



West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District

January 2013

Chief's Message

Chief's Report:

As we ring in the New Year, I hope each of you and your families had a great holiday season. As we close out 2012, there is still much to do in 2013. We are looking forward to bringing our latest recruit class on-line; recruiting new members; providing new programs for our existing members; increasing available training opportunities (both in-house and external), as well as enhancing our service level to the community. Each of these endeavors, and many more, are going to take all of us – a corroborated team-effort to further the success of our organization.

Holiday Events

I wanted to personally thank Firefighter Brandon Cousins for spearheading the Patterson Volunteer Firefighter's Association annual toy drive. Brandon and his "band of elves" hosted another very (very) successful event for our District. Hundreds of toys were donated by those living within our community, our local businesses, and local vendors, each helping to ensure children of all ages had a very Merry Christmas!

In addition to the toy drive, our holiday season wouldn't have been complete without nightly-sightings of "the big-guy," Santa Claus. Rumor has it, Captain Eddy Thompson has "an-in" with Kris Kringle and his merry band of helpers. Sightings of Santa were witnessed all over the City of Patterson, Diablo Grande, and Westley/Grayson (thank you to the Westley-El Solyo Association for their support).

The support for this annual event seems to grow each year, with more and more inquiries made by the public on how they can assist. If you have any ideas on how we can improve upon this, or any other community event, please don't hesitate to coordinate with your respective associations.

December, 2012 – a bitter month

December is a time we prepare for the approaching holidays; wrapping presents,

preparing meals, anticipating family get-togethers. This past December halted these routines many of those within our nation as well as here at home.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the twenty-six families who's loved ones were taken from them on December 14th by a lone gunman – a coward – at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut; and to the families of the two slain Volunteer Firefighters and two of their comrades seriously injured by another gunman – another coward – on Christmas Eve in Webster, New York;

Also within our own family, our thoughts and prayers go out to Captain Hector Ornelas and his family who lost their sister in December. In addition, our thoughts go out to Reuben Bedoy, a former Westley Volunteer, and his family who lost their mother as well.

Another loss of a previous member in December was Bob Crone. Bob was a member at the Patterson station. When Bob joined we all knew we had someone to protect and back us up. He showed up at his first training with a bandana on and a 12" hunting knife hanging from his belt. Bob was always there to help control the crowds, all you had to do was say "Bob, crowd," and there were no more concerns. He was always the first one at the station for strike team assignments, and getting him to come home took an act of God, (he enjoyed them so much). We still talk of how he explained the way fire burns underground. The many nights we were at river bottom fires, he was positive they all started in Mountain Views district. As the years went by, Bob began to slow down. He loved working around his house and taking care of his pets and any strays that were passing by. Bob was also the caretaker of the old Del Puerto Hospital. Bob eventually retired from the department. We were able to locate his sister and she said all he ever talked about was his experience in the Fire Department. It is tough to hear of a loss of a fellow Firefighter, but when it's one of your own, it's makes one think of how precious life is. His sister is planning a service in the spring for him at the San Joaquin National cemetery. When we hear more we will pass the information on.

Lastly, another of our family was taken from us in December. Brad "the Bear" Freeman passed away in Houston Texas on December 17th 2012. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Beverly, his son Danny, and his daughter Mandy. Brad will be truly missed by all that knew him. Please be safe – watch your backs – take care of each other, so everyone goes home.

New Employees

Please join me in welcoming two new employees to the District. Carrie Silveira has been hired as a joint-employee with the District and City of Patterson as a Fire Prevention Specialist. Carrie comes to us with an extensive background in fire prevention and public education, as well as having a vast knowledge of the City and District; she lived in Patterson for years, and rumor has it she may be related to a former Assistant Chief, Allister Allen (Carrie's father). We welcome her expertise and look forward to having her onboard. Although she will be out in the field most of the time, please don't hesitate to stop-by Headquarters and introduce yourself.

Our second employee is a familiar face in the District. Mike Ambrosino has accepted the joint-position of Fire Training Officer for the City and District. Mike has been a Suppression Captain with the City of Patterson since 2008 and has been a valued Volunteer with the District since 2001. Although Mike has had to resign as a Volunteer, you'll all be seeing much more of him as he makes his way throughout the District conducting training as each of our stations.

Operations & Training

Happy New Year! I'm all excited about 2013, this is going to be a great year for us! First I would like to introduce and welcome Captain Mike Ambrosino to the training division. Many of you know Mike, he is a longtime Captain working for the City of Patterson as well as an officer for the West Stanislaus Fire District. Mike comes to us with strong willingness, desire and the experience to deliver safe quality training. Give Mike a nice warm welcome, you will be seeing quite a bit of him at you upcoming trainings. Mike's contacts are: Cell # 209-202-2519, Office # 209-895-8141 or at mambrosino@ci.patterson.ca.us.

One's value to the organization and his community is difficult to measure. Increasing the knowledge, skills and abilities of our personnel will also increasing our worth. Starting this month the training division will be conducting the training needed to for firefighters to also be capable to drive and operate our fire apparatus. The training will be held at Patterson Station #2 and will be conducted from 0800 hours to 1700 hours on the following days; January 19, February 23, and March 2. If you have any questions please contact Captain Ambrosino or Chief Breasher.

Up coming classes: ICS 200 Jan.11 (1800-2200),12 and 13 (0800-1700)

Fire Command-1A (MFSCI-350-3727) = 13 openings Cost \$228.00
 Jan. 18 1800-2200 Jan. 25 1800-2200
 Jan. 19 0800-1700 Jan. 26 0800-1700
 Jan. 20 0800-1700 Jan. 27 0800-1700

Fire Command-1B (MFSCI-351-3938) = 14 openings Cost \$228.00
 Feb. 8 1800-2200 Feb. 15 1800-2200
 Feb. 9 0800-1700 Feb. 16 0800-1700
 Feb. 10 0800-1700 Feb. 17 0800-1700

Fire Command-1C (MFSCI-341-3731) = 7 openings Cost \$228.00
 Mar. 1 1800-2200 Mar. 8 1800-2200
 Mar. 2 0800-1700 Mar. 9 0800-1700
 Mar. 3 0800-1700 Mar. 10 0800-1700

All classes will be held at Patterson station 2 – Signups are through Modesto Junior College www.mjc.edu click on "Pirates Net, then log-in using your user name and password (if you currently have one) or click on "First time user information" to setup your access.

For questions contact: Capt. Ambrosino 895-8141 / Chief Breasher 895-8130 / Instructor Chief Hall 895-8130



Maintenance & Facilities

Apparatus Maintenance

Burtons Fire was here in October and performed Pump test on all the District Apparatus. With the exception of one engine everything passed. The technician did note some issues with each apparatus which I will begin repairing, most are related to "Lack of use." Basically when warm-ups or truck checks are done people are not exercising valves, operating pumps, relief valves. These things in the past were part of the process. It would be a great help if when you do these you make sure everything works.

Remember, if you find a problem with any apparatus or equipment that you are unable to repair yourself, I need you to E-mail me or leave a written note with someone at the office describing what the problem is, when it happens and what if anything you did to try and repair the issue. Telling me or one of the other Chiefs at a call sometimes doesn't work because we are concentrating on the incident and things get forgotten.

Station Maintenance

Other than electric door openers needing some work, there have been no major issues at any of the stations this newsletter cycle; that's good news.

One thing I do notice is it appears that some "station pride" has been dropping off. I go to the outlying stations and I notice trash, weeds, apparatus dirty, bays needing to be swept out; nothing major, but just a few minutes each time you're at the station would make a big difference. Your help with this would be greatly appreciated

Parking

I know this has been mentioned before, several times, but once again I have to ask people not park their personal vehicles on the back apron at Station-1. There are times we need to move apparatus. Not only is it inconvenient to find someone to move their vehicle, it will delay the response to an emergency if we have to respond out the back. There is plenty of parking across the street (on El Circulo).

Special Projects Liaison, Richard Gaiser

Average Apparatus Age

One of the projects that I have been working on lately is the annual update to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Realize, of course, that many fire districts in this county do not have Capital Improvement Plans. Our CIP outlines our proposed large purchases (over \$1000) for the next ten (10) years and we, as district, are in a very financially tight situation for those next ten years as we have a very major expenditure hanging directly over our heads in the form of a replacement Crows Landing Community Fire Station.

In the past, we have hoped that structural growth in the District would help offset the costs of that replacement station and that is certainly not occurring right now. And, also was the possibility of a station located at the Crows Landing Naval Auxiliary Landing Field, paid for by the development at the field, would suffice to take care of the Crows Landing Community as well as the commercial activity at the old base. And, that funding remedy does not hold any promise for the near future. And, as we wait, the existing station gets older, as does the apparatus assigned to that department.

Consequently, that leaves us with the situation of either building something new or finding a suitable used building and modifying it to comply with *essential building* requirements of the State as well as modifying the building to make it suitable for a fire station. Either way, this need is going to be expensive and will cause the District to reduce its apparatus replacement program even further.

The average age of our emergency response apparatus (engines, tenders and trucks) is presently 17.41 years. To arrive at the number, we calculate the number of all apparatus, the ages of all that apparatus and arrive at the 17+ year average. That shows the apparatus that was delivered this past year, like El Solyo Brush 4 (less than 1 year of age) as well as the age of Crows Landing Engine 16 (42 years of age). When we have to build a replacement station that will cost over a million dollars, we know that 17+ year average age is going to stay very high until such time as we get that station paid off and we can again begin to replace apparatus more actively. Consequently, we are continuing to review our options and welcome suggestions as to new ideas. And, naturally, we can hope for an improvement in the economy of the area.

A History Lesson

Recently, a couple of our firefighters mentioned that they had been made aware that the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District had a name listed on the California Firefighter's Memorial located at the state capitol in Sacramento and wanted to know more about the listing. The California Firefighter's Memorial was officially unveiled on April 6, 2002, five months after I had retired from the fire service. However, sometime prior to that date, all fire agencies in the State had received notification about the memorial and the criteria to be followed in submitting names to be included on the memorial.

One of the things that I was able to do shortly after I was hired by the City and District in 1978, was to read the minutes of the Fire District Board of Directors dating back from the District's inception in 1934-1935. In doing that, I was aware that one of the District Directors tragically died while doing work for the District in 1939. After doing some research, I officially submitted the name of Frank Cox for inclusion on the California Firefighter's Memorial and was notified that his name would be included on the Memorial. The following is a little history on that incident.

Back in the 1930's one of the reasons that the District was formed was because of the historic need for fire protection stemming from dry land grain fires in the west side of the valley and from fires in the west side hills. At that time, the then California Division of Forestry was in its infancy, and the ranchers of the west side of Stanislaus County played a major role in fire suppression in the hill country. When the District was formed, it began officially dealing with these fires. Also, at that time there was no Interstate Highway 5, no Delta Mendota Canal nor California Aqueduct. Consequently, wildland fires came down from the hills a good deal further into the valley area of the District than they do today.

As part of the prevention/suppression tactics, the District had constructed some one hundred ninety-two (192) miles of fire trails to ultimately limit the spread of wildland fires in the west side hills. Annually, these trails had to be maintained, free of grass and brush. In the winter of 1939, Frank Cox, the District Director from the Westley Area, with four other men (three bulldozer operators and an Oak Flat Ranch employee) were scouting out a route for the construction of a fire road/trail above the Orestimba Creek Narrows. All were horseback and the weather was cloudy with rain expected. About 10 o'clock a.m. the horse which Director Cox was riding stumbled, pitching the rider over the horse's head, whence he struck a rock outcropping with his head and was killed instantly. This incident occurred about six miles from a vehicle accessible road, on Wilcox Ridge, in the upper reaches of the Orestimba Canyon beyond the Narrows.

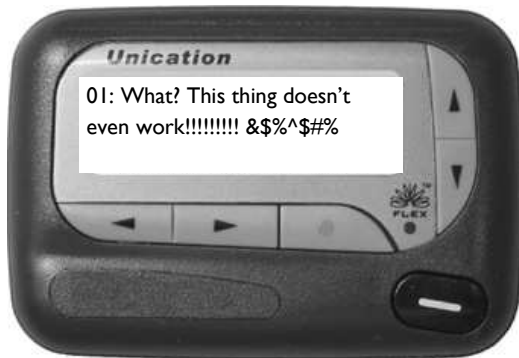
Before I retired, and shortly after the notification of the potential Memorial, I contacted Ms. Mimi Draper, Frank Cox's daughter, about the incident and whether or not the family had any objection in the District pursuing the process of seeing if the Director Cox Incident would qualify for the Memorial. After a very interesting interview with Mimi, who incidentally I have known for many years, and after her approval to pursue, the District submitted the name of Frank D. Cox to the Memorial, and of course, it was obviously approved and on April 6th, Mimi was there at the unveiling of the memorial.

And, as one last note, fortunately, this is the only name appearing on the Memorial from this District.

On December 14, 2012 history was made. It was a glorious day for me! We started receiving the fire calls on our cell phones. I know this is something that we have talked about for years. I still can't believe it's finally arrived. We have made it into the world of technology.

At some point, your alpha pagers will no longer receive pages directly from Dispatch. Some of you may not want to receive calls on your cell phones. Please let me know if you would like to keep receiving messages on your alpha pagers and not your cell phones. You must, however, pay your pager bill in order to receive pages. If you do want to receive the fire calls on your phone via text message, please contact me and give me your phone number and carrier.

If this doesn't make sense, give me a call and I'll explain it.



This was our actual reaction when we started receiving the calls on our cell phones!!!

Sal Abdulla recently saved a little 4 year old girl's life in Yemen. He wanted to thank us for the training we provided. Just makes me so proud!

January Birthdays

- Marty Greunke 1st
- Jeff Breasher 2nd
- Victor Romero 3rd
- Jesse Martinez 6th
- Ahmed Abdulla 7th
- Justin Ambrosino 10th
- Amy Best 17th
- Nick Jamieson 19th
- Chris Vento 24th
- Anthony Cordova 27th
- George Vargas 27th
- Michael Rea 27th

February Birthdays

- Tom Houk 5th
- Beth Lawwill 8th
- Ken Bays 15th
- Brandon Cousins 15th
- Chris Priola 23rd



Happy Birthday