

Meet Joe Kaczenski: Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Chief

Joe Kaczenski has been the Fire Chief for the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District (RFPD) for almost one year. So far things seem to be going pretty well.

Kaczenski replaced long time Chief Dave Crawford who retired last June. Kaczenski was hired in August as the Fire Chief; Crawford has remained as the part-time Administrative Chief. "Chief Crawford is still here," says Kaczenski. "He still has a title, still helps me with the budget and is still helping me transition. He and Mary Lou (Assistant Chief Mary Lou Busch who also retired last June) are great assets to have."

Kaczenski and his family moved to the Mist-Birkenfeld area from Aloha in 2000, but Kaczenski says his wife Ginger's family have long roots in the region. "My wife's ancestors actually founded the community of Knappa and were in the Jewell area in the 1800s," explains Kaczenski. "We always wanted to move into the country and settled out here because of the way the community is."

For the Kaczenski's firefighting runs in the family. Kaczenski grew up in the fire service – he is the fourth generation in his family to work professionally as a firefighter. His great grandfather was a firefighter for Portland, his grandfather

worked in Sweet Home and also worked for the Oregon State Police in the arson division, his father retired from the Portland Fire Bureau and Joe has worked full time for the City of Hillsboro since 1997 as well as currently serving as the part-time Mist-Birkenfeld Fire Chief.



Ginger Kaczenski is a third generation firefighter. Her father and grandfather were both firefighters and she is a volunteer tender operator at Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD. The Kaczenski's two children also volunteered with the Mist-Birkenfeld department.

Kaczenski says his department has handled a handful of fires in the last year including a fairly large log deck fire just inside the Clatsop County line at a logging site in October. Kaczenski says that, although the fire was actually outside of the Mist-Birkenfeld District, they were the closest department that could

respond and they worked with Oregon Department of Forestry personnel. "Our folks did a great job," said Kaczenski. Kaczenski noted that the water pond the District built last year next to their station worked really well during that fire-fight as numerous trucks were able to refill and return to the action.

Logs that were burned in that fire and could not be processed were donated to the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD and are being cut for firewood by volunteer association members. The firewood is provided by the RFPD to needy families in their area; Kaczenski says there should be enough left over that the department can sell to raise funds to support the volunteer association and put back into

the community.

Kaczenski says his department is always short staffed and is always looking for new recruits. "The volunteers we have are very dedicated," he says. "It so hard because our popula-

tion is so sparse and spread out, but the ones we do have now are exceptional. They put in a lot of volunteer hours."

Kaczenski wanted to be sure to invite the community to help the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD celebrate their 35th Anniversary this year at their annual picnic on September 6. According to Kaczenski, the Department was actually established around 1956 but dissolved. It was re-formed in 1979 and "...going strong," he says. He says they still have several original members with the department.

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