



P O N D E R O S A

FIREFIGHTER

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

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HCESD #28

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Ponderosa VFD:

More than just a shiny red truck

From the cliché “cat in the tree” to natural disasters, major chemical spills, and of course, fires... the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department is your FIRST “first responder”. It has been our mission throughout the years to keep our citizens protected under any circumstance using an “all hazards” approach. That’s why our members receive top-notch training and maintain working relationships with a host of other emergency resources available to us.

Although there may be incidents beyond our scope, we are fully prepared to begin the mitigation process and immediately draw upon our expansive partnerships and resources – including our neighboring fire departments’ expertise and equipment for trench, high angle rescue and rising water conditions, along with Harris County’s HAZMAT Team for suspected terrorist or other hazardous materials situations.

Harris County has some of the highest rated emergency organizations and capabilities in the nation, and we would be foolish not to take advantage of that. We realize that we can’t do it all alone, so by combining our expertise, we can accomplish amazing things.

Below are just a few more impressive organizations we can call on in times of need:

Harris County’s Office of Emergency Management (HCOEM)

The HCOEM (headed up by County Judge, Robert A. Eckels) works in conjunction with state, federal and local authorities to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the effects of natural disasters – such as hurricanes or floods – or manmade hazards, including, but not limited to, refinery fires and terrorist-related events. They are also responsible for an emergency management plan that prepares for public recovery and relieves and reduces human suffering following these events. Key Contribution: The HCOEM is prepared to activate an Emergency Operations Center during any major disaster to allow coordination of all support agencies to provide continuity of services to the public. During a disaster, the OEM’s phone bank will be open to assist concerned citizens by answering their questions and relieving anxieties.

The Channel Industries Mutual Aid (CIMA)

The CIMA is the largest industrial mutual aid organization in the world. They are a non-profit organization combining the fire-fighting, rescue, hazardous material handling and emergency medical capabilities of the refining and petrochemical industry in the Houston Ship Channel area - and can be activated to bring in the “big guns” if necessary -

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF...

The Ponderosa VFD was formed by a small group of citizens in 1972. In the over 30 years since its inception, this area has seen tremendous growth – from a budding community to the metro-suburb it is today. In response, we have grown, too – adding the volunteers, station locations and equipment necessary to reflect the needs of this community.

It has been, and always will be our commitment to not only meet, but exceed the high expectations you rightfully require of your fire department. Although the hope is that you will never need our services, the reality is, you just might. And if that day ever comes, we'll deploy all the necessary resources at our disposal to protect your family and belongings. Traditionally, we have taken considerable pride in being able to do this with reliable equipment and top notch full-time employees and volunteers.

Today, we are at a crossroads. For years, we have pinched your tax dollars, doing all we can

to keep costs down without jeopardizing services. But this is getting more difficult with each passing year. Ponderosa VFD's operating costs continue to increase. With spikes in the cost of fuel and insurance, the shortage of volunteers, and similar increases in other necessary operating costs, our budget is being stretched to the limits.

We realize that tax increases are usually not welcome, but every so often a request for additional funding or revenue is almost indisputable. Here's what it comes down to...you have expectations about how a fire department should respond if YOU ever make the call. YOU place a value on your home...your possessions...your life, and your family members' lives. Is \$15 a year* a fair price to pay for PVFD to continue to meet your expectations? It is your choice. Go vote (see information below) in the special election on May 13, 2006 to extend the tax cap from \$0.06/\$100 appraised valuation to \$.10/\$100



valuation – even though the Department only anticipates that \$0.07 - \$0.075 will be necessary to support increased operating costs.

If you have any questions prior to the election, feel free to call our office at 281-444-8465. Ask for me. As always, thank you for your support.

J. C. Wondrus

*A home that is appraised at \$100,000 will pay an additional \$10 to \$15 more per year in ESD taxes. State legislation mandates that any voter-approved increase in the district's tax-rate cap must be pushed to 10 cents, whether or not that large of an increase is needed.

First Responder...

Continued from page 1

with personnel, and huge water flow and foam capabilities.

The Westador Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) The Westador CERT is comprised of a team of citizen responders trained through a Federal Emergency Management Agency program that offers life-saving skills and hands-on education about the hazards communities face in the post-9/11 era. The team is equipped to use their training as part of a neighborhood or workplace team that helps others

when professional responders are overwhelmed or not immediately available.



Harris County Judge Robert Eckels with Westador CERT member, Richard Murphy

As your FIRST “first responders” it is our responsibility to know where to turn when and if a situation is beyond our personnel or equipment capabilities. We value and respect those relationships and we are proud to be part of such a highly regarded network.



See page 8 for a list of emergency phone numbers.

The Proof is in the Pudding

The Benefits of Living and Working in PVFD's District

“If the PVFD had not responded as quickly as they did, the fire would have been in the house within minutes.” Bill Travers, Ponderosa homeowner.

On December 16, 2004 at approximately 10:45 a.m., Bill Travers spotted small flames and thick black smoke coming from his garage. He realized, quickly, that this was not a job for his garden hose. Travers ran to the house to call the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department, but, like most homes built here in the late 60s and early 70s, there had been no firewall installed on either end of the breezeway connecting the garage to the house. All electrical lines had been burned through and the phone line was dead. Travers ran next door and yelled to his neighbor, Connie Taylor, to make the call.

As Travers ran back toward his home, he realized smoke had begun billowing out of both sides of his attic's gable vents. A sickening fear gripped him... was it heading towards his home...or was it already there? Moments later, he heard sirens and the PVFD was in front of his home.

“Prior to their arrival, each minute felt like ten,” Travers recalled. “What I didn't realize was that from the time of dispatch to the time of their arrival, took just three minutes. And within 12 minutes, there were fire trucks lined up and down the entire block...I lost count at 10. It was incredible.”

After Travers informed the fire fighters that no one was in the

house, they sprung into action, separating into two units – one came in through the front door and into the attic, the other went directly to the garage. The PVFD did not yet know if the fire had reached the house, so they took aggressive action to ensure it didn't spread via the breezeway.

“When all was said and done, the fire came within three



feet of the back door and attic entrance of the breezeway,” said Travers. “The fire fighters performed professionally, knew exactly how to approach and tackle the situation, and offered friendly, solid advice as to what to expect next and how to avoid the situation in the future. Most importantly, everyone was safe and no ‘unreplaceables’ were lost. I personally understand why the PVFD is rated one of the best volunteer fire departments in the nation and I'm proud to live in their jurisdiction.”

“The PVFD firefighters stayed late into the evening helping our residents salvage their furniture and belongings”.
Shannon Crumpler, Manager,

Carriage Hill Apartments.

On January 23, 2006 at around 3:30 in the afternoon, Shannon Crumpler, Manager, Carriage Hill Apartments, was going about her regular duties...until one of her residents ran in and informed her there was a fire in Building 12.

“I ran outside, but I didn't see anything,” said Crumpler. “To be safe, I called 9-1-1. The fire department arrived quickly and immediately took control of the situation.”

It turns out, there was a fire, a fairly significant one on the second floor of the Westfield-facing building. Caused by an electrical problem in the attic, the PVFD did their job to extinguish the fire in the units directly affected and salvage those surrounding it.

“In the end, two units were completely burned – those where the fire started,” said Crumpler. “There was some water damage in several others – partially caused by the bursting of a hot water pipe, but, in the end, half the building was salvaged, and the firefighters showed great compassion. It was very impressive.”

In Case of Fire...

If you see or suspect fire in your home, a neighbor's home, or a business establishment, dial 9-1-1 right away. The PVFD works hard to keep up the standard of excellence you have come to expect. We will respond as quickly as possible and do everything in our power to protect your family, your home and your belongings. It's our promise and commitment to you.

The Only Thing Constant...is Change.

How Ponderosa VFD Copes With the Challenge of Change

We have experienced some dramatic growth in this community in recent years – in expanding residential and business development, state and local roadways, and population — with a sudden spike (due to Katrina) this past year. No doubt you’ve noticed the changes in traffic, new construction (e.g., apartments!), new infrastructure (conversion to surface water) and the ubiquitous crowds... just about everywhere. But for every noticeable change, there are just as many -- if not more -- behind the scenes. The PVFD, specifically, has experienced a 20% increase in responses this past year -- all of which we have handled, but the increase has frequently strained our hard-working crews.

“The many demographic changes we’ve seen are pushing our current capabilities to the limit,” said Chief Windisch. “Add to that an expanding 65 and over population, increased congestion on our roads, and the almost overnight influx of Katrina evacuees, and it’s become quite clear that our existing system will be severely challenged as we work to keep up the standard of excellence our residents expect and deserve.”

In response to some of these issues, PVFD has modified its night time staffing practice. In the past, the fire department relied upon “home response” – when a citizen called 9-1-1, pagers dispatched fire fighters from their homes to staff the appropriate fire station. But with fewer volunteers and the rising number of calls, response times were beginning to suffer...a trend the PVFD could not accept.

“We had a personnel gap after daylight hours,” said Chief Windisch. “To close it, we offered small stipends to volunteers who would spend the night at headquarters. We definitely saw improvements with this new method, but it was accompanied by another additional (but necessary) increase in costs.”



The “Senior” Effect

“*The Times, They Are A’ Changin’*”...if you’re old enough to remember that well-seasoned gem of Bob Dylan’s, you’re probably part of The Graying of America. Currently, one in every six people in the developed world is 65 or older. There is a plethora of reasons folks are living so long these days. One theory is that a whole generation (a.k.a. Baby Boomers) becoming older and they are bringing their youthful habits and ideas with them...including plenty of exercise, good diet and access to excellent healthcare.

Senior citizen is a serious misnomer for many Boomers now reaching 60 – and there are lots of them. At least one-third of ALL Americans – 76 million people – were born between 1946 and 1964. This generational “bubble” has dominated our culture and

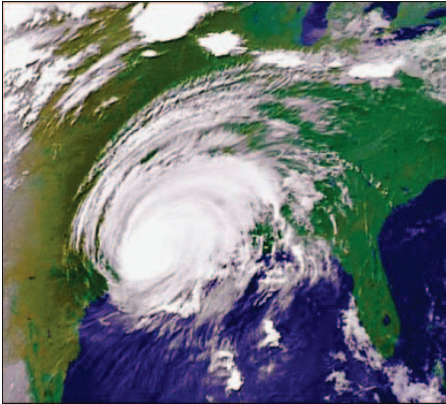
economy for 40 years — very much like the proverbial “pig moving through a python.” What many experts predict for the future is that we’ll have the old caring for the very old...as this massive demographic shift continues.

While more active “seasoned citizens” are also more prone to injury, many would rather break a leg on the ski slopes than in the bathtub. But the reality is - adults age 65 and older are more than twice as likely to die in fires than the overall population (according to the National Fire Data Center, a part of the United States Fire Administration). This data points out that 34 percent of those who died — and 14 percent of those injured — in residential structure fires in 2002 were 65 years of age and older.



According to Harris County Appraisal District over 65 exemptions for the Ponderosa VFD district, in Ponderosa’s service area alone, there are more than 1450 seasoned citizens -- many of whom live alone after the death of a spouse. Caring for older homes becomes more difficult as the homeowner ages and, without routine maintenance, fire hazards can develop to threaten the structure and the resident.

“Being sensitive to the special needs of our older residents,” said Windisch, “requires us to know more than just statistics. We have to realize that mobility can be a serious issue in determining if someone can react fast enough -- or move fast enough -- to safely exit a fire. And as the number of ‘senior’ households increases, we must also anticipate a corresponding increase in the number of service calls.”



Our New Neighbors: Hurricane Katrina Transplants

The infamous Hurricane Katrina was the single largest natural disaster in FEMA’s 26-year history, and it displaced hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents. As we have done so many times before in crisis situations, Houston and its surrounding communities opened our resources and hearts to house, clothe and feed those who were unable to return home.

It is estimated that 150,000 of those hurricane evacuees remain in the greater Houston area today, and many will stay for good. This overnight addition of residents continues to pose a variety of challenges for those involved in emergency services.

Previously empty or partially full housing units are now packed, traffic has increased on an almost exponential level, the need for additional food, clothing and

general medical care has shown a dramatic rise and, as expected, emergency situations – whether medical, fire or otherwise – have grown as well.

Although the effects of Katrina are certainly not the sole reason for the sum of these increases, they are a major contributing factor. With no time to assimilate the evacuees into our midst – our general goal of gradually expanding with the normal, or even above normal growth of the community was impossible. The additional need was immediate. And we are still today responding – with all means possible — to address that need.

Meeting the Needs

In the short-term...how does a volunteer organization – with already stretched manpower and resources – accommodate these changes? Here’s the basic reality...running a fire department isn’t cheap. Running one at the level we expect – and you deserve – is even more expensive. Diminishing our services, equipment, training, and/or expertise isn’t an option. We aren’t here to apologize for not being able to meet your needs...we’re here to respond in the most unfortunate of situations...as you expect. Our training and preparation allow us to not only salvage your property, but to hopefully save you or your loved ones from harm should that need ever arise. The problem is that all of this costs significantly more than it did a decade ago.


In addition to the issues mentioned above, today’s fire department reality includes increased operating costs on top of a record emergency response load — aggravated by a staggering shortage of additional volunteers. Consider,

just as one example, the rising cost of fuel. In just the past two years, diesel has increased in cost from \$1.35 to close to \$3.00 per gallon. Add to that the spiraling cost of firefighting gear — from \$1,000 per person to \$1,900 in the same time period – and you understand our concern.



“The cost of gear is expected to rise another 5 to 8 percent in the next year,” said Windisch. “The lease / purchase price of fire apparatus is forecast to escalate and higher emissions standards brought about by the EPA will add to that \$10,000 per apparatus. We are monitoring these trends, and will recommend appropriate changes to avoid risking a decline in our service/response ability...which would be unacceptable to us and to you.”

The PVFD has served this area’s residents and businesses for over 30 years, and we plan on doing all we can to continue our high level of service for years to come. We ask that you do your part, as well. Call us today to see how you can help... and please remember, we’re always looking for enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. ●



Life Line Screening Can Provide Life Saving Information

Did you know that STROKE is America's third leading killer and the number one cause for nursing home admissions? Even more disturbing...half of all stroke victims have no warning signs before a stroke occurs. Not one.

So, how do you help reduce your chances of becoming a statistic?

As part of the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department's "all hazards" community approach, we recently provided a location for Life Line Screening – America's leading provider of quality health screenings – to set up shop. Available screenings included: Stroke Screening/Carotid Artery; Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening; Peripheral Arterial Disease

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening: \$45 This test screens for the existence of an aneurysm (enlargement) in the abdominal aorta...a condition in which the vast majority of people have no symptoms, and that can lead to a ruptured aortic artery. Procedure: The technologist applies an acoustic gel on your abdomen and uses the painless transducer to visualize the aorta.



Screening; and even an Osteoporosis Screening (see descriptions and prices for each below).

The Results

February's screening at PVFD found 20% of those tested were in need of some form of medical management to avoid one (or more) of the diseases. That's almost twenty people that now have the information necessary to get a jump on treating medical conditions that, had they not been detected, could have caused major medical issues in the near future.

It is important to know that physicians typically don't order an ultrasound evaluation for patients with no visible symptoms of vascular disease or osteoporosis.

Stroke Screening/Carotid Artery: \$45 The #1 cause of stroke is linked to carotid artery blockage. This test screens the carotid arteries in the neck for fatty plaque buildup. Procedure: The technologist applies an acoustic gel on your neck over your carotid arteries. A painless instrument, called a "transducer", is then moved around your neck to visualize the inside of the carotid artery.

Peripheral Arterial Disease Screening: \$45 This test screens for peripheral arterial disease (plaque buildup) in the lower extremities. Studies suggest an abnormal ABI may indicate peripheral arterial disease as well as a high risk of coronary artery disease. Procedure: Blood pressure cuffs and a Doppler ultrasound probe are placed on your arms and ankles.

That's why screenings like Life Line Screening are so important. They allow you to be checked for these conditions*, make you aware of any previously undetected health problems and provide you with results to bring to your physician for follow-up care. Screenings are quick, affordable, accurate and painless...a small price to pay for information that could save your life.

The PVFD plans to host another Life Line Screening event next February, but we can bring them back earlier if enough folks are interested. Call Life Line Screening (1-800-324-1851) today to express interest in an interim event or to schedule an individual appointment. Stay aware and on top of your health!

Osteoporosis Screening: \$35 Osteoporosis is a debilitating disease in which bones become fragile and are more likely to break, and if not detected, prevented or left untreated, it can progress painlessly until a bone breaks (typically in the hip, spine and wrist). These breaks can impair a person's ability to walk unassisted and may cause prolonged or permanent disability or even death. The osteoporosis test screens for abnormal bone mass density in men and women. Procedure: By placing your foot in an ultrasound unit, the bone density of the heel is measured with ultrasound.

**All screening results are reviewed and confirmed by a board certified physician who is fully insured and licensed to practice. Results are received within 21 days.*



YOUR PVFD: KEEPING PROPERTY VALUES UP AND HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE DOWN

You're probably asking yourself...how in the world does a fire department affect the value of my property or my insurance rates? The fact is...the quality of your fire department has a VERY REAL impact on both. Good or bad. It's all based on **ISO's Public Protection Classification (PPC) System**, and the rating they assign to your local fire department.

What is the PPC?

The Public Protection Classification System is a countrywide classification system used by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) to reflect a community's local fire protection for property insurance rating purposes. Classifications are based on the public fire protection of a city, town or area using ISO's Fire Suppression Rating Schedule.

The ISO auditing company compiles data from 45,000 fire departments nationwide and evaluates each department's defense capability based on three major categories: Water Supplies (40%); Communications (10%); and Fire Department Operations/Staffing (50%). Classifications range from 1 (the best) to 10 (the worst).

What is PVFD's PPC Classification?

The PVFD has an ISO rating of "3", which puts us in the top 4% of the nation's fire service! PVFD's rating has consistently improved throughout the years. In the 80's, the department was rated a "5", then a "4" in the 90's, and as of 2003, the rating reached the current classification of "3".

How Does the Excellent ISO Rating Benefit Me?

It's pretty straightforward actually, insurance companies use ISO's PPC to price policies, offer coverages, and establish deductibles for individual homes and businesses. But how does an improved rating affect you...

There are variables for each insurance company, but all have specific savings for improved PPC ratings. For example, a home insured for \$120,000 with a PPC rating improved from "5" to "3" will save the homeowner about \$70/year. Our tax rate on the same home is \$72/year, so in effect the homeowner is receiving fire protection for two dollars per year!

Bottom Line

The commitment we have to this community and the excellence we strive for daily rewards you in more ways than one. We do everything in our power and use all the resources necessary to keep your family and property safe. This consistent dedication translates into dollars for you...great fire service means higher property values AND lower insurance rates. Make sure you are reaping the benefits...call your insurance agent today to ensure they are utilizing the latest ISO PPC classification of "3".

Summer Break Increases Need for Donated Food

In the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, more children than ever depend on the free lunch program at our public schools. So how do we help sustain them over the summer?

The need for food can increase by as much as 30% at the end of the school year, and this year's need could easily exceed that figure. For years, Northwest Assistance Ministries' (NAM) food pantry, in partnership with the Cypresswood Swim Team, Northwest Bible Church, Cypresswood homeowners and the PVFD, have held a summer food drive to help provide necessary food items. Your support – while always appreciated — is even more critical this year.

Most Needed SOS (Survival Over Summer) Items

The following foods are most needed for the children in our area.

Peanut Butter & Jelly
Canned Pasta (such as Spaghetti-o's, ravioli, etc.)
Canned Fruit
Macaroni & Cheese
Dry Soup
Canned Soup

Please stop by the Cypresswood Subdivision Clubhouse (located just east of Kuykendahl on Cypresswood) on Saturday, May 13th, from 9:00-10:30 a.m. A Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) truck will be parked in the parking lot, and a representative will be there to accept your donations.

The PVFD will also be driving through Cypresswood prior to, and during the hours of the drive to rally support from the residents. We hope to see you all there with food in hand!



Spaghetti Sauce
Dry Cereal
Tuna
Canned Meat (chicken, Vienna sausages, etc.)
Canned Vegetables

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

The Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department: 9-1-1 or 281-444-3473 if 9-1-1 is not working.

Our business line is: 281-444-8465
Cypress Creek EMS: 9-1-1 or 281-440-9650 (business)

Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management: 713-881-3100

Commissioner Jerry Eversole – Precinct 4: 281-353-8424

Sheriff's Department: 713-221-6000

Precinct 4 Constable: 281-376-3472

Motorist Assistance Program (MAP): *627 (mobile) or 713-225-5627

Harris County Flood Control: 713-684-4000

Traffic Signal Repair: 713-881-3210 (county); 713-802-5662 (state)

Early and election day voting will be at Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Dept. Headquarters at 17061 Rolling Creek in the Ponderosa Subdivision.

**Early Voting
May 1-5; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
May 6, Saturday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
May 8-9; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

**Regular Voting
May 13; 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

**PONDEROSA
FIREFIGHTER
HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28**

17061 ROLLING CREEK DR.
HOUSTON, TX 77090



This publication is intended for the residents within the Ponderosa VFD service area. If you received it in error, we hope that you'll still read it and utilize the fire safety information.

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