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The 'Noose' is loose!**

Open burn laws in I.V. tightening Top three firefighters now packing heat

Illinois Valley Fire District's (IVFD) top three personnel are now allowed to carry firearms in connection with enforcing a stricter policy against open burning without a permit.

They are not carrying all the time, only under certain circumstances.

Chief Harry Rich said that the three also are available to back up deputies from Josephine County Sheriff's Office, should that assistance be needed.

He stressed that their primary duties will continue to be fire protection and prevention. There is no intent to become law enforcement officers except in certain situations, he noted.

Rich told the IVFD Board of Directors Thursday night, Oct. 13 that he, Deputy Chief Jeff Gavlik, and Fire Marshal Jerry Schaeffer have been sworn as special deputies by Sheriff Dave Daniel with authorization to be "gun-toting." Rich made the announcement during a board meeting at administrative headquarters.

The chief noted that there have been a number of instances where firefighters were threatened by armed residents when checking for illegal open burns. "One man shoved a shotgun in my face," said Rich.

He noted that as special deputies, not only can they issue citations that carry fines, but they can testify in court if necessary.

The board heard the first
(Continued on page 6)

Following are the high-and-low temperatures recorded by O'Brien residents Cheryl & Harry Johnson.

*Fri., Oct. 7: 64-43
*Sat., Oct. 8: 66-39
*Sun., Oct. 9: 70-46
*Mon., Oct. 10: 72-38, T
*Tues., Oct. 11: 69-48
*Wed., Oct. 12: 71-38
*Thurs., Oct. 13: 75-39

Weather Watch

Illinois Valley

Wednesday, Oct. 19
Partly Cloudy
High--69 Low--39



Thursday, Oct. 20
Mostly Cloudy,
showers possible
High--66 Low--38



Friday, Oct. 21
Mostly Cloudy & Cool
High--65 Low--33



Saturday, Oct. 22
Mixture of Clouds
& Sunshine
High--64 Low--33



Sunday, Oct. 23
Mostly sunny
High--65 Low--33



Monday, Oct. 24
Partly Sunny
High--67 Low--33



Tuesday, Oct. 25
Mostly Cloudy,
rain likely
High--66 Low--31



Arson is indicated in a Cave Junction structure fire. ('Illinois Valley News' photo)

Suspect arrested in CJ building fire

Following a structure fire at 2200 Laurel Road in rural Cave Junction Tuesday night, Oct. 11, a woman was arrested the next day.

She was identified as Elizabeth A. Mathews, 41, of 2200 Laurel Road. She was charged with second-degree arson and first-degree criminal mischief, said Josephine County Sheriff's Office (JCSO).

Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) and Oregon Dept. of Forestry units responded at approximately

7:40 p.m. to the alarm. Those first on-scene reported what appeared to be a "fully involved outbuilding."

There was minor extension to the surrounding wildland, and a power line at the site was arcing, with sparks emanating.

There were rumors at the scene that the structure, consisting of a shop and garage, was a methamphetamine lab, but evidence of the same was not confirmed, said JCSO. Because of statements by a man who claimed to be the

owner that the building was a lab, it was allowed to burn, and firefighters stayed away from the smoke.

There were three explosions during the fire.

The loss to the building and contents, plus a 1985 pickup truck, was estimated at \$9,000 by IVFD Chief Harry Rich.

JCSO said that the suspect, who had been living in the building, had argued with her mother, Dorothy Hicks, prior to the fire, about a man living with Mathews.

Meyer Memorial Trust grants \$85,000 to help expansion of I.V. Senior Center

Illinois Valley Senior Center has received an \$85,000 grant from Meyer Memorial Trust to support the center's expansion project, said Dave Toler, project development assistant.

The estimated project cost, he said, is slightly more than \$300,000. The expansion will increase the size of the current facility on E. River Street by approximately 50 percent.

A key element of the expanded area will be a wellness center. Toler said that

the center has received reconditioned exercise equipment worth approximately \$20,000 from Asante Health System.

"It's very nice equipment and is in great shape," Toler said.

Expansion of the senior center is needed to accommodate a rapidly growing membership, now at some 470 members.

Board member Roger Thomas said that with "lots of senior housing on the drawing board in Cave Junction, the already stretched senior

center needs to expand to serve the growing Illinois Valley senior population."

Toler added that he's hopeful that he will be able to secure funds in time to begin construction in spring 2006. The center is looking for builders in the community who might want to provide some discounted services.

"Given the high profile of this center," he said, "I think it's a great project for involvement by local builders." For more information phone Toler at 592-4434.

Valley's attractiveness draws retirees

Senior Spotlight, a special feature, is on pages 4 and 5 with a number of distinctive offerings.

Southwestern Oregon, with its scenic beauty and other attractions, is well-known as a desirable location for retirees.

In fact, in Josephine County the largest population segment consists of 24,254 persons 55 and older, according to 2004 information from Oregon Employment Dept.

Josephine's total population is 75,726. That is a 3.8

percent rise from the figure in 2000, adding 2,874 new residents.

Increases in population are noted for the city of Cave Junction and the county's unincorporated areas. The city population in 2000 was 1,363; and last year was 1,440. There were 51,360 person in the unincorporated areas in 2000, and that number last year rose to 53,370.

Besides new building in Grants Pass, a tremendous growth rate is in the works in the city of Cave Junction.

Chateau protected by I.V. Fire District

A contract to respond to structure fires at The Chateau at Oregon Caves National Monument has been signed with the National Park Service.

Chief Harry Rich of Illinois Valley Fire District (IVFD) informed the IVFD Bopard of directors about the agreement during a board meeting Thursday night, Oct. 13 at administrative headquarters.

"It's our obligation," said Rich, "because if we lost that building (the historic lodge) we'd be cutting our throats"

with regard to tourism and the historical value.

"We have signed an agreement to cover structure fires," the chief said, indicating that Oregon Dept. of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service firefighting personnel are wildland firefighters, not structural firefighters.

Rich said that the district already responds with American Medical Response for medical calls to the monument, 22 miles east of Cave Junction.

The park service would

reimburse IVFD for any responses, the chief said.

He added that based on a recent inspection at The Chateau, "They are well-protected with interior and exterior sprinkler systems, including a 25,000-gallon water tank on the roof."

Additionally, "They are well in tune with fire prevention," he told the board.

Rich said that IVFD will conduct twice-yearly inspections, and help conduct fire drills in case emergency evacuation is needed.

CJ assessed value up 12.35%; county levies ascend to \$46.3 million

Total tax levies, assessments and fees imposed throughout Josephine County this year total more than \$46 million (\$46,338,648) an 8.28 percent increase (more than \$3.5 million) from last year.

The total assessed value of all taxable property in the county has increased 6.29 percent from 2004.

As of Jan. 1, 2005 the taxable total value rose to \$4,762,774,263. The total taxable value in 2004 was \$4,481,076,323 (an increase of nearly \$300 million).

The largest increase in taxable assessed value is in Cave Junction, an increase of 12.35 percent, with Grants Pass increasing 9.47 percent.

The market value (as defined by Measure 5) of taxable property increased throughout the county. The total market value for 2004 was \$6,502,753,771; and for 2005 is \$8,017,637,670. An increase of 23.3 percent (more than \$1.5 billion).

The 2005-2006 fiscal year county property tax statements are to be mailed to property owners on or near Saturday, Oct. 22.

Property owners needing more information can contact the Office of County Assessor at (541) 474-5260 or the Tax Collector's Office at (541) 474-5175. Both offices are located in the basement of the Courthouse. Assessor Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fri-

days. Tax collector hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

If property tax bills are paid in full by the Nov. 15 due date, there is a 3 percent discount. To receive it, payments must be postmarked on or before Nov. 15.

Taxes also may be paid in three installments due Nov. 15, 2005; Feb. 15, 2006; and May 15, 2006. Taxpayers are encouraged to pay early to receive the discount; prevent holiday mailing delays; and to avoid delinquent-payments interest.

Generally the assessed value of a property can only increase 3 percent from one year to the next. The required 3 percent increase is the result of Measure 50, a constitutional amendment approved by Oregon voters in 1997. The measure required a roll-back of the '97-'98 assessed value to the '95-'96 level less 10 percent.

Each subsequent year, Measure 50 requires the maximum assessed value to increase by 3 percent annually unless it exceeds the real market value. Thus, the assessed value of most properties increases by 3 percent more than the prior year.

If there is new construction, a new parcel, a new subdivision or the removal of a special assessment, the assessed value may increase more than 3 percent. The real

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Spirit Parade Friday part of I.V. Homecoming week

This is Homecoming 2005 Week at Illinois Valley High School with activities including a parade in Cave Junction on Friday, Oct. 21.

The parade will begin at 1:15 p.m. It will move down E. River Street to Evergreen Elementary School; then south on Kerby Avenue; east on Lister Street; south on Hussey Avenue; and east on Watkins Street.

The procession with floats from each class will

then move north on Hwy. 199; east on Lister; north on Junction Avenue to Lorna Byrne Middle School; and then return to IVHS.

A bonfire was part of the celebration Monday night, Oct. 17. Events Wednesday, Oct. 19 were to include "powder buff" and "powder puff" football, followed by a field night around 7 p.m.

The homecoming dance will be held at the school Saturday, Oct. 22.



HOMECOMING ROYALTY - Voted by classmates as Homecoming 2005 princesses (from left) senior Erika Riley, junior Jenna Heald, sophomore Jaime Farr, and freshman Breana Burgess; and as princes (from left) senior Garret Crowl, junior Robert Bell, sophomore Nathan Green, and freshman Jack Anderson. (Photos by 'Illinois Valley News')



Wildfire topic for public forum

Wildfire risk and related topics are on the agenda for a public workshop Monday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m. in Anne Basker Auditorium adjacent to the county courthouse in Grants Pass by the Josephine County Rural Planning Commission.

The workshop is to review the wildfire risk in the

county, the county's integrated fire plan, and fire protection options.

Also, wildland fire vs. structural fire protection, unprotected areas, mutual aide between agencies, Senate Bill 360, and the county's new Article 76 (Wildfire & Emergency Services Safety Standards).

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