

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Positions at VRFPD

Volunteer Coordinator Position Filled

At the Annual Awards Banquet, Trish Smith was announced as the Volunteer Coordinator for Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District. Trish has lived in town since 1996 and has been involved in Emergency Medical Services for eleven years. This position was formed to augment the Training Captain's duties.

First and foremost, this position is an advocate for the volunteers and a liaison for the District/Volunteer Association. Trish has already begun individual conversations with volunteers to ensure that they are receiving the training, equipment, and help that is needed for responding and maintaining a healthy volunteer/district relationship. Participating in the budget process, Trish has already identified several ways to help the members bond and build the strong family that is needed in this high stress and physically demanding job set. Trish manages this day-to-day, as well as having a hand in almost every local event in town. She has the ability to make others smile and feel needed.

Current Staffing

VRFPD currently has two Volunteer Lieutenants, seven Volunteer Firefighters, three Volunteer Emergency Logistics, two Volunteer Recruit Firefighters, and one Volunteer Non-Emergency Logistics Personnel. Also one paid Training Captain, one Chief, and one Office Manager to make sure the bills are paid and the lights stay on. For the last two years,

the average response to calls for any given month of the year was two personnel. For that to be the average, it means that more than two volunteers showed up for a few calls and the rest were covered by just the Duty Officer. One of four people responded to roughly two thirds of the overall calls as the only response from VRFPD. This current model has a Duty Officer on call 24-7 with that role being shared by the Chief, Training Captain, and Two Lieutenants. "On Duty" doesn't necessarily mean at the station. One can stay at home or in town, but MUST be ready to respond at a moment's notice. This means that they are limited in things that they can do and places they can go due to response times. With only four people to cover every hour of every day, our personnel are getting worn out due to increasing call volume (already at 190 halfway through April), demanding daily work, and home life schedules. It is getting harder to find people with the time, let alone the drive, to volunteer these days.

Vernonia is lucky enough to house Metro West, which provides shift Paramedics and weekday EMT Basics. They cover the weekday shifts and Volunteer EMTs cover nights and weekends. The Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association (VVAA) staffing contains one EMR level, nine EMT Basics, one Intermediate, and two Paramedics.

The volunteers give up their personal time to more training, both new topics and recertifying hours, as well as

emergency calls, with no pay and seemingly little praise. The community has rallied in the last couple of years, approving a bond and an operating levy to provide a Training Captain and a new water tender. Even though these have been huge assets for our District, unfortunately with the increasing call volume, training requirements, and dwindling availability of all our rostered volunteers, the workload still seems to weigh heavily on the current responding volunteers and paid staff.

Both VRFPD and VVAA are in desperate need of more volunteers, at all levels. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please reach out to Training Captain Will Steinweg or Volunteer Coordinator Trish Smith at (503) 429-8252. Join us at the station where neighbors help neighbors.

Training Captain

Captain Will Steinweg has had a very positive effect on the District operations with the large task of solidifying the current training platform, then expanding on that process, as well as finding ways to recruit more personnel. Accomplishments to this point for the district include recertifying and increasing the District's training accreditation to include Firefighter 1, Firefighter 2, Driver, Apparatus Operator Equipped with a Fire Pump, and Wildland Firefighter type 2. The volunteers have been able to increase their Certs with some new Pumper operators and Wildland



certified personnel. This has all been done while increasing his level of certification through Fire Ground Leader.

Projects still underway are High School Fire Science Program that will give the juniors and seniors the ability to have dual credits and begin college credit collection, in essence, growing future firefighters and leaders. In conjunction with that process, the "out of District volunteer" program is under construction. This program will allow people from outside our community to stay at the station and pull scheduled shifts on call. This system puts more personnel in district ready to respond, as well as helping with routine station work and training. A lot of these programs are multilayered and take time to research and weave into a successful, sustainable, and energetic system. Will has done a great job chasing leads and working through roadblocks. He has been a great asset for the District and the Community.

It's Almost That Time of Year Again!

By: Robert Schattschneider

Very soon the skies will clear, things will dry out, and we will get outside to begin yet another year of mowing the yard, planting our gardens, and cleaning up the mess that winter dropped all over our yards and rooftops.

That brings me to the topic of "Burn Permits." Get yours early and get it out of the way. If you live within the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District, you can pick up your 2018 Burn Permit at the fire department, which is located at 555 E. Bridge St. in Vernonia. The burn permits only cost \$5 for the year, and you'll receive a list of things that

you CAN and CANNOT burn. Burning items that are prohibited could result in a costly fine. So BEFORE you begin your open burning this year, please pick up your Burn Permit paperwork so you'll be legal and know all of the rules for a safe burn season.

Now let's move on to that dreaded topic of "Driving Safely." When the drier weather gets here so will the influx of bicyclists, motorcycles, joggers, and tourists who love to come to our sweet spot called Vernonia.

Not all bicycle riders make full use of the Banks to Vernonia trail. You will still come upon them riding along the edge of Highway 47 and Scappoose

Vernonia Highway. So please be prepared to encounter them over every hill and around every bend in the road.

The same holds true for the joggers. Although they aren't as prevalent on the roadways as the bicyclists are, they still stray away from the trail on occasion.

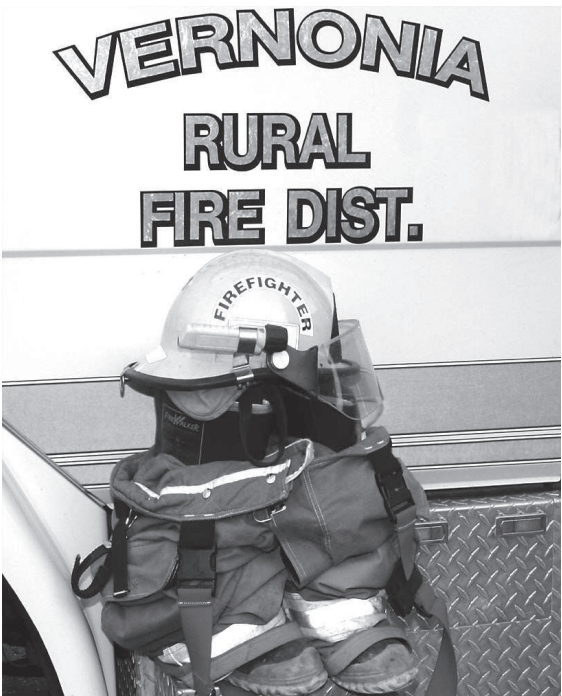
Any of you who have lived in or near Vernonia for any period of time, know how the motorcycles show up, especially on the weekends. They often tend to keep their speed closer to, or just under, the posted speed limits. They are much harder to see especially if they aren't using their headlights, so keep an extra eye out for them as the temperatures rise and things dry out.

For those of you who

do use the trail, please pay special attention to the warning signs that are posted throughout the trail. Those "Stop" signs are there for a reason!

On several of the cross streets on Highway 47, traffic turning off of the highway onto one of these side streets aren't able to see the foot and bicycle traffic approaching the intersections on the trail. There have been many close calls at these intersections because trail traffic did not obey the warning signs. So it's also up to the trail users to pay close attention to traffic as well.

Please do your part to help ensure that we all have a safe and enjoyable spring and summer here in Vernonia!



**CAN YOU FILL
THESE BOOTS?**

**VOLUNTEERS
WANTED**

**Call Dean Smith
for more information
on free training
(503)429-8252**

Calls responded to March 1-31

Fire	0
Emergency Medical Service	50
Hazardous Condition	0
Service Call	13
Good Intent	1
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	3
Total	67