

# 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. Damping 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 buildup of creosote on the lining of your chimney. But 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, is now on fire, spewing smoke, ash, and in most cases, sparks and even flames out of 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 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. (See end of article.)

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 chimney fires 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 the 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 damper on your stovepipe 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 on the internet 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 Seeks New Public Information Officer

VRFPD is seeking a replacement for their current Public Information Officer. If you are looking for a way to volunteer some time to the fire department without having to go through a lot of training, this just might be the opportunity you've been looking for.

For details about the position please contact Chief Smith at (503) 429-8252.

## Safe Driving

Recently we had a couple of trees come down, taking powerlines down with them, on Nehalem Highway south of Vernonia. VRFPD's Fire Chief responded to assess the situation, and found that the southbound lanes of 47 were obstructed by the downed trees.

In the process of assessing the situation, and warning traffic in both directions concerning the obstruction that blocked the southbound lanes, an impatient driver traveling south, drove around the Fire Department's

emergency vehicle into oncoming traffic, nearly causing a head on collision.

Please, anytime you approach an emergency vehicle with its emergency lights flashing in either lane, ODOT vehicles with yellow warning lights, or any other construction type vehicle stopped with flashing lights, slow down or stop until you are directed to pass or can reasonably ascertain that it is safe to do so. Being impatient and inconsiderate of other drivers on our roadways will eventually result in

a serious if not fatal traffic accident.

Failure to obey lane closures and traffic control devices or traffic control personnel could, in addition to causing an accident, result in a Moving Violation Citation from Law Enforcement. Lane closures are necessary from time to time, and they will be kept to a minimum as conditions allow. Please be patient and cooperate with personnel who are working to open the lanes of traffic as quickly as they can.

## Personal Generator Usage

This time of year we all worry about unexpected power outages that can be caused by high winds, heavy snowfall or ice storms, or accidents that knock down power poles and lines. Those of us who have personal generators to supply our homes with electricity need to follow some important safety guidelines for everyone in your neighborhood, and the linemen who work for West Oregon Electric.

Remember that when you connect your generator to power your home, you need to disconnect the main circuit breaker in your breaker box. This prevents the power that you are supplying to your home from back

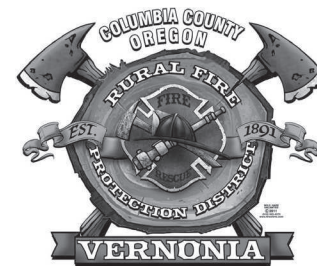
feeding down the power lines that lead away from your home.

When the electrical current back feeds down the lines away from your home, unsuspecting linemen are at risk of being electrocuted from your generator.

Remember that when you power up, "DISCONNECT" from the grid to protect those around you. If you have questions on the proper way to do this, please contact someone from West Oregon Electric for more information, or a qualified electrician.

Now keep those Christmas lights blinking and have a Merry Christmas!

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED



Here's What We Do!

### 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.

**VRFPD**  
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Vernonia, OR 97064  
503-429-8252

**VRFPD FIRE CHIEF**  
Earl Dean Smith  
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**VRFPD P.I.O.**  
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### Calls responded to November 1-30

Fire	1
Emergency Medical Service	29
Hazardous Condition	2
Service Call	6
Good Intent	1
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>