

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Three Years of Training

By Captain Will Steinweg

On September 1, 2016, I started my position as the Training Captain for the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District. This September marks the third year I have been with VRFPD and have served with some amazing volunteers and staff. But what has the Training Division done in the last three years?

To start, we have revamped the training program to push our people to always strive to get better. In our line of work we have to become comfortable being uncomfortable. What better way to do that than to recreate those situations during training. We have our officers mentor newer volunteers during our drills to put them in situations they will see in the field and teach them lessons during our trainings to make them comfortable in uncomfortable situations. We have also had eight of our people receive 13 new certifications in the last three years.

We have also brought in outside resources to help build on our training program. DPSST has been a great resource for us over the last three years. We have

brought in training props to work on ventilation and forcible entry in-house. These are valuable resources that we, as a Fire District, would not be able to use unless we were to go to trainings out of our district. The Lower Columbia Regional Training Officers Association (LCROTA) has also let us borrow props and use their training facilities in St. Helens to work on live fire training. Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD has taught classes during our Recruit Academy as well as let us use their burn cell. We have a great relationship with our neighboring districts that have helped our training program grow.

Vernonia RFPD can also teach more classes in-house. We are certified through the State of Oregon to teach Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, Driver, Pump Operator, and Wildland Firefighter type 2 courses. Because of that we had our first in-house Recruit Academy in years and next month we will be holding an NFPA Driver course in-house. VRFPD is accredited through DPSST to teach these courses to other districts as well. Meaning we will not only be teaching our volunteers but we will also be teaching firefighters from



all over our county. I have been working on my certification level as well to better serve the community and our District. While I have been with VRFPD I have received my Fire Ground Leader and Rope Rescue Operations level certification and have been working toward my Fire Officer I and CPR instructor. This means I can train our people to a higher level than when I was hired.

We continue to build on our training program every year. The more we train, the better we can serve our community. I would like to once again thank our voters for giving me the opportunity to serve this wonderful community. This community has an amazing group of volunteers always working to get better.

Building an Emergency Supply Kit for Your Home and Car

Here in the Great Northwest, emergencies can threaten the safety of our families. Whether it's a snow storm, wind event, flooding, or an earthquake, steps can be taken to improve the outcome.

For a complete list of steps to take, templates that you can use, and other good information, go to www.Ready.gov. This website is the official website for the Department of Homeland Security.

We recommend that you build a disaster supply kit. The kit will contain basic items that you will need in the event of an emergency.

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least 72 hours. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours or it might take days.

You should build your kit well in advance in the event that you need to evacuate at a moment's notice, tak-

ing the essentials with you. If you wait you probably will not have the time to assemble or shop for the items in most circumstances.

After building your supply kit, you'll want to make sure that it is properly maintained.

Here are some tips to keep your kit ready and in good condition.

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned goods that become swollen, dented, or corroded.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your kit as your family's needs change.
- Go to: <http://www.ready.gov/maintaining-your-kit>, for additional information.

You never know where you might be when an emergency occurs. Consider having more than one kit avail-

able. Having your main supply kit at home will cover you and your family in the event that you need to evacuate. But having a small kit at work or in your car could prove to be quite valuable if you are unable to get home and become stranded in your vehicle because of an event. Becoming stranded in your car is a real possibility during a disaster.

Consider the following things when putting together your emergency food supplies:

- Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food.
- Choose foods your family will eat.
- Remember any special dietary needs.
- Avoid foods that will make you thirsty.
- Choose salt-free crackers, whole grain cereals, and canned foods with high liquid content.
- Don't forget about medications that you or your family members take daily.

Following a disaster, there may be power outages that could last for several days. Stock canned foods, dry mixes, and other staples that do not require refrigeration, cooking, water, or special preparation. Be sure to include a manual

can opener and eating utensils.

You should store at least one gallon of water per person for three days. A normally active person needs about three quarters of a gallon of fluid daily, from water and other beverages. However, individual needs vary, depending on age, health, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate. To determine your water needs, take the following into account:

- One gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation.
- Children, nursing mothers, and sick people may need more water.
- A medical emergency might require additional water.
- If you live in a warm weather climate more water may be necessary. In very hot temperatures, water needs can double.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person.

For more information about developing a disaster plan, building a 72-hour supply kit for you and your family, go to: <https://www.ready.gov>.

Information contained in this article was obtained from www.Ready.gov.

Chimney Fires

As temperatures begin to drop, Oregonians will start using their fireplaces and woodstoves, and fire agencies will find themselves responding to chimney fires. The largest percentage (65%) of chimney related fires occur between November and February 1. During these months, chimney fires account for nearly one out of every three home fires. Looking at houses and apartments in Oregon from 2011 through 2015, there were a total of 2,968 fires that either were confined to a chimney/flue or started in a fireplace, chimney, or flue and extended to the structure. During this period, these fires resulted in 13 injuries, and more than \$13 million in estimated damage.

Most fires involving chimneys are confined to the chimney or flue. These confined fires rarely result in serious injury and account for just 2% of estimated losses in chimney related fires. The average estimated loss per fire that was confined to the chimney or flue was \$96. Conversely, 17% of chimney fires spread to become building fires, accounting for 98% of estimated losses in chimney related fires. The average estimated loss per fire that was not confined to the chimney or flue was more than \$26,000.

Additional chimney related fire statistics:

- Half of all chimney fires occurred between 4 and 9 pm
- There has been a 7.5% average decrease in chimney

fire incidents over the last five years.

• The average dollar loss from a chimney fire that spreads to the structure is about 270 times greater than the average dollar loss from a chimney fire confined to the chimney. The trends, issues, and threats associated with chimney fires in a local community can easily be identified through complete and accurate incident reports. By understanding the prevalence and causes of chimney fires in their local jurisdictions, fire agencies can lead public education campaigns to help prevent these types of fires.

The following can help prevent fires:

- Have chimney and woodstove flues inspected and cleaned each year by a qualified chimney sweep
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood; it causes less buildup in the chimney
- Never use a flammable liquid such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline to start a fire

In addition, understanding safe practices, such

as using a fireplace screen, keeping combustibles away from heat sources, and properly disposing of ashes will also translate to fewer fires.

The Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has educational materials covering home heating and many other topics. You can review and order materials on the OSFM website: https://www.oregon.gov/osp/SFM/docs/Comm_Ed/Gated_Wye/2016/November_16_GatedWye.pdf.

Calls responded to August 1-31

Fire	3
Emergency Medical Service	39
Hazardous Condition	2
Service Call	12
Good Intent	1
False Alarm	7
Total	64