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# *Fireside*

## APPLEGATE VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT #9

2009 The Fire District's Newsletter Packed with Information & Tips. . . . Fall Issue

Welcome to the Fireside Newsletter. It is my pleasure to be the Fire Chief and to continue to share our accomplishments as well as communicate our needs with you. As 2009 comes to a close we have had a great year as we skipped through another fire season with no major wildfires. The troops were tested a couple of times this year with fires on Upper Applegate, North Applegate and Forest Creek and in all cases the fires were kept to a manageable size without major damage to property. We assisted our neighbors with the two largest fires in southern Oregon in late September by sending personnel and equipment to both Ashland and Medford. In 2009, the Fire District was selected as the District of the Year for the Oregon Special Districts Association.

The Fire District was again successful in securing several grants for fire equipment, training, and radios to the tune of over \$ 300,000. We also received a couple of large donations from a couple of foundations and a couple local citizens that allowed us to upgrade our breathing air capacity, uniforms and a thermal imaging camera that helps firefighters locate victims in smoky conditions. We spent some time this last year putting the finishing touches on our latest five year plan as well as continued to improve our leadership skills within the District.

Our single greatest need is additional volunteers. As you will read in a later article, overall we are doing quite well but there are some stations that continue to have low numbers of volunteers and looking towards the future we must remain pro active in recruiting new volunteers to stay ahead of normal turnover. This Fire District continues to provide the service that it does because of our volunteer firefighters. With the cost of wages and benefits, we cannot afford to hire additional full time employees as volunteers retire or leave the community.

Last but not least, on behalf of the District, the volunteers and staff, I want to thank everyone for another great yard sale. The 2009 yard sale brought in just under \$ 8,000. So whether you donated some items or bought some items – we thank you for your support !

### **Hazardous Fuels Reduction**

Thinning hazardous fuels in the Applegate Valley is not exactly a new subject. The Applegate has been very active in making this a safer place to live for years. A number of residents began doing this kind of work twenty plus years ago, mostly to transition the vegetation on their properties into a healthier state. Around 2001, a national movement began to create defensible space around homes that would benefit these homes during the fire season from approaching wildfires. The Applegate was no exception. A tremendous amount of work has been accomplished since then and we are in better shape because of it. Whether the motivation to do this was for fire reasons or create a healthier stand of trees or both, the point is that it doesn't matter – both motivations serve each other well.

The Fire District has been actively involved with you, seeking grants to assist with the cost of getting this work done and/or by working with landowners to assess their conditions and needs. To date the number of acres treated in the Fire District using grant funds is over 1,100 acres. We haven't tracked the acres that have been treated by landowners themselves without the help of the grant funds, but believe that this represents another 2,000 acres. The last of our grant funds were exhausted in May and therefore unless we are awarded any additional funds, we won't be able to help landowners with this assistance. However, the Oregon Department of Forestry has some funds, mostly for small projects up to the two acre range. If you have any interest in additional grant funds and reside in Jackson County call ODF at 664-3328 or if in Josephine County call ODF at 474-3152.

The Fire District is always available to meet with landowners and help answer questions regarding fuel reduction. For those of you that have treated your land or portions of your land, it is never too late to start doing a little maintenance work on those previously treated acres.



#### Board of Directors

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*Carey Chaput*

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*Tailese Goodnough*

*Mike Kuntz*

#### Station 1

*18489 N. Applegate Rd.*

#### Station 2

*7774 Upper Applegate Rd.*

#### Station 3

*1095 Upper Applegate Rd.*

#### Station 4

*12188 Williams Hwy*

#### Station 5

*2170 Hwy 238*

#### Station 6

*1076 Kubli Rd.*

#### Station 7

*7990 Griffin Ln.*

**Recruitment**

As you drive through your fire district you may see signs saying “Volunteers needed...Join Now!” Also, previous *Fireside Newsletter* and *Applegator* articles have contained messages exclaiming our need for volunteers. This time, I’ve decided to take a different if not more transparent approach.

While the number of volunteers on our roster isn’t at an all-time low, there is certainly room and a need for more personnel immediately. What is really driving this recruitment campaign is an anticipated increase in “retiring” volunteers. Right now, 30% of our firefighters are over the age of 60. In the next few years, we can expect the majority of these volunteers to move into other fire district positions rather than respond to calls and fight fire. This is why we are stepping up our recruiting efforts and asking more fire district residents to consider contributing to and serving their communities.

In addition to anticipating a number of current volunteers “stepping back”, we have had difficulty getting those who have shown interest to commit to the mandatory training of new recruits. When I started in the fire service 12 years ago, the initial training required of new volunteer firefighters totaled 48 hours. At the time, I thought this was a steep time commitment. Today, national standards and OSHA requirements have increased to a point that initial firefighter training is now nearly 100 hours. This means that the last few firefighter academies, new recruits have attended, have been 6 full weekends in length, offered during a 2-1/2 month school term. As you can imagine, it has been extremely difficult for folks to commit to such a time demanding course. Recognizing this, we have been working with State, Local and OSHA Officials to come up with a format that would make it easier for new recruits to complete all of the required training over a one year period. Starting this January, we will be offering a 48-hour entry academy, similar to the one I took 12 years ago. Recruits will then be able to respond to calls in a limited capacity while we spread out the remaining 50 hours of training over the following 6 to 12 months. It is our hope that this will make it easier for those of you who have shown interest in joining our team...to do just that.

Lastly, we have asked our full-time staff and volunteer officers to make every effort to ensure that we maximize each minute that our volunteers give to the fire district. Our staff will handle all the administration and paperwork possible. We strive hard to make drills and training events meaningful and enjoyable. Volunteers are given significant roles and important responsibilities when we are called to emergencies. And all personnel will be given the leadership and support they need and deserve.

In all sincerity, your fire district is looking for additional team members. We are looking for community oriented, motivated and responsible residents who are looking for an opportunity to help and serve their friends and neighbors. If you are or have been interested, procrastinate no longer – join now.

Chris Wolfard  
Operations Chief

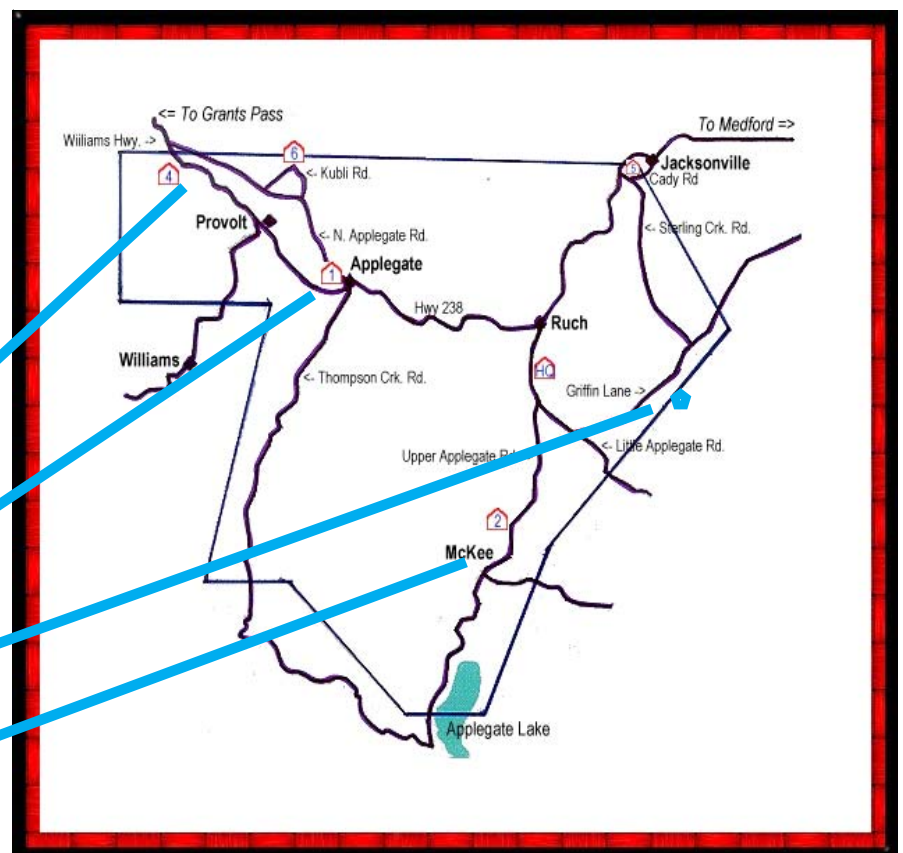
**Locations with the greatest Need for Volunteers**

- Station 4 - 12188 Williams Hwy.
- Station 1 - 18489 N. Applegate Rd.
- Station 7 - 7990 Griffin Ln.
- Station 2 - 7774 Upper Applegate Rd.



**Fall Tips for Fire Prevention**

- ◆ **Build Firewood piles at least 30 feet away from all structures.**
- ◆ **Clean fallen leaves and needles from rain gutters and roofs.**
- ◆ **Check all chimneys for spark arrestors and trim away branches that are within 10 feet.**
- ◆ **Have your chimney or stove pipe cleaned or checked by a professional.**
- ◆ **Be sure to have a reflective address sign so emergency responders can find you.**
- ◆ **Survey your defensible space and along driveway for unhealthy trees that may fall during winter storms.**
- ◆ **Call Air Quality before you burn!**  
 Jackson County 776-7007  
 Josephine County 476-9663
- ◆ **Be safe. Don’t burn on windy days.**
- ◆ **Always attend your burn pile!**
- ◆ **Consider Alternatives to burning;**  
 Chipping Wood  
 Compost Leaves  
 Biomass Recycling
- ◆ **Practice Your Family Escape Plans.**
- ◆ **Plan Ahead. Think about what you would take if you had to evacuate. Would you or someone you love require special notification or need extra time?**
- ◆ **It is time to check your Smoke Alarms. Are they working properly? Do they need to be replaced?**
- ◆ **Be careful while camping and hunting. Make sure your campfire is out when you leave.**
- ◆ **Let us help you prioritize your emergency preparation needs, ask our staff for a Home Assessment.**





## Smoke Alarms

### Protect Yourself and Your Family Today!

In the event of a fire, properly installed and maintained smoke alarms will provide an early warning to your household. This alarm could save your own life and those of your loved ones by providing the chance to escape.

**Why do I need smoke detectors?** Most fire deaths happen at night, while people are asleep. This makes early fire detection and warning especially important. Contrary to popular belief, the smell of smoke may not wake a sleeping person. The poisonous gases and smoke produced by a fire can numb the senses and put you into a deeper sleep. An inexpensive household smoke alarm can alert you to a fire, giving you time to escape.

**How many smoke alarms do I need or is required?** According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), minimum protection requires a smoke alarm outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. On floors without bedrooms, alarms should be installed in or near living areas such as dens, living rooms, or family room.

Be sure everyone sleeping in your home can hear your smoke detectors' alarms even with bedroom doors closed. If not, or if any residents are hearing-impaired, install additional alarms inside bedrooms. For the hearing impaired, there are smoke alarms that flash a strobe light in addition to sounding an audible alarm.

For extra protection, NFPA suggests installing additional alarms in or near dining rooms, furnace rooms, utility rooms, and hallways. Smoke alarms are not recommended for kitchens and bathrooms – where cooking fumes, steam, or humidity and temperature changes might affect a detector's operation.

**Choosing a Smoke Alarm** Dozens of brands of smoke alarms and detectors are for sale. Smoke alarms are considered self-contained while smoke detectors operate as part of a central control system. Be sure that the smoke detecting device you buy bears the label of an independent testing laboratory, such as UL or FM.

**What is the Difference between an ionization alarm and a photoelectric alarm?** Ionization alarms contain material that ionizes the air, making an electric path. When products of combustion enter the device, the molecules attach themselves to the ions. The change in electric current flow triggers the alarm. All Ionization smoke alarms sold in Oregon are required to have a hush feature and a ten-year battery. Photoelectric smoke alarms contain a light source and photocell, which is activated by light. Light from the bulb reflects off the smoke particles and is directed towards the photocell, which triggers the alarm.

**When do I replace the smoke alarm battery?** Batteries weaken with age, and must be checked and replaced at regular intervals (usually every 9 – 12 months). Battery power units that are listed by UL or FM will generate a beeping sound (usually at night when you trying to sleep) to indicate when the batteries need to be replaced. Remember having a detector with dead batteries is the same as having no detector at all.

**When do I replace the Smoke Alarm?** Studies show that untested smoke alarms lose about half of their dependability after a 5 to 7 year period. Smoke alarms should be replaced about every 8 to 10 years. Read the manufacturers instructions as they usually have recommendations.

**Do I clean my smoke detector?** Yes! – Dust can damage your detector's sensitivity. Most units need to be cleaned at least once a year, just use your vacuum cleaner to clean dust out of unit. Read the manufacturers instructions manual.

**TEST YOUR SMOKE ALARMS!** Remember having a detector with dead batteries is the same as having no detector at all!

Carey Chaput  
Office Manager/Prevention

## Are you Prepared?

## Animal Evacuation

### Saving Pets and Livestock When Wildfire Strikes

Imagine a wildfire racing towards your house and barn and evacuation is imminent. What would you do with your pets and livestock to keep them safe?

Fire season has ended, but now is a good time to start planning for the protection of your pets and livestock. One thing we know for certain, the threat of wildfire will be back.

While ensuring the safety of your animals requires some advance planning, there are a few simple things you can do right now to help keep your animals safe:

- Make sure pets are wearing up-to-date identification at all times and livestock can be identified via good photographs, names on halters, etc.
- Vaccinations should be up to date and health records kept accessible in the event you need to evacuate.
- Prepare a pet emergency kit (go online for specifics).
- Find a safe place for your animals ahead of time. If you evacuate, plan on taking your pets with you since you have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area.
- Assess your property to see if it's possible to shelter livestock in place during a disaster. If not, make arrangements to move them off site.
- Meet with your neighbors to develop a neighborhood plan for pets and livestock.

Jackson and Josephine counties are just beginning a process to develop plans for the sheltering and evacuation of companion animals and livestock. In addition to the county plans, local or neighborhood plans will also be encouraged. There are many ways you can be involved, from helping to develop resource lists (such as identifying sites that could shelter animals, transportation logistics, etc.) to hosting neighborhood or organizational meetings. For more information, please contact the county's contractor:

Lin Bernhardt  
(541) 840-9903  
linb@clearwire.net

### When the Detector Sounds!!

How your family responds in a fire depends on how well you've prepared.

- Make sure everyone is familiar with the sound of the smoke detector's alarm.
- Plan escape routes. Know at least two ways out of each room. Agree on a meeting place outside your home where all residents will gather after they escape.
- Practice your escape plan at least twice a year, and teach every member of your household these survival techniques.
- When an alarm sounds, leave the building immediately and go to your meeting place. Then call the fire department from a neighbor's phone.

Visit the [applegatefd.com](http://applegatefd.com) web site for Family Escape Plans and information that can help prepare you for an emergency.  
Being prepared is your best line of defense!

## Meet a few of the distinguished members of our Fire District Family.....

No matter how many times I talk to our Fire District's volunteers, I'm always amazed at the variety of reasons *why* folks decided to become a volunteer firefighter. These three guys are no exception. A message that I've gleaned from all of my talks with our volunteers is that every station is different, every volunteer's qualifications are different, and that our District needs every sort of person to volunteer.

I'm honored to have gotten to know these volunteers better, and I hope that their stories will resonate with some of you and inspire you to follow suit and sign up to be a volunteer firefighter with the best Fire District in the state – Applegate Fire!

By Sandy Shaffer



Bill Dunlap  
Station 1 - Applegate

Sept. 11, 2001 is what got Bill Dunlap to sign up with Applegate Fire District. He told me he'd been good friends with neighbor and long-time firefighter George Butcher for several years, and they occasionally talked about the Fire Districts work. But after 9/11, Bill wanted to be able to take care of his family in an emergency, and he also felt the need to be a stronger part of the community. He's now a First Responder and has been the backbone of Station 1 ever since, answering calls virtually any time of the day or night.

Bills been a carpenter all his life and had also owned an adult-care facility with his wife, Kathy, and he says that all of this experience worked to help him become a firefighter. Being in construction, Bills always been safety-minded, but he also understands tools and mechanics. As a volunteer firefighter, he's found the mechanics of putting out a fire and learning how to cut cars apart (to extricate crash victims) very interesting. His "people skills" come into play a lot, too, especially during tough life and death situations, which he said can be difficult, but helps to know ahead of time what families are going to go through.

Bill said that there is "more structure" in being a firefighter than he expected, that a fire district is a "paramilitary" organization with given rules and orders. Even though Bill's a free-flowing kind of guy, he's grown used to this, that its worth the time and effort because there is a lot of fun, interesting and challenging stuff, too. He believes theres "something for everyone."

Bill says that being a volunteer firefighter means being a part of the community, where "everybody takes care of their own." He likens this to the way it used to be – not having to go far to help our neighbors. His advice for anyone considering becoming a volunteer firefighter with Applegate Fire District: dont wait like he did – "join now!" After all, Bill says, ours is "one of the best volunteer fire districts" in the state!



Gary Sciocchetti  
Station 2 - McKee Bridge

Years ago Gary and his wife were building their home on Upper Applegate Road and needed a variance from the Fire District. During the homesite inspection, then-Fire Chief Ron Yarborough did a little arm-twisting as he approved the building: you should join our volunteer firefighters, he said. Gary did, because coming from a family who had always volunteered in one way or another, it was the "right thing to do."

With 17 years under his belt come February, Gary is one of only three fire fighters responding out of the Upper Applegate area right now. He's an EMT Basic, and as a retired carpenter he's available just about any hour of the day. (But he's quick to point out that *all* hours are valuable, so don't feel like you need to offer 24/7 to volunteer!) His wife is a nurse and his father was a corpsman, so the medical aspect of being a volunteer firefighter was not an issue for Gary. He said Station 2 doesn't get a lot of calls, given its location; most are medical situations with some recreational accidents during the summer months. Gary's also been a member of the District's Technical Rescue team for 12 years and was the first on scene last month when a car went into the Applegate River. Repelling down the rocks to reach the vehicle in the dark was challenging!

Gary said he enjoys learning the new and interesting things that are part of a firefighter/first responder's job. The training every Monday night might seem like overkill at first, but he says that you need repetition so that you can respond automatically to any situation. He noted that Applegate Fire's training and equipment is superior, and therefore presents a huge asset to our mutual-aid partners, such as Jacksonville and Williams Fire Districts and Rural-Metro in Grants Pass.

Gary enjoys the sense of satisfaction he gets from "giving back to his community," but also working with the great folks who become volunteers. They are, he said, "a heck of a great group of people."



Jeff Hoxsey  
Station 4 - Provolt

Jeff's business (Subway Sandwiches) brought he and his family to the Rogue Basin, looking for a home on property in a good school district, that would also allow him to fish or hunt. (He also said he needed a house with a *very* high ceiling to accommodate an elk rack, but that's another story.) It's our collective luck that the Hoxseys chose to settle along the Applegate River, next door to one of our Fire District's most active volunteers.

It sounds like a tedious soap opera, moving next door to a guy who volunteers to run out to cover emergency calls in the middle of the night and then has weekend BBQs with all of the other volunteer crazies. But Terry Riley wasn't just any volunteer firefighter and Jeff Hoxsey (marathoner, skier, snowboarder, fisherman, hunter, pilot) isn't anywhere near a laid-back, rural kind of guy. Jeff found that during those BBQs he started getting an adrenalin rush when Terry and the others left on a District call. They talked often about the Fire District, and Jeff joined up in 2003. Today he's a First Responder and a Lieutenant out of Station 4.

Jeff's an energetic guy who learned from the best, so there weren't a lot of surprises when he became a firefighter. Four years with the National Ski Patrol meant no stranger to emergency situations. He was ready for the high call volumes and rigorous hands-on training. However, in a candid discussion Jeff told me that he found himself "waiting" for that first *big call*, the first house fire or cardiac arrest, because he wasn't sure how he'd respond. He was *surprised* when he did what he was supposed to – he'd done his job.

Jeff loves the rush of responding to calls 24/7, but he also stated that his level of commitment can tax his family life if he doesn't balance things. He's an all-or-nothing kind of guy who finds it hard to say no. But he said our District needs *all sorts* of folks. Come and find out what the Fire District can do for you! We're all "in this together," Jeff says, so come and find your niche.