

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Wildland Fire Preparation

A Drafting and Water-Shuttle Drill

By Larry Boxman

Paramedic with Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD

In our rural environment, wildland fire is a very real and dominant force that warrants considerable attention and response. Wildland fire management involves planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to facilitate the protection of people, property, communities, and natural resources from the detrimental effects of unwanted fires. The wildland fire environment we face today and in the future demands that we continue to pursue learning and development.

The importance of learning cannot be overstated. Learning contributes to continuous development and increased capability. As a result and to prepare for this year's fire season, a wildland fire drill took place on Saturday, June 1. The drill was organized by Division Chief Nick Berg from Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD and included firefighters and apparatus from Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD, Vernonia RFPD, Clatskanie RFPD, Scappoose RFPD, and Columbia River Fire & Rescue, as well as Columbia County 9-1-1 dispatch. A total of 31 personnel, both career and volunteer, participated, as well as 14 different fire engines and water tenders.

Mist Mountain was the area selected for the drill because over the past five years there have been three wildland fires in remote areas on this mountain. The main issue with fires in these isolated areas is water supply. These areas do not have pressurized water-distribution systems such as hydrants, so getting water to

the fire scene quickly and effectively is vital. Therefore, the main objective for this drill was to practice drafting (using suction to move water from a body of water to the intake of a fire pump) and water-shuttling.

The drill was spread-out over several miles to create a realistic situation that required an area to get water, an area to store water, also known as the dump site, and the actual simulated fire location.

To get water, a source is needed such as a pond or a lake. A remote pond on the mountain was chosen and this was called



their water into the tank and proceeded back to the draft site. A fire engine was placed next to the portable water tank and withdrew water from the tank and was able to spray water through a deluge gun to protect the area from the fire.

Additional water tenders extracted water from the portable tank and delivered it to the scene of the simulated fire. Progressive hose lays (a method of deploying hoses so that additional hoses can be added as needed) were utilized to be able to squirt water from several different angles. Firefighters utilized these hoses to attack the fire



the draft site. One end of a five inch hard suction hose was placed in the pond and the other end was connected to the pump on the fire truck. This produced a flow rate of over 1,000 gallons per minute and allowed for incoming water tenders to fill their 2,000-3,000 gallon tanks in a matter of minutes. A continuous flow of tenders arriving empty at the draft site and leaving full of water en route to the dump site occurred.

At the dump site, a 3,000-gallon portable water tank was set up. The water tenders quickly unloaded

from various directions.

Over 35,000 gallons of water in 150 minutes were shuttled from the draft site to the dump site and ultimately to the fire. This was an extremely successful drill and demonstrated a high level of cooperation amongst the six participating public safety agencies. As with any training exercise, an "after action review" was conducted with all participants to discuss what went well and areas to be focused on during future drills.

Safe and effective response to wildland fires requires continuous learning and training for firefighters. To ensure that this education is meaningful, it's imperative that firefighters participate in hands-on training using the equipment that would actually be used for fire suppression. The exercise that took place on June 1 proved that although we can't guarantee that wildland fires won't occur, we can assure residents that their local fire departments strive to be prepared and quickly respond and effectively suppress these fires.

Train Like Your Life Depends On It!

By Captain Will Steinweg

Over the last few months we have been ramping up our training here at Vernonia RFPD. Why do we train you ask? Well, with the obvious reason being keeping the community and ourselves safe, we also have to consider the changes that happen in the Fire Service. With

ground to us.

The way we do this is by working closely with other fire departments in our area as well as our state training agency, the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST). These agencies help us by loaning mobile training props for us to use. We also work with the Lower Columbia

with a training prop for roof ventilation. This gives our volunteers practice on something that we don't get to do very often anymore. Usually we are only able to practice roof ventilation when we acquire houses to burn for training. With the strict regulations on training burns, we very rarely are able to acquire these houses. With the prop we were able to change the pitch or slant of the roof as well as get our volunteers comfortable with their abilities.

The roof vent prop is constructed of 2x6 rafters and OSB sheathing to make it as real as possible for a training environment. We were also fortunate

enough to get the material to build the roof donated to us by CB2 Industries LLC, as well as a few ventilation props loaned to us by Columbia River Fire and Rescue to make the most of our training.

These training props give us valuable experience when we go out on emergency calls. If you would like to come see what our training program looks like or join our team please feel free to come by the station and pick up a volunteer application. We have a lot of different training opportunities available and we don't just train like our lives depend on it, we train like your life depends on it too!



houses being built with lighter weight materials, and furniture being made of compounds that are closer in nature to gasoline than cotton, we have to be ready for the unexpected. Vernonia Fire is not set up with a large training ground like larger city departments are, so we have to improvise and bring the training

Regional Training Officers Association (LCRTOA) for these needs. During our Fire Academy we were able to borrow a Forcible Entry Door from LCRTOA to get hands on practice on forcing entry into residential and commercial structures.

Recently DPSST provided us

Calls responded to May 1-31

Fire	5
Emergency Medical Service	32
Hazardous Condition	0
Service Call	11
Good Intent	1
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	0
Special Incident	0
No Emergency Found	0
False Alarm	1
Total	50