elementary School to talk about fire prevention at home in conjunction with Fire Prevention Week. Volunteer Billie Harris spoke to an assembly of 150 kindergarten through third grade students, reminding them of the dangers of playing with matches and candles, and to have a home evacuation plan in case of fire.

The highlight of the morning for the students was when volunteers Donnie Smith, Kevin Bradshaw,

Jim Irvine, and Angie DeMonte dressed in their fire turnout suits, put on their oxygen tanks and masks, and crawled through the mass of students. The students

swarmed the firefighters, touching them and even crawling over their backs. This activity was done to familiarize the younger children with the firemen and what they will look

like in the event of a fire. There have been cases where children have run away from firemen because they were scared of their suits, masks, and tanks.

At the end of the presentation, the children were allowed to climb aboard and tour one of the department fire engines that was parked on the playground.



Mt. Erie Fire Department
14825 Deception Road
Anacortes, WA 98221

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
SAM INC