

Building a citizen team of first-responders

Residents dive into three-day training that could save you

By D.B. LEWIS
The Columbia Press

Everyone benefits when neighbors help each other in times of need. We benefit even more when fellow citizens are specially trained for major area emergencies.

A dozen citizen volunteers from around the county met for three days last weekend at Warrenton's Camp Kiwan- ilong to get basic Community Emergency Response Team training (CERT).

CERT members will assist when paid emergency responders are overwhelmed by the sheer scope of a natural disaster.

With boot-camp intensity, trainees were led through in-
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Above: Students practice putting out fires with a heavy-duty extinguisher.

Right: CERT instructors demonstrate how to methodically assess the severely injured after a major disaster.

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Prolific car prowlers hit 100 cars or more

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More than 100 vehicles have been burglarized in Warrenton, Hammond and the Smith Lake area during the past month.

Nearly all of them have been vehicles left unlocked at night and, in most cases, items taken were small, and easy to carry and sell on the street.

"We arrested somebody on an unrelated case and, during that arrest, recovered a sizeable amount of property that we've been able to link up with several of the cases," Police Chief Matt Workman said. "We're still gathering information and don't believe this is the only suspect."

The man arrested was picked up on an outstanding warrant for a probation violation. He has not been arrested for the car prowls. But he did have many items in his possession that appeared to come from the burglaries, Workman said.

Warrenton typically has one to three cases per month of unauthorized entry of a motor vehicle, commonly known as a vehicle prowl or burglary.

"It's a crime of opportunity, but we're having five, six, seven a night, up to 15 a night," he said. "There's a concentrated effort."

Among the items taken were sunglasses, spare

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Warrenton Fire Department wins large grant for new water tender

The Columbia Press

Warrenton Fire Department has been awarded a \$350,000 grant to purchase a new water tender.

"The current vehicle is more than 37 years old and has ended its service lifespan," volunteer firefighter Lenard Hansen said. "Repair parts were hard to find and the steel tank was rusted. The tender also was very hard to drive and operate."

Hansen, 65, who retired as fire chief for the city of Astoria only to volunteer for the city of Warren-

ton, wrote the grant for Warrenton Fire Department.

"After three years of applying for the grant, the department was finally notified that it was successful," he said.

In 2001, Congress set aside money to help fire agencies across the country purchase new equipment. The Assistance to Firefighters Grants program is managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Warrenton received one other grant from the program in years past. Acquiring a new vehicle is the most competitive of all the

grant requests, Hansen said.

Warrenton Fire Department must provide a 5 percent match, or \$16,667. Warrenton City Commission approved the match request last week.

"A volunteer wrote this grant," Mayor Henry Balensifer said. "We have a great fire department and great volunteers."

To apply for the grant, a committee composed of Hansen, Fire Chief Tim Demers, Capt. John Shepherd and firefighter Scott Watson determined the tender was the department's greatest need.

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Courtesy Lenard Hansen

Warrenton Fire Department expects to have a new water tender similar to Vernonia's by next summer.