

VRFPD Uses Homes for Practice

The Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District (VRFPD) recently received a couple of fantastic donations that were put to great use during the past year.

In early summer, VRFPD used a house on Scappoose-Vernonia Highway, donated by Jim Morrison, to practice and hone their firefighting skills. The structure was used extensively in practice scenarios before Vernonia, Scappoose and Mist-Birkenfeld fire personnel practiced extinguishing techniques while the structure was burned.

VRFPD received another training opportunity when Tim and Tara Bamburg recently built a new house on their property on the south end of town and donated the old home structure to the local fire district. VRFPD has been using the house to hold training sessions over the last six months that have included search-and-rescue operations, ventilation techniques, wall breaches, salvage operations and rapid intervention rescue training. The use of the structure culminated on December 4th with a practice burn that, in addition to Vernonia volunteer firefighters, included firefighters from the Scappoose, Columbia River Fire and Rescue, Clatskanie, Mist-Birkenfeld, and Elsie Vine-Maple Districts.

"We did a little bit of everything," said Vernonia Deputy Chief Dean Smith, about the last year of training. "We had a chance to show our recruits and our firefighters what we want to see and the right way to do things."

Smith says the Bamburg house worked well,

because the house was similar to many old mill homes in town that have been added onto over the years. "Some of the walls in the home were newer than others," explained Smith. "We would get to an interior wall, which you would expect to be sheet rock and that interior wall used to be an exterior wall. So we got to show everybody not to quit and how to go through a stronger wall."

The day of the Bamburg burn provided more opportunities for extended training. Smith estimates over fifty actual firefighters participated in the day's activities. Smith was able to set up Logistics Crews for Rehab for firefighters. Mandatory Rehab is something new the state is requiring that helps provide safety and health checks for firefighters who wear about 200 pounds of equipment. Rehab requires regular breaks for water, food, rest and cooling down. Smith said this burn gave his logistic crews a chance to practice running a real rehab operation.

Smith and his team also set up different training stations with instructors. Smith was able to put some of his officers-in-training with those instructors, so his personnel received additional information and had a



chance to instruct as well.

Firefighters worked in teams of two and rotated through the various training stations. They learned how to operate a firehose in actual burn conditions as part of both an attack crew and a back-up crew, trained as rapid intervention crews that would instigate rescues during a fire, and worked on ventilation crews that open up the structure to allow smoke and heat to get out.

Smith said they were able to work their way through the house, burning one room at a time to allow firefighters lots of opportunities to practice. Teams rotated through the whole fire scenario numerous times. "We literally wore them out," said Smith. "When we finally went ahead and let the house burn, we still had one room left for practice, but the firefighters were done. As an instructor, you can't ask for anything more than that."

Smith noted the level of training is really beneficial for firefighters from a safety standpoint. "This level of tiring really gives a firefighter an idea of their limits and really helps them be one with their gear. You get to learn the difference between being a little tired and 'I shouldn't go in here--it's not safe for me in my condition.' They can tell their officer they need a break before going inside, instead of going in and then realizing they are in distress."

Smith thanked the Bamburg family for their donation of the structure, allowing for this opportunity to provide expanded training. He also thanked all the agencies that participated in the training-- in particular, Scappoose Fire Chief Chris Lake for his help in setting up the training.

Smith also discussed the house that VRFRD owns at 633 State Street. According to Smith, the house is also being used for training purposes similar to the Bamburg house. It will eventually be part of a fire investigation training class with staged burns inside that will allow firefighters to learn about preserving evidence and what to look for while fighting a fire.

These two homes are providing Vernonia firefighters with unique and vital, hands-on training. It will only make them better at what they do-- providing protection for our community.

Sentry Market and Customers Donate to Holiday Grocery Box Project



Tina Brewington (left), Vernonia Cares Food Bank secretary accepts a donation check from Sentry Market.

Vernonia Cares Food Bank was doubly blessed this month. The check stand giving project allowed Sentry customers to donate money for the holiday food boxes. The total donated this year was \$1,575.

The owners (Randy and Sharon Parrow, Chuck Hendricks, and Gordon Smith) and staff

of Sentry Market also donated \$1,000 towards the project, as well. On December 21, 2010, the food bank gave away 172 Christmas meal grocery boxes. These boxes contained groceries for a Christmas meal, along with a turkey. Sentry Market stored the frozen turkeys for the food bank until the day they were given to

their recipients.

"We are so glad to brighten the holidays for these 544 people," stated Sandy Welch, Vernonia Food Bank Director. "We could only do so as generous people and businesses donated to this project. Thank you, donors!"

Free Child Safety Seat Check Up Event

Columbia County Safe Kids, in partnership with Alliance for Community Traffic Safety (ACTS Oregon) and several community partners, will be holding a child safety seat check up event on Thursday, January 13, 2011, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The free clinic will be held in Scappoose at the Scappoose Fire Station, 52751 Columbia River Highway, Scappoose, Oregon. The clinic provides an opportunity to have a child safety seat checked by a certified technician, who can correct misuse, help with installation and teach you how to correctly install the seat. Technicians can also check for seat recalls. There is no cost to have a

technician check your child safety seats. Please plan to spend 30-60 minutes at the event.

Additionally, through a grant funded by the Oregon Department of Transportation, Columbia County Safe Kids is also able to provide low-cost child safety seats to families in need. Families who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) should contact their worker about payment for a seat. For more information about the clinic or the Columbia County child safety seat program, please contact the Commission on Children and Families at 503-397-7211.

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