

# VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

## Chimney Fires

It's that time of year again where everyone with a fireplace or wood burning stove is heating their homes during our colder winter months. While there are few things more enjoyable than sitting near a nice crackling fire in your fireplace, or sitting near that nice warm wood burning stove, there is a hidden danger slowly building up in your chimney called creosote.

Over time the smoke created by your fire builds up a sticky tar like substance. Creosote builds up faster in chimneys that are used with wood stoves designed to get the most heat out of the wood that you are burning. Dampening down the air supply, causing the wood to burn more slowly, causes more smoke and unburnt particulates to flow up through your chimney.

Most chimney fires occur when you first get your wood burning stove going with a hot fire. The increase in temperature ignites the creosote that has built up on the lining of your chimney.

They can occur with little to no warning. It's important to always monitor your heating system for any signs that might indicate that you have a problem.

Creosote burns at an extremely high temperature and your chimney, which was designed to carry the smoke out of your home, can catch on fire, spewing smoke, ash, and in most cases, sparks and even flames from the top of your chimney. These sparks and burning embers can fall on your rooftop and ignite your roofing material.

It's important to clean your chimney on a regular basis. If you are unsure how to, or unable to clean your chimney, there are reputable companies that you can call for assistance. For more information on how to clean your chimney, you can find information on the internet.

Well designed chimneys have been built with this possibility in mind. Even so, chimney fires can burn at extreme temperatures which can cause

severe damage to your chimney system. If your chimney system fails, the extreme heat can cause combustible materials near it to ignite.

Some signs of a chimney fire include:

- Loud cracking popping noise
- A lot of dense smoke that can puff in and out of the air inlets on your wood stove
- An intense hot smell
- A loud rumbling noise coming from the area of your chimney.

In the event that you suspect that you might have a chimney fire have someone call 911 right away. Next, using a chimney fire extinguisher, which can be purchased at most home improvement stores, will help to extinguish the fire. Follow the directions provided with chimney fire extinguisher.

Whether you use a chimney fire extinguisher or not, the next step you should take is to close the air vents and the damper on your stove pipe leading



to your chimney. Alert everyone in your home that it might be necessary to evacuate and wait for fire personnel to arrive.

In the event that you have a chimney fire, you should have the chimney inspected by a qualified chimney expert before using your chimney again.

There are numerous websites where you can learn more about the causes of chimney fires and steps that you can take to minimize your chances of having one. Here is just one website where you can go for more information. [http://www.csia.org/homeowner-resources/the\\_facts\\_about\\_chimney\\_fires.aspx](http://www.csia.org/homeowner-resources/the_facts_about_chimney_fires.aspx).

## VRFPD's Smoke Alarm Program

The Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District is starting The Smoke Alarm Installation Program.

This program is designed to allow trained personnel to enter your home or apartment and assess your smoke alarm needs.

Oregon law requires Landlords to provide working smoke alarms for their rental units. It is the renter's responsibility to test these alarms and replace the batteries as needed. Smoke alarms are only rated to last for a period of 10 years. Any alarms older than 10 years, or alarms that cannot be correctly dated, must be replaced.

Oregon law also requires Landlords to provide a CO detector when there is a CO source in the dwelling, and in all homes built in 2011 or thereafter whether there is a CO source or not.

This program is designed to help homeowners and tenants by determining where the smoke alarms should be installed throughout the home, provide new batteries where needed, and we will provide some new smoke alarms on a case by case basis.

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal is providing 100 new smoke alarms to assist with this project, but they will go fast. Due to the limited number of available new smoke alarms, the program will be done on a first come

first serve basis.

If you are a renter, and you do not have working smoke alarms in your rental unit, contact your landlord or property manager right away. We can install the smoke alarms at the time of our inspection, provided the alarms have been provided prior to the scheduled inspection.

Statistics provided by the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal show that between 2004 and 2013 there were 348 fire related fatalities and 2,572 fire related injuries.

In the cases where there were fatalities, only 54% had smoke alarms installed in the structures. Of the 54%, only 35% of those alarms were working smoking alarms.

Statistics show that working smoke alarms, properly installed and maintained, save lives and reduce fire related injuries.

The Smoke Alarm Installation and Inspection Program will be starting in the next 3 to 4 weeks.

If you are a renter in need of working smoke alarms, please use this time period to contact your landlord or property manager to obtain working smoking smoke alarms,



### Calls responded to December 1-31

Fire	0
Emergency Medical Service	31
Hazardous Condition	3
Service Call	11
Good Intent	2
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	3
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

and inquire about CO detectors for your home or apartment prior to applying for the Smoke Alarm Installation and Inspection Program.

If you live in the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District, please stop by the fire station located at 555 E. Bridge St. and pick up an application form requesting an inspection and installation of smoke alarms for your home.

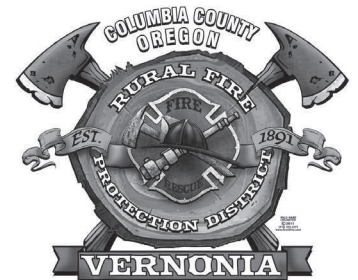
Applications are available at the

Vernonia US Bank, Vernonia Library, and Vernonia City Hall.

After you complete your application, you can drop it off at the fire station, fax it to: (503) 429-2900, or mail it to:

Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District  
Smoke Alarm Installation Program  
555 E. Bridge St.  
Vernonia, OR 97064

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED



### VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

VRFPD is currently accepting applications for Volunteer Fire Fighters.

- You must have a High School Diploma or G.E.D., a valid Oregon Driver's License, and be at least 18 years of age.

- Currently, you must be able to attend weekly training on Monday nights

- Willing to attend the Fire Academy

- Live or work (employer willing to let you respond to calls) within VRFPD's District

- Applications can be picked up at the Fire Station.

### Here's What We Do!

**VRFPD**  
555 E. Bridge St.  
Vernonia, OR 97064  
503-429-8252

**VRFPD FIRE CHIEF**  
Earl Dean Smith  
dc4502@yahoo.com  
503-709-8821 (cell)  
503-429-8252 (office)

**VRFPD P.I.O.**  
Robert Schattschneider  
pio.vrfpd@gmail.com  
971-225-8332 (cell)  
503-429-8252 (office)