

Fire Protection Meeting Summary

Given by Chief Randy Larson and Cassandra Witt

May 19, 2022 at Station 3

- We had a great turnout. 40 residents were in attendance to learn about both home and wild fires and how they are handled.
 - In attendance: Rita and Roger Jensen, Matt and Maggie Fischer, Bill Remien, Bob and Becky Endres, Brian Thielst, Will Thielst, Bill and Sherry Milligan, Tom and Janette Wennerlund, Kyle Knight, Diane Davis, Sue Wells, Dean and Susan Dussell, Robert and Anne Farris, Will Dunbar, Jean and David Smith, Jo and Al Myatt, Rick and Bernie Sautel, Kim and Ron Franco, Al Borchadt and Cindy Zabel, Pat and Monika Amstein, Glenn and Donna Unrath, Chuck Foster, Sharon Jennings, Barb Hanrahan, Peggy Beach, Steve Hendrix
- Cassandra is the Community Risk Reduction Specialist
- Basics
 - 24 hour staffing, but rely on volunteers
 - 12 full time, 4 on each shift
 - 45 volunteers
 - The PFPD covers 327 square miles
 - Archuleta County as a 3-man crew but they respond to what Chief Larson needs
 - Training is done by all personnel, volunteers included. They carry what is called a ‘red card’, which you receive after undergoing arduous training included carrying a 45 lb backpack for a minimum of 3 miles. Initially there is a minimum of 240 hours of training.
- WHEN YOU CALL 911 for a FIRE
 - A page goes out on both employee and volunteer phones. This includes the GPS location of the fire as well as if there are hydrants available
 - The call goes to Station 1 and the full-time crew immediately responds
 - Everyone is able to see who is responding
 - Either Chief Larson or a deputy chief or both will respond to all fires
- RESPONSE TIME FOR LOMA LINDA
 - Once the call is made, it goes to Station 1, which is the main station on Pagosa Boulevard. The response time is 10 – 14 minutes to Loma Linda, all dependent on weather conditions, of course.
 - In our area, there are 3 volunteers that live near by and they, along with other volunteers, can head to Station 3, get a truck and arrive on scene before the engine from Station 1 arrives.
- Equipment Available
 - 9 pumper trucks – these come with 1000 gallons of water as well as 1000 feet of hose
 - 7 tender trucks – these are referred to as portable fire hydrants and carry 2500-3000 gallons of water.
 - It was noted here by Chief Larson that they normally send 2 -3 tenders to a fire. A daisy chain is constructed so that the first engine responding is never without

water. If there is a hydrant nearby, that is usually used to fill a tender truck which then backs up the first engine.

- 4 Brush engines w/pumps
- FIRE HYDRANTS
 - Chief Larson noted many areas do not have fire hydrants and even if they do, they do not rely on them. He knows that his trucks have water and they have the pressure for the water that they need. Hooking up to a fire hydrant may not give them the pressure they need so they do not rely on them. They typically use them for mop up or to fill tenders that are then daisy chained to the engine and other tender that are fighting the fire.
 - It was noted by a resident that we have only had 3 known structure fires in the 40 years the development has been here. In the case of Rick Sautel's home burning, even though he had hydrant right in front of his home, they did not use the hydrant and instead relied on their trucks. In the instance of the home on Echo Drive, they also used their trucks and then hooked up to a hydrant for mop up.
 - They can connect up trucks providing 2000 feet of hose for a fire if needed. But they rely mostly on using their trucks with water in them that they are assured of working
 - It takes about 7 minutes to fill a tender with 3000 gallons from a hydrant if that hydrant has good pressure. That is why they would rather daisy chain the trucks by having the first engine with 1000 gallons being continually refilled by the tenders or other engines.
 - Chief Larson was asked if we need more hydrants. His answer was that they do not rely on the hydrants to fight structure fires. As far as need, we do not need them but if they are there, that is nice. If someone has the money, he would like one at every home. But they do not rely on them.
- General Notes from Chief Larson
 - If water is put into the right place on a structure fire, it should take only 300 – 400 gallons of water to extinguish the fire. The first engine truck carries 1000 gallons.
 - If it takes 10,000 gallons to put out a fire, that fire is not being put out correctly or there is an accelerant involved keeping the fire going.
 - 1st priority is the lives of those who have called for help, 2nd priority is the lives of the firefighters. Chief said those are the facts, the structure will be saved if it can but not at the cost of lives
 - We live in a wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which means an area where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation. Chief made a point of saying that we as homeowners knowingly bought homes in an area where fires can happen and as such, we take on that risk of living here.
 - The most important thing for a home to have are working smoke detectors. Those are what can make the difference when it comes to people getting out of a house on fire.
 - You should keep extinguishers in your kitchen, near an exit, and in your garage. There is a new "K" fire extinguisher made specifically for kitchens. 5 pound extinguishers are more than sufficient.

- HOW PFPD APPROACHES A FIRE
 - When a structure fire is called in, the first engine responding immediately goes to the fire. They do not stop and look for hydrants. They immediately go to the fire and start pumping water from that engine truck.
 - The firefighters ascertain whether everyone is out of the structure. Per the NFPA, no one is allowed to go into a structure unless there are 4 fighters present. The rule is 2 in, 2 out. If the crew of 4 were to stop, drop someone off to look for a hydrant, and go on to the fire, not only is valuable time lost, but they cannot search the house if needed.
 - The second engine on scene is tasked with looking for a hydrant when they arrive. If they find one, they may hook up to that and help with the fire but in most instances, when a tender arrives, it is immediately hooked up to the first engine and keeps that engine full so that it can attack the fire. Then the engine tasked with finding a hydrant may connect to the tender and fill that truck. This is what forms the daisy chain, which Cassandra did a good job of explaining through a drawing on the whiteboard.
 - The tender chain was explained as the engine truck with the initial 1000 gallons attacking the fire. The tender truck arrives and hooks up to that. The second tender arrives and hooks up to the first tender, and so on.
- WILDFIRES
 - If there is a wildfire, many districts may work together to form a plan of attack. With the Plumtaw fire, PFPD arrived and began digging trench lines. The San Juan Forest people arrived as did hot shot crews, etc.
 - Wildfires are not fought with water until they are mopping up.
 - Forest service hand crews, which normally consist of 20-man crews, cut the lines for wildfires so the fire can be contained. They work around the perimeter
 - Once lines are established, they start moving in on the fire, using hoses that have been run to mop up and turn over the fire to get the heat out.
 - Hydrants are not used with wildfires. Digging containment lines and trenches to prevent the fire from spreading is the way that they are fought
 - They look for embers outside the containment zone that may have flown by wind and get those put out.
 - Hoses run for wildfire are not the same as those that hook to a hydrant
- STRUCTURES WHEN IT COMES TO A WILDFIRE
 - The firemen have a coding system of green, red, and yellow that they use to mark homes that are in the path of a wild fire. Green homes are those considered defensible. Red homes are not. Green homes will be given first priority when defending structures. As an example, the chief said a home coded green may take 15 minutes to prepare for the fire whereas a red home may take an hour or two hours. They will devote their resources to the green coded homes first because they can save more homes if there is time. They will use their personnel to work on defending homes that have a better chance of being saved.
- MITIGATION
 - Chief Larson was asked if we had to choose between spending money on mitigation or fire hydrants, what would he recommend? His answer was “mitigation, mitigation, mitigation.

- He also recommended getting together with the forest service and getting fire breaks in place around Loma Linda. He said it had been done years ago but most likely have grown over. He said that was a top priority.
 - He also noted that The Myatt's home was a fantastic example of a defensible home from fire.
- TESTING FIRE HYDRANTS – Chief Larson said he would be happy to get together with a Loma Linda rep, a PAWs rep in the fall sometime to test the hydrants and their pressure. And to coordinate that with Cassandra.
- The Most common causes of home fires nationwide are: chimney fires, smoking, and electrical issues.