

# Support Labrador firefighters by protecting area homes

By  
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*IVN Contributing Writer*

Folks in the Illinois Valley know how to lend a hand and many understandably want to support the hundreds of firefighters currently stationed at Lake Selmac and just outside of Cave Junction.

But rather than making some sort of donation, fire officials urge Valley residents to re-focus their impulse to donate and instead improve fire safety at home and pitch in on community-wide projects to clear brush and other fire hazards in town and around the Valley. With months left in the fire season, tinder-box dry conditions and firefighting resources already stretched thin, new brush fires could present serious problems.

"To show appreciation, please, make and hang banners where fire-fighters will see them," said Public Information Officer Tom Lavagnino. "That has a huge impact on morale, especially when fire-fighters are headed back to camp after a long hot day on the fire line. Sending notes and cards are shared and appreciated as well, we have sign boards at camp where we post them."

Food donations are unnecessary and cannot be accepted

from private citizens due to government standards for food safety. Most items brought to fire camps end up donated to homeless shelters. Firefighters are fed 3,500 calories in meals per day, are fully equipped and generally assigned to fire camps for two weeks before being rotated out and sent home to rest and re-supply their kits for their next assignment.

"We're paid to do this work and are well taken care of, though we truly appreciate the concern and good thoughts from people," Lavagnino said. "Toot your horn and give firefighters a thumb's up when you see them."

Lavagnino wants people to "pretend your a fire and look around. How could a spark take your house?"

Wood piles should be moved away from homes and rain gutters and roofs kept free of pine needles and dry leaves. In general, residents are urged to seek out anything combustible near their homes and "put it away, throw it away or move it away." Brush piles should be at least 100 feet from the house.

"For those currently brushing around their properties to improve fire safety, it's important to not create new brush piles this time of the year," said Bob Gale, Public Information Officer. "If you can't chip the brush up, then lop it and scatter it until the rain comes back. Preferably out in the middle of a field and away from homes."

"Stay alert to potential fire threats and consider helping out with improving overall community fire safety," said Cave Junction Mayor Carl Jacobson. "We could use more help to address hazards around town. Also, if your property is in good shape, then help your neighbors."

Officials also want residents, especially those living closest to the wildfires, to make emergency preparations now, to minimize stress in the event evacuations do become necessary. This includes packing non-replaceable items of sentimental value, medications and clothing in your car. Any evacuations would be coordinated by uniformed sheriff's deputies working with the fire management teams.

"Having lived through the Biscuit Fire, we learned how important it is to pay attention to the latest fire updates, which are regularly posted at the County Building," Jacobson said. "We need to follow instructions, stay calm and dispel rumors. And if you need anyone to talk to for emotional support, contact Pastor Chase the Methodist Church at 541-592-2876."

Send letters or cards to fire-fighters to this address: Labrador Fire-fighters, 26568 Redwood Highway, Cave Junction, OR, 97523



(Photo's by Dale Sandberg, IVFD Media Dept)

A mobile kitchen (above) where meals are prepared. A Chow hall (right) set up at Lake Selmac provides shade for the dinners.

It's not home, but Fire Crews are provided with what they need when they are off shift. Sending cards and letters of support is what the USFS suggests Valley residents do, if they want to help out.



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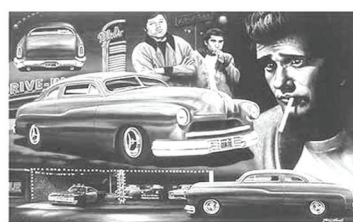
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Come to the Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance from 4 to 6 PM on Friday the 9th of August during the Farmer's Market to paint T-shirts to celebrate surviving abuse and domestic violence. After T-shirt painting, join us for a Walking Mindfulness Meditation through the Illinois Valley Art Walk from 6 to 7PM. This walk will begin at the Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance. These events are hosted jointly by Compassionate Gathering and the Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance.

For more information contact Virginia Jones of Compassionate Gathering at compassion500@gmail.com or 503-866-6163  
Contact Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance at 541-592-2515.



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