

VERNONIA RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Winter Powerline Safety

During the winter months with the rain, ice, snow, and strong winds many branches and even trees end up falling to the ground, which quite often ends up bringing down power lines. Also bad road conditions during the winter or any time can cause vehicle accidents involving power poles. Here are some safety tips that everybody should follow to avoid injury from a downed power line.

If you see a wire on the ground **do not** go near it and do not let anybody else approach it. Contact your power company and they will take care of the situation. You cannot tell if it is a phone line, secondary line, or a primary voltage line. The wire that is on the ground could quite

easily be energized with voltage as high as 500,000 volts depending on what kind of wire it is.

Power lines, whether on the ground, on a vehicle, or on a blown down tree, are still very dangerous. A fallen energized line will not always arc or spark and it may lay energized for a very long time until looked after properly by the utility company.

Electricity from a power line will create a ripple effect, much the same as throwing a pebble in still water, for up to 30 feet. If you touch any two spots in this zone electricity will use your body to increase the strength of the charge and push the ripple forward. It is as if electricity can take a step using you as a con-

ductor, and you will be shocked and seriously or fatally injured.

If you are in a car that has hit a power pole and the power lines are laying on your car or a tree has torn down the power line and it ends up on your car **do not** get out of your vehicle. Have someone contact the power company to come and assist you. If remaining in your vehicle is unsafe, for example the car is on fire, and you must exit, jump clear of the vehicle and land with both feet together. Proceed away from the vehicle and power line by hopping with your feet together, or by shuffling your feet (heels should not pass the toes), **do not** take full steps. Taking full steps can cause what we



call "step potential" and will give you a severe electrical shock. Continue shuffling your feet until you are at least 30 feet from the vehicle.

Remember, even if a power line is on the ground there is no way you can tell if it is energized or not. Call your utility.

Volunteers Earn Driver Certifications

By Training Captain Will Steinweg

The Vernonia RFPD would like to recognize some of our people for finishing the lengthy process for their Driver/Operator certification from the Oregon Department of Safety Standards and Training. Two of our volunteers have recently been certified; Trish Smith and James George are now NFPA Fire Apparatus Driver/Operators.

Vernonia RFPD held a driver academy in October to get our volunteers the needed training to complete this task. We spent a day in the classroom and a day on the driving course evaluating the drivers. With the recent changes in the rules

we were able to certify people who have not yet finished their Firefighter I certification.

Trish joined the Fire Department almost four years ago with the intent of just being a logistics member, but works full-time for Metro West Ambulance here in Vernonia. She decided to go through our firefighter academy last year and made a change to do more with the fire side of the Department. She went through the driver academy in October with the rest of the recruits and has finished the required taskbook to be certified through the state.

James was recently certified as a Fire-

fighter I in July of 2019. He also went through the recent driver academy and received the necessary skills to be certified through the state. James joined the VRFPD almost three years ago and has been working hard to build his certification base.

I would personally like to extend congratulations to these two volunteers for taking the time away from their lives to finish their driver certification. I would also like to congratulate our Fire Chief for completing his Wildland Firefighter type I certification. If you see Trish, James, or Chief Smith congratulate them for their hard work paying off.

New Firefighter Recruit Academy Starts

By Rob Davis
Recruitment and
Retention Officer

The 2020 Joint Firefighter Recruit Academy began on February 17 with 11 new Firefighters attending! Six members are from the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District, and five are from the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District. We are excited to see such an increase in Volunteer members between both Fire Districts.

We took a new approach to the academy course work to try and lighten the burden of attending classroom style training. This year we have moved the curriculum to an online platform called Target Solutions which provides access to the accredited course work while our new volunteers have time to work through chapters, either at home or in the station! When we meet for academy nights and weekends we will be able to focus strictly on the hands-on training needed to perform the tasks of a Firefighter. We believe this will drastically reduce the time we pull them away from their fami-

lies during their initial training.

Not all of these new volunteers are community members; as of this year we have launched an Out of District Volunteer Program to help supplement our community volunteers. The personnel in the Out of District Program will have requirements for the amount of time they spend at the station serving our community.

As we continue to feel the strain of higher call volumes, we have to continually look at ways to provide top quality service to the community while being good stewards of our citizens' tax dollars.

Speaking of call volume, did you know that Vernonia Fire runs the second highest number of calls per 1,000 citizens in Columbia County? What that means is we ran 202 calls per 1,000 citizens of our Fire District in 2019.

If you are interested in being a part of our team please come in and see us and find out what being a Volunteer Firefighter is all about!

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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