

SIUSLAW VALLEY  
FIRE & RESCUE

## The 'tones' of firefighting

(Editor's note: Beginning with this issue of our monthly Coast Life section, we will be carrying a special feature written by new Siuslaw Valley Fire & Rescue Recruitment and Retention Coordinator Pete "Boa" Warren, who will give insights, tips and perspective from our local fire department each month.)



BY PETE "BOA" WARREN  
Recruitment & Retention  
Coordinator for SVFR

As the Recruitment and Retention Coordinator for Deadwood, Swiss Home, Mapleton and SVFR

Departments, I am the result of a newly created, 4-year position thanks to a FEMA SAFER Grant.

As the newest full-time member at Siuslaw Valley Fire and an 11-year volunteer, I'm responsible for recruiting

and retaining trained volunteers to serve our communities.

In the coming months, I'll inform the public not only about my efforts as a recruiter, but also about the goals of area departments, training and development, tips and other fire department-related topics.

For this initial column, I thought it would be appropriate to discuss what "initiates" every firefighter's response to an emergency: The "tones" of his or her fire department pager.

The tones, a specific sequence of notes emitted by pagers, are different for each fire department. This allows firefighters and responders to identify which department is being notified by 911 dispatchers, whether it be for Florence, Mapleton, Deadwood, etc.

After sending the tones for a specific department, dispatchers announce the reason for the emergency response, such as house fire, motor vehicle accident (MVA), search and rescue, ATV accident or other emergency situation.

In addition, emergency information is transmitted to the cell phones of first responders as they head from home or work to their respective stations. Within minutes, residents hear sirens and see

flashing lights that, hopefully, cause cars to pull over and make way for ambulances and fire trucks.

Oftentimes, Facebook lights up with "What's happening?!?" messages.

What's happening is that your local Emergency Response Team members and volunteers have initiated working towards a common goal: Helping someone in need or protecting property which is in jeopardy.

Each of these individuals is responding to the need for help — not only by those needing assistance, but also their fellow firefighters responding to that same call.

Most are volunteers who respond ready to do so 24/7, throughout our area.

They do so thanks not only to the tones emitted by their pagers, but also the common call they all share in service to their communities.

Capt. Pete "Boa" Warren can be contacted at 541-997-3212, or the main SVFR station, 2625 Highway 101, or email [Boa@svfr.org](mailto:Boa@svfr.org).

Fire Marshall offers  
home heating safety tips

As colder weather arrives, State Fire Marshal Jim Walker is urging Oregonians to use heating appliances wisely.

"With the onset of cooler weather, I urge citizens to ensure all their heating appliances are in good working order," says Walker. "Have your woodstoves, fireplace-sand chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified specialist before using them. Portable space heaters also pose a high risk. Use these with extreme caution and follow our space heater safety tips."

Although woodstove- and fireplace-related fires are more common, the most deadly home heating fires result from combustibles too close to portable electric heaters.

From 2011 through 2015 in Oregon, there were 2,267 home heating-related fires resulting in nine deaths, 57 injuries, and more than \$30.9 million in property loss. Although chimney and fireplace-related fires accounted for more than 66 percent of these fires, six of the nine fatalities occurred in portable heater-related fires.

Oregonians can keep themselves safer from heating-related fires using these safety tips:

**Portable Space Heaters**

- Only use portable space heaters with an automatic shut-off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.

- Give heaters space. Keep at least three feet of space between the heater and combustibles such as furniture, curtains, bedding, and papers.
- Check heater electrical cords. Inspect for cracked or damaged cords, broken plugs, or loose connections. Replace before using the space heater.

- Plug portable electric space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Never plug them into a power strip or extension cord.

- Never allow children to play with, or around a heater.

- Turn heaters off when not in use, before going to bed or when leaving the room.

**Electric Baseboard and Wall Heaters**

- Be aware of electric baseboard and wall heaters. These heaters are thermostatically controlled and may turn on without warning when temperatures drop.

- Give these heaters space. Just as with portable space heaters, keep at least three feet of space between your baseboard/wall heater and combustibles items such as furniture, curtains, bedding and papers.

**Fuel Burning Space Heaters**

- If using a fuel-burning space heater, make sure it is designed for indoor use. Read all manufacturer instructions and make sure it is properly vented.

- Allow the heater to cool before refueling. Refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area.

- If you smell gas, do not

light the heater or operate any electrical switches or thermostats. Leave the building and call 911, the fire department, or the gas company.

**Fireplaces and Woodstoves**

- Have chimney and woodstove flues and vents inspected and cleaned every year by a qualified specialist. Ask them to check for creosote deposits, soot build-up or physical damage.

- Always use a fireplace screen. Make sure the screen is made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass to prevent sparks from escaping.

- Keep a clutter-free environment. Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations, and flammable materials.

- Store kindling, fire logs, and wood at least three feet from any heat source.

- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue and chimney temperatures.

- Use proper fire starters.

Proper fire starters include newspaper, kindling or specially manufactured starters designed for indoor use. Never use flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene or gasoline to start a fire.

- Never burn charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal can release lethal amounts of carbon monoxide.

- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around woodstoves.

- Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing of them.

- Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal container and place the container outdoors, at least ten feet from the home and any other nearby buildings. Ashes may retain heat for days after they appear to be out.

**Smoke Alarms and Home Escape Plans**

- For increased protection, have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), in each bedroom and outside any sleeping area (hallways).

- Test smoke alarm batteries at least once a month by pushing the test button.

- Look at the date on the back of your smoke alarm, if it is 10 years old or older, replace it. If there is no date, it is more than 10 years old and should be replaced.

- Ensure you have a home fire escape plan and practice it with your family.

**Carbon Monoxide Dangers**

- Carbon monoxide poisoning can be fatal if not detected early.

- Home heating and cooking equipment that burn fuels such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane are sources of carbon monoxide.

- Make sure you have working CO alarms on every level of your home, in every bedroom and outside each sleeping area.

- Test and maintain your carbon monoxide alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## Food safety tips in the event of power outage

The storm is passed but the power in many areas is just now being restored. With power outages for this length of time, there are concerns about safety of foods in deep freezers and refrigerators.

What is safe and what is not? OSU Extension Service has resources available to help residents determine safety of your food.

"The weather was on your

side if you took advantage of it," said Nellie Oehler, OSU Extension Faculty with the Lane County Extension Service. "Temperatures were well below freezing during the storm, so if your freezers were in an unheated area outdoors or in the garage or out building, your food would have been below 40°F.

"Now that the temperature is warming put a thermometer in

the freezer and see if it is below 40°F. If so you can safely refreeze the food. The quality will be poorer but it will be safe."

However, if the temperature is above 40°F, Oehler suggests checking to see if there are any ice crystals left in the food. If so, those are safe to refreeze.

"Cooked foods such as convenience foods, pizzas, frozen (blanched or cooked) vegetables should be discarded because harmful bacteria can multiply and some are not destroyed by cooking," said Oehler. "Raw meats, fruits, juices, jams, etc. are ok if they are still cold or have ice crystals in them.

The quality might be poorer so mark them and use them first."

Food along the inside wall of the freezer and those in the door will thaw first, where as those in the center will stay

frozen longer.

In the refrigerator, condiments such as catsup, pickles, commercial mayonnaise, jams and butter will be safe. Cooked foods should be discarded.

OSU Extensions — Lane County has several publications on its website to help analyze food to determine whether or not it is safe to eat at [www.extension.oregonstate.edu/lane/food-preservation/publications](http://www.extension.oregonstate.edu/lane/food-preservation/publications).

There are also several publications on emergency food and water storage.

For more information, call the OSU Extension Service Master Food Preserver message line and a certified Master Food Preserver at 541-344-4885, or send messages via "ASK an Expert" by clicking the icon on the OSU Extension Service website at [www.extension.oregonstate.edu/extension-ask-an-expert](http://www.extension.oregonstate.edu/extension-ask-an-expert).

Lady Elks offer scholarships  
to local high school students

The Florence Ladies of Elks, BPOE No. 1858, is accepting scholarship applications from graduating seniors attending local area high schools. Students enrolled at Siuslaw, Mapleton, Reedsport, and Triangle Lake High Schools are eligible to apply.

Students wishing to apply are advised to request an application from their guidance counselor, along with an information sheet detailing what to include when submitting the application packet.

Deadline for applications is March 4.

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Remember drivers to watch  
for emergency personnel

The law requiring motorists to yield to emergency vehicles was signed into law in 2003, yet many motorists still fail to comply with the law.

Whether it is from inattention, being unaware of the law, or indifference, failure to act needlessly places police officers, fire fighters, EMT and tow truck operators at risk of harm.

Every year, police officers, firefighters and emergency medical workers are killed or injured while working along our nation's highways, enforcing traffic laws or assisting at motor vehicle crashes.

The law requires that any

person operating a motor vehicle who approaches an emergency vehicle, roadside assistance vehicle, tow truck or ambulance which is stopped and displaying warning lights:

- Must move into the lane furthest away from the emergency vehicle, or

- Reduce their speed if unable to move into an adjacent lane by at least 5 mph below the posted speed.

If you are approaching the scene of a crash, carefully watch for emergency workers directing traffic and follow all of their instructions.

—Lincoln County Sheriff's Office