

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

60 Days In

By Robert Schattschneider

VRFPD's investment in a new Training Captain has been a good decision thus far. Even though Captain Will Steinweg has only completed his first 60 plus days in the new position, he has covered a lot of ground. He jumped into the water with both feet and never looked back.

As it is with any new job, there is that break-in period where everyone involved is waiting for the dust to settle, personalities to jell, and the temperature of the water to be tested. But eventually, all of that just seems to fall into place and everyone starts moving forward.

Any time you bring in a new face, there is some level of concern about the new guy being accepted and fitting in. The volunteers have obviously accepted Will rather quickly and that's always a good thing.

Having been with the department for a little over a year now, I have come to learn quite a bit about the many different personalities that roam around the station. It's no different than anywhere else I've worked over the past 40 years. It seems that no matter where you work, play, go to school, or attend church, every type of personality exists.



Training Captain William Steinweg

must give Will a lot of credit. In my opinion he tested the waters, listened and observed, but still maintained the proper amount of control, exercising his authority in such a way that communicated a clear message to the volunteers. That being, "My job is to bring everyone up to the same level of training that is expected from all of us. During this process, we are going to evaluate where you are, versus where you need to be. But no matter how great or small the gap, we are going to do it together, but we are going to get it done."

During Will's first two months he has elevated the level of training

on training nights; at the same time he's made the training enjoyable. After seeing the changes in our volunteers, I would have to say that now they seem to enjoy showing up to training night, and everyone seems interested and ready to participate, despite the demand placed on their personal time.

Will has taken on several important projects during his on-duty hours around the station. Some of those projects include the creation of online training classes, establishing guidelines for a Cadet Program for students in the Vernonia School District, and he provided a great experience for the grade school students at the Vernonia School by bringing in the Exit Drills in The Home (E.D.I.T.H.) training trailer, which provides the students with a hands-on training experience.

The online training tools enable the volunteers to do some of the learning on their own time. Then on training night, the hands-on portion of the training is more interesting and it allows the volunteers to get home to their families a little bit sooner, requiring less time to be spent at the station.

In addition, Will took advantage of a computer program that tracks and documents each volunteer's train-



ing. Will is able to input the training that each individual volunteer fire fighter needs to maintain his or her certification. This helps ensure that all volunteers are current on their individual training requirements.

The Fire Chief, Dean Smith, told me, "Captain Steinweg has been invaluable around the station. In addition to training and responding to calls for service, Steinweg has managed to work his way through numerous S.O.G.s (Standard Operating Guidelines) that have needed updating. Having that extra set of hands around the office and out on calls for service has been extremely helpful to me."

The Board of Directors, Fire Chief, and Volunteers at VRFPD want you to know that your tax dollars have been put to work for the benefit of the community. Thank you again for passing the tax levy.

Basic Fire Escape Planning

Your ability to get out depends on advance warning from smoke alarms and advance planning.

Pull together everyone in your household and make a plan. Walk through your home and inspect all possible exits and escape routes. Households with children should consider drawing a floor plan of your home, marking two ways out of each room, including windows and doors. Also, mark the location of each smoke alarm. For easy planning, download NFPA's escape planning grid. This is a great way to get children involved in fire safety in a non-threatening way.

A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat and fire. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. NFPA 72, National Fire Alarm Code® requires interconnected smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.

Everyone in the household must understand the escape plan. When you walk through your plan, check to make sure the escape routes are clear and doors and windows can be opened easily.

Choose an outside meeting place (i.e. neighbor's house, a light post, mailbox, or stop sign) a safe distance in front of your home where everyone can meet after they've escaped. Make sure to mark the location of the meeting place on your escape plan.

Go outside to see if your street number is clearly visible from the road. If not, paint it on the curb or install house numbers to ensure that responding emergency personnel can find your home.

Have everyone memorize the emergency phone number of the fire department. That way any member of the household can call from a neighbor's home or a cellular phone once safely outside.

If there are infants, older adults, or family members with mobility limitations, make sure that someone is assigned to assist them in the fire drill and in the event of an emergency. Assign a backup person too, in case the designee is not home during the emergency.

If windows or doors in your home have security bars, make sure that the bars have emergency release devices inside so that they can be opened immediately in an emergency. Emergency release devices won't compromise your security - but they will increase your

chances of safely escaping a home fire.

Tell guests or visitors to your home about your family's fire escape plan. When staying overnight at other people's homes, ask about their escape plan. If they don't have a plan in place, offer to help them make one. This is especially important when children are permitted to attend "sleepovers" at friends' homes. See NFPA's "Sleepover fire safety for kids" fact sheet at NFPA.org.

Once you're out, stay out! Under no circumstances should you ever go back into a burning building. If someone is missing, inform the fire department dispatcher when you call. Firefighters have the skills and equipment to perform rescues.

Putting your plan to the test

- Practice your home fire escape plan twice a year, making the drill as realistic as possible.
- Make arrangements in your plan for anyone in your home who has a disability.
- Allow children to master fire escape planning and practice before holding a fire drill at night when they are sleeping. The objective is to practice, not to frighten, so telling children there will be a drill before they go to bed can be as effective as a surprise drill.
- It's important to determine during the drill whether children and others can readily waken to the sound of the smoke alarm. If they fail to awaken, make sure that someone is assigned to wake them up as part of the drill and in a real emergency situation.
- If your home has two floors, every family member (including children) must be able to escape from the second floor rooms. Escape ladders can be placed in or near windows to provide an additional escape route. Review the manufacturer's instructions carefully so you'll be able to use a safety ladder in an emergency. Practice setting up the ladder from a first floor window to make sure you can do it correctly and quickly. Children should only practice with a grown-up, and only from

a first-story window. Store the ladder near the window, in an easily accessible location. You don't want to have to search for it during a fire.

- Always choose the escape route that is safest – the one with the least amount of smoke and heat – but be prepared to escape under toxic smoke if necessary. When you do your fire drill, everyone in the family should practice getting low and going under the smoke to your exit.
- Closing doors on your way out slows the spread of fire, giving you more time to safely escape.
- In some cases, smoke or fire may prevent you from exiting your home or apartment building. To prepare for an emergency like this, practice "sealing yourself in for safety" as part of your home fire escape plan. Close all doors between you and the fire. Use duct tape or towels to seal the door cracks and cover air vents to keep smoke from coming in. If possible, open your windows at the top and bottom so fresh air can get in. Call the fire department to report your exact location. Wave a flashlight or light-colored cloth at the window to let the fire department know where you are located.

Please take the time to develop an escape plan for you and your family!

Information for this article was obtained from NFPA.ORG

Calls responded to October 1-31

Fire	0
Emergency Medical Service	22
Hazardous Condition	5
Service Call	7
Good Intent	2
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	6
Total	42