

Chief Fillis was always available to assist the public

■ CHIEF FILLIS
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However, because residents of the Applegate tend to be older and retired, Chief Fillis' toughest challenge over the years was recruiting and keeping volunteer firefighters. He offered up advice for his successor: *be aware of and manage* the impacts of change on the volunteers. Standards for training are constantly changing, so keeping the district's "training bar" high while still having fun is a challenge.

What has the chief achieved, personally, during his tenure here? In his own words, "It's knowing

that the things I have been a part of have made a difference." He feels his legacy is "a better-equipped and better-trained group of firefighters," and that our fire district is one of the best in southern Oregon.

Chief Fillis hopes Applegate patrons will remember him as a "dedicated, hard-working public servant who was always available to assist the public, regardless of their problem, emergent or non-emergent." And his local fire agency colleagues? He hopes they remember him as "someone who thought it was more important to work together than getting hung up in how we were going to do it."

Always the team player, our chief.

Some people move through the windows of your life leaving dim memories, if any. Not so Brett Fillis—he definitely left his mark here in the Applegate, and we wish him all the best in retirement.

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At the Special Districts Association of Oregon's annual awards banquet in 2009, Chief Fillis and Applegate Valley Fire District #9 were awarded "Outstanding District Program" for their "collaborative, innovative and invaluable efforts" in implementing the Applegate Fire Plan.



Photo, left: Brett discusses emergency preparedness with the community. Photos, right (clockwise from top): Brett in his first fire truck, Chief Fillis and fire district board chair Ed Temple at ribbon-cutting ceremony for Station 7, Brett with his prize catch during a fishing trip to Baja.



Personal notes from retiring Fire Chief Fillis

Any amount of success that is placed on the job that I have done is due to the enthusiasm and support that has been given to the Applegate Valley Fire District by the patrons and those members who make up the district (volunteers, staff, board members, budget committee, and Friends of the Fire District). This job is easy and fun when everyone has a similar goal. When things become focused around a single individual or group and the goals no longer are aligned, the job becomes difficult and no longer fun.

To the patrons

I have had the privilege of meeting many of you during non-emergent times, and, in most cases, I was able to easily help you in one way or another.

Others I have met during emergent situations, which generally were not good days for you or your family. During those times I always intended to show compassion, but occasionally you may

have seen my aggressive side when something needed to be done and it needed to be done quickly. If I offended you and wasn't able to fix that part of our relationship before we concluded our time together, I sincerely apologize and hope that if I was "short" with you, you at least understood the reason why.

To residents of the district

Over the years the Applegate Fire District, as well as many other agencies, has been active in preaching "preparedness" for our residents, be it from wildfire, flood, or any other disaster that may affect us. In the last couple of years, we have been talking more about being prepared for a potential large-scale earthquake. If this occurs and happens to the degree that is being predicted, the only way residents will pull through an event of this magnitude somewhat successfully will be because they are personally prepared.

The type of preparedness that I am speaking of is not of the 72-hour nature. This type of preparedness means being prepared to take care of yourself and your family for *two weeks*. Due to the extent of this type of disaster, assistance from federal, state, and county agencies will be slow and overwhelmed. I believe that the fire district will be hard-pressed to meet its normal responses to what we consider basic services due to the lack of things that we generally take for granted, like phones, roads, power, and bridges, to name just a few.

If you are pretty confident this will never happen, then don't worry about it. If you think that the possibility exists, start preparing yourself and your family.

To members of the Applegate Fire District

It has been my pleasure to have been

associated with you for the last 20 years. Every one of you has given a piece of yourself to make this fire district function and, ultimately, an entity that is relied upon by our fellow citizens during their time of need.

For that reason and many others, any credit that has been given to me in regard to how this district has operated is because of your efforts.

One of the things that I have learned is that the last chief is also the target to blame, which I am okay with. You will soon have a new fire chief who will be dependent on you for input and support. The new chief will also be dependent upon you for understanding when a change is required to be made. Change is tough on people. Resilient people handle change with style. Tough people handle change with ease. You are resilient *and* tough.

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