

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Firefighters Struck and Killed by Passing Vehicles

By Robert Schattschneider

Wow! What a headline! But, from August 13, 2006 to August 5, 2008, that's exactly what happened in the State of Oregon, nine times. Fortunately for Vernonia, this has not been a reality; not yet anyway.

I cannot stress enough the importance of "defensive driving." Defensive driving goes much further than just driving your vehicle in a manner that protects you from the actions of other drivers. It also involves driving your vehicle in a manner that protects you from yourself!

What? Yes, I'm talking about you.

In a two-year period, nine firefighters were struck and killed on Oregon roadways by drivers just like you and me. Drivers just like you and me, on a mission to travel to our planned destination, so intent on conquering the task, that we fail to recognize and comprehend the obvious danger just ahead.

For some reason, drivers just do not connect the dots. When they approach those flashing lights, and it just doesn't seem to matter whether they are flashing yellow, red, white, blue, or any combination of the four, slowing down to determine what the danger is, and then reacting appropriately, just doesn't happen.

We have had some close calls. In recent months, we have had firefighters and emergency vehicles narrowly missed by vehicles that are approaching from the rear, front, and passing the area where the emergency exists.

Anytime our emergency vehicles are parked on or near the edge of

the roadway, we will have emergency personnel out flagging approaching traffic. Please slow down to a speed that will allow you to safely stop your vehicle if instructed to do so by one of our first responders or a law enforcement officer. While passing an emergency vehicle that is parked in or near a lane of traffic, allow plenty of room and do so at a greatly reduced speed.

Here is what Oregon law has said:

811.147 Failure to maintain safe distance from emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow vehicle or ambulance

(1) As used in this section, roadside assistance vehicle means a vehicle with warning lights that responds to requests for repair assistance from motorists with disabled vehicles.

(2) A person operating a motor vehicle commits the offense of failure to maintain a safe distance from an emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow vehicle or ambulance if the person approaches an emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow vehicle or ambulance that is stopped and is displaying required warning lights and the person:

(a) On a highway having two or more lanes for traffic in a single direction, fails to:

(A) Make a lane change to a lane not adjacent to that of the emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow vehicle or ambulance; or

(B) Reduce the speed of the motor vehicle to a speed that is at least five miles per hour under the speed limit established in ORS 811.111 (Violating a speed limit) or a designated speed posted under ORS 810.180 (Designa-

tion of maximum speeds), if making a lane change is unsafe.

(b) On a two directional, two-lane highway, fails to reduce the speed of the motor vehicle to a speed that is at least five miles per hour under the speed limit established in ORS 811.111 (Violating a speed limit) or a designated speed posted under ORS 810.180 (Designation of maximum speeds).

(3) The offense described in this section, failure to maintain a safe distance from an emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow vehicle or ambulance, is a Class B traffic violation.

Additionally, drivers seem to need a refresher on what to do when they encounter an emergency vehicle that is traveling down the roadway. Again, here is what Oregon law says.

811.145 Failure to yield to emergency vehicle or ambulance

(1) A person commits the offense of failure to yield to an emergency vehicle or ambulance if an ambulance or emergency vehicle that is using a visual or audible signal in a manner described under ORS 820.300 (Exemptions from traffic laws) and 820.320 (Illegal operation of emergency vehicle or ambulance) approaches the vehicle the person is operating and the person does not do all of the following:

(a) Yield the right of way to the ambulance or emergency vehicle.

(b) Immediately drive to a position as near as possible and parallel to the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway clear



of any intersection.

(c) Stop and remain in such position until the emergency vehicle or ambulance has passed.

(2) A person is not in violation of this section if the person is acting as otherwise directed by a police officer.

(3) This section does not relieve the driver of an emergency vehicle or ambulance from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway, nor does this section protect the driver of any such vehicle from the consequence of an arbitrary exercise of the right of way granted under this section.

(4) The offense described in this section, failure to yield to an emergency vehicle or ambulance, is a Class B traffic violation.

Please use greater caution when traveling our roadways and be on the lookout for Emergency First Responders and Emergency Vehicles.

CHECK US OUT

If you've been thinking about how you might contribute to your community, then come on out on a Monday night to see what we do.

The first, third, and fourth Mondays of the month, we have our regularly scheduled practice night, where you can get a taste for what we do.

We'd love to have you come and spend an hour or two with us. We will let you observe a training night, tour the station and equipment, and have all your questions answered by one of our senior firefighters or the Fire Chief.

Our Training Night starts at 7 pm and is usually over by 8-8:30 pm. We are located at 555 E. Bridge Street, right across from the entrance of the Vernonia Schools. There is parking on the East side of the building and in the rear parking lot.

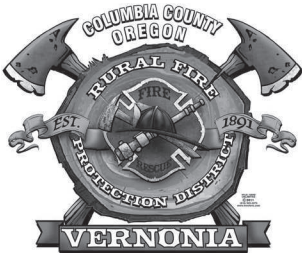
Please contact Chief Smith or Captain Steinweg at 503-429-8252 to make arrangements.

See you soon,
The Volunteers
and Command Staff
VRFPD

Calls responded to November 1-30

Fire	0
Emergency Medical Service	30
Hazardous Condition	6
Service Call	7
Good Intent	1
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	1
Total	45

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

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