



# FULLY INVOLVED

KITTITAS COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE #7

Newsletter 6.30.2017 - Vol 9

## From the Chief's Desk Jay Wiseman



It's been a while. I take full responsibility for letting this communication slip over the last year. I have not forgotten and after discussing this with staff our intent will be to send this out at the end of each quarter with updates on administration, membership, operations and training. So stay tuned for more!

### **Status of merger talks**

As many of you are aware Fire District 7, Fire District 1 and Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue held a special work study meeting that was open to the public back in April. The purpose of the meeting was to present many options for discussion to each of the District's Board of Fire Commissioners.

In December last year I began a discussion with Fire District 7's Commissioners about what their options are as a Board for the future. The options ranged from do nothing to expanding the funding structure to its highest allowable amount by law. I did not make a recommendation nor has the Board decided to pick one of these options moving forward. We are simply exploring what the options are so we are well rounded with information and when the time is right the Board should have everything they need to make that decision. In order to get closer to the decision we have decided to form a Citizens Advisory Committee. The committee will focus through a series of meetings on challenges the District is currently facing and what challenges will the district face in the future and how to address them. The group will be asked to focus on solutions and our mission will be to present the Commissioners with some recommendations on service level needs of the District. Once these recommendations are presented the Board will then need to decide if having a proposition for the voters is appropriate. I expect the Committee to be focused on these topics for the remainder of this year. If, and I emphasize IF, the Board decides that asking for more tax dollars is the solution then next year, 2018, would be a year of educating the public on the proposition that would likely go in front of the voters in November of 2018 at the earliest.

As far as discussions with District 1 and KVFR, we have focused more on functional consolidations vs an outright merger for now. That means as an example, if we can combine training we should explore those options. A merger of those three organizations is less likely at this time since it means District 7 tax payers would see a very large jump in taxes paid for fire protection. As it stands now that doesn't seem like the best option. This option will however be one of the topics the Citizens Advisory Committee will examine. Again it is my belief we should be very diligent to examine all the options so we have a complete understanding of our future needs.

Other merger efforts in the County include Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue and Fire District 8. It is likely there will be a proposition this November asking the voters of District 8 to merge into Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue. So far it seems we have good support and we are currently engaged in community events explaining what this means.

### **So..... What are the Challenges the District faces in the future?**

First of all another example of functional consolidation is something we are doing now and in the last couple of years it has improved. After the extreme fire season's we've faced the last few years the county organized the High Fuels Fire Plan. That plan since it's implementation involves dispatching KVFR on all outside fires in the lower county regardless of jurisdiction. The plan also dispatches District 7 to all outside fires in the upper County. The intent is to rapidly dispatch wildland resources to new starts in an aggressive manner to bring them under control before they can turn into a larger incident. So far we have been very successful as was the case on Wednesday this week when we had a rapidly spreading wind driven grass fire on Thorp Prairie Road. Units from District 1, KVFR, District 7, Cle Elum Fire and Easton Fire all converged and stopped the fire. The collaboration between all of those agencies was the best I've seen yet and it seems every year we get better.

The new challenge is keeping up with our growth. I think it's no secret our County had the 10<sup>th</sup> highest growth percentage in 2016 in the United States. Two other Washington State Counties had higher percentages and they were Snohomish County and Peirce County. That tells us King County and the Seattle area are growing fast and people are moving to the Pacific Northwest because of how healthy the economy is right now. Like it or not they are coming. More and more people are figuring out they can live in Kittitas County and commute over the pass to work and some believe it to be better than sitting in I-5 and I-405 traffic. Even highway 18 is turning into a commuter nightmare. The Baby Boomer population is retiring and moving out of the city. We are seeing increasing call volumes each year with this growth. This begins to stress the EMS system as well as create more calls for fire protection and rescue response. In addition local recreation opportunities bring more people over the mountains every year.

So in my humble opinion it is time to consider paying people to work for the District as Firefighter/EMT's. Not to replace the Volunteer's but to help pick up the slack on the 3 in the morning AFA to Suncadia or wherever but also to help administer the Volunteer program. I strongly believe that through training we will spark interest for community members to join our fire department. Quality training is the answer to strong Volunteer programs and paid staff help make this happen. No one wants to feel like they are not skilled at what they do. People excel when they can solve dynamic problems by having the tools they need and the skills to accomplish these challenges. This is a hot topic, I understand, but a conversation that needs to happen.

### **Changes in recruitment**

I am working with DC Pearson on the process of recruitment. In September we will be having the second Volunteer recruit academy. This academy is a joint effort between Fire District 7 and Snoqualmie Pass Fire & Rescue. We plan on having this academy every fall and we invite and encourage other fire agencies to join in. This year we are going to try some new things. First, each recruit or member participating will have the initial EVIP class the last week or two of August. Then the recruit school begins. We are working on incorporating in the recruit school elements for non-combat (non-interior) firefighting and RASP personnel. Those members will be asked to show up for a portion of the recruit school to learn the foundational skills associated with the commitment they have chosen. They will not be required to attend the entire school. Once the academy is finished the recruits will be taken to the North Bend Fire Training Academy for live fire operations. The last step will be a pump operator's course. So by the end of fall each new member will be qualified to drive, pump, and extinguish fire. Then EMT class starts and the fun continues. In the spring wildland training will be offered. So to make a long story short the first year for new members is filled with training.

Sounds like a lot! I know! A member asked me recently "why so much training?". How do we help people be successful in the process? How can you expect someone who is volunteering their time to do all of this?" I guess my answer is.....well we've got to. This is a business of danger and the public expects us to show up and take care of their problem. We are really teaching people to be risk managers. The frustration amongst members in District 7 always comes back to one thing. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Training will fix that. There are other dynamics within the organization that are challenged right now that lead to this frustration but we are working on those challenges. We are trying to make it better and we will. When a new member joins or expresses their interest in joining the organization I will ask the new member "what is your path or desire?". There will be four paths offered. All hazards, EMS only, wildland only and RASP. In the very near future we will probably add a fifth path which is tender operators but we are currently working on this policy with the Commissioners. Each path will have a training plan that is discussed with the new member. We have a conversation with the member about commitment. If the candidate cannot commit to the training plan then we agree that it's not a good time to join. This will eliminate the great amount of time and energy trying to train this person as well as the Member's frustration when they are not properly trained.

Training is similar to a college class. Because of the work load of the instructors and the dollars it takes we cannot ask the instructors to do more. That means too much make up time is not an option. Some make up time will be permitted but once the commitment is made we need the candidates to live up to that commitment. Tuesday night training will be for sharpening our skills not initial training. If anyone has any questions please let me know and I can explain more. You will always get an honest answer even if it may not be the answer you are looking for.

## **Make Sure you are Ready!**

Fire Season has begun. We have already been engaged. If you haven't already, get your gear out and ready. If you are someone who likes to go on a deployment that's great but please understand that you are committing to at least a 14 day assignment. If we can, we will try to arrange crew swaps but I don't want that to be an expectation. Under the high fuels fire plan I described earlier KITTCOM hosts a weekly conference bridge with the fire district chiefs, DNR, USFS, and emergency management. We discuss the current situation in county, fires outside the county, resources available etc. If things get real scary then we hold these conference calls on Mondays and Fridays.

The Fourth of July week is upon us. It looks like the weather will be dry. The question mark is the wind. If it stays like it has been we have real potential for new starts. Please everyone pay attention to your pagers and give us a hand.

## **No word on the county burn ban but we will let you know as soon as this becomes a reality**

Tony Ditsworth and Nathan Hubbard are now on summer seasonal firefighter status which means you will not see them at drill very much. They are going to be working for the District in this role until September 29<sup>th</sup>. When state mobilization requests come we will manage that first on local needs and then if able we will send one of them with other interested Volunteers. Tony and Nathan will be responding in most cases with a brush truck however they will have some ability to decide what resources are appropriate for the situation.

## **Please welcome all of our New Members!**

We have several New Members that started recently.

**Rick Graham** a long time resident and former KCFD7 member is an EMT and also works for Kittitas County EMS. **Kelli Lippert** recently moved here and has extensive experience as a wildland fire fighter with the USFS and BLM. **Werner Mostert** also new to the area works for Suncadia and has attended the Texas Fire Academy. **Josh Schiller** a long time resident was on our firewise crew and now is a volunteer in the process of obtaining his Red Card. **Erika Krahmer** new to the area has attended a Fire Tech Class and has had EMT training in the past. **Mike Bain** moved to our community last fall and recently joined Dist. 7. Mike is a fully qualified structural firefighter and an EMT. He is a Lieutenant for the City of Renton Fire Department and is working on getting his red card.

## **Last but not least THANK YOU!**

Change is slow but deliberate. I truly believe we are making improvements. I want to thank all of you for staying engaged and staying patient. I've seen a lot of quality work on calls by members of the organization. Thank you for that!

I want to give special thanks to Sandy, Eryn and Crystal in the office for helping with all the little things like making sure everyone has the gear they need, the reports and the paper work that is dialed. All the non-glamorous work that is so necessary for making this department better. Sorry we give you gals white shirt headaches all the time.

I want to thank Bryan and Ray for helping me with so many issues. I feel we are getting our heads above water so please don't leave me! Bryan having your hand on the pulse of everyday operations and Ray helping us develop our district manual.

Aaron in the shop. Literally moving mountains! The maintenance work load on all the apparatus to make sure our responders are safe responding to and returning from alarms.

And to everyone else in the organization. All the shiny fire trucks and fire stations don't mean anything without you!

## Something to ponder:

I'd like to leave you with some food for thought at risk of sounding too Rah Rah Rah....but I think this truly applies to the dynamic of a well-organized fire department.

### **“Charm School” (Crew Resource Management or CRM)**

*I found this information in the May 2016 issue of Firehouse magazine in an article written by Tim Sendelbach. The concept of crew resource management proven to be on the the attributes that has become a model for the U.S. Navy SEALs. Mr. Sendelbach at the end of the article asks “maybe it’s time we revisit the concept of charm school in the fire service” Consider the following:*

The Navy SEALs represent the best of the best. Their track record of success and operational effectiveness is not based on the physical or mental abilities of an individual, but rather the collective capabilities of the team. This team cohesiveness is not by happenstance; it’s the product of rigorous mental and physical training, the development of individual trust, and an exhaustive focus on team-based performance.

Charged with transforming the way the special operations community operated and changing the way the Army wages the War on Terror, U.S. Army General Stanley McChrystal is quoted saying in his book *Team of Teams*, “innovation and problem-solving is the product of teamwork, not the work of a ranking individual”.

By practicing CRM, the Navy SEALs demand and employ the qualities of physical courage, moral courage, creativity, team ability and humility, enabling them to achieve unequaled success.

- Physical courage represents a willful desire and dedication to develop and maintain a level of physical fitness and mental readiness to achieve the mission at all times.
- Moral courage is about developing the trust and respect of your crew and those you serve.
- Creativity is one’s ability to solve problems as a team and to overcome the unknown.
- Team ability represents the responsibility of each individual to lead and/or follow, regardless of their respective rank.
- Humility represents an openness to learn and to never allow one’s status or accomplishments to interfere with or impede the opportunity to improve.

In its infancy, CRM was labeled as the “Charm School” for pilots, a punishment imposed upon the pilots by the ranking authorities. Today, CRM is a model of proven success, a model that creates an immeasurable level of safety and operational effectiveness in the skies overhead and on the battle ground of our modern day warriors.

## **Thank you Everyone! Have a safe Fourth of July!**

# Around the Siren



## From Assistant Chief Risdon

If it seems like fire department life is a little busy lately, it's because we are! As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, we are at 380 incidents, that is 120 ahead of this same time last year. I would estimate we will get very near the 800 incidents mark this year. We are still running about a 60/40 split with EMS and fire responses.

Currently we have 65 members on the department. Five of those members function as our RASP group bringing us food and water at extended incidents. Twenty-two members are interior qualified firefighters and of this group, 19 are EMT's. We have a total of 27 EMT's in the department and one is a paramedic. After looking at our RASP and interior firefighters the 38 remaining are 3 staff officers, new firefighters entering the training phase, tender only operators and commissioners. Some members choose to do wildland only and 3 of those have EMT certifications. The remaining members are the 3 commissioners.

Also, Karaley Lilienthal was the only District 7 member to attend this year's EMT course and one of the few successfully passing the course final exam on the first try! She now must take her national exam in Yakima on July 8<sup>th</sup> which will allow her to obtain her state certification.

**Fire Stations:** I've traveled to a couple stations and have noted items needing repair and nothing has been reported. Please notify your station officer whenever items needing of repair on apparatus or the station. Your officer will notify the office and Sandy will generate a repair order. This gives us a means to follow-up and verify proper repairs are completed. Please let me know either directly or through the office if repairs are not accomplished in a reasonable time. Serious items warrant a direct call to the office if the station officer is not immediately available.

We continue to work and fine tune our new server and email we have here in the office. William our IT guru is constantly helping to upgrade our system and its security. We will be placing an icon on the station computers for Outlook which will allow members to call up the CAD reports from KITTCOM to obtain any additional missing data elements for reports. Also, all officers will be required to have an Outlook account for department communications for legal reasons that protect not only the officer but the department. This program is fully compatible with both iPhones and Androids unlike some of the issues experienced with GoDaddy. Additionally, staff will be discussing future considerations for adding all members to what is known as the email exchange server with district accounts.

William will also be adding an event calendar accessible by all members for immediate access of upcoming events, trainings and meetings so all can have up-to-date information.

**And** we see in the region there has been increased fire activity everywhere. Please stay hydrated and have your equipment ready to go at a moment's notice.

**Thank You for all your hard work and effort and please have an enjoyable 4<sup>th</sup> of July and STAY SAFE!!**

## **From Deputy Chief Pearson**

### **OPERATIONS REPORT**

#### **Wildland**

During our 2017 Wildland Preparedness KCFD7 has accomplished the following:

- 18 personnel completed all Red Card required training.
- 19 personnel completed their wildland refresher training.
- 9 of 11 brush trucks have had annual "B" Service completed. The 10th brush truck is currently being serviced. All brush truck inventories have been checked, updated, cleaned and reorganized.

#### **Fleet Maintenance**

- All fire engines passed the annual pump tests.
- L761 and E721 passed the annual Underwriters Laboratories Tests.
- All KCFD7 ground ladders have passed the annual testing and inspections.

**Thanks and you all have a Safe 4<sup>th</sup> !!!!!**