



P O N D E R O S A

FIREFIGHTER

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Association, Inc. Board of Directors

Tom Wyka - President
Cypresswood resident

Dan Vogel - 1st V-P
Westador resident

Steve Sheridan - 2nd V-P
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Rick Windham - 3rd V-P
Fire department representative
Ponderosa resident

Bill Wurdeman - Secretary
North Forest resident

Brandon Huffman - Treasurer
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HCESD #28 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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A First-Class HazMat Team in Our Own Backyard

From 1979 to 2001, the Houston Fire Department Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Team was the only dedicated hazardous materials response team in our area. Although world-renowned and still considered one of the best, the events of September 11, 2001 and the Anthrax attacks that followed created a need to evaluate the overall HazMat response capabilities of Harris County. Based on the reality that Harris County is the petrochemical capitol of the world and has such close ties with our national infrastructure, a decision was made to create additional resources.

In the spring of 2002, the Harris County Hazardous Materials Response Team (HC HMRT) was created by the Harris County Commissioners Court. By that summer, the initial team of two HazMat technicians and two response trucks (3/4 ton pickup trucks) was born, with a mission to respond as quickly as possible to hazardous materials situations and offer technical assistance to fire department Incident Commanders. Five years later, the HC HMRT has grown by leaps and bounds and is the second busiest and one of the best trained teams in our 13-county region. They operate as a FEMA, Type 1 HazMat Team - which includes a custom-built HazMat Response truck (called HM1). The truck carries a full complement of HazMat response equipment, is staffed with four HazMat Technicians per shift (for three shifts), and is led by a HazMat Captain.



In situations where your fire department utilizes the services of the HC HMRT, you may be wondering how it all plays out. **Bob Royall**, Chief of Emergency Services for the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office and responsible for the day-to-day operations and management of the Emergency Response Division, was kind enough to sit down with us and fill us in. See page 3 for the beginning of our interview with Chief Royall, and go to our website homepage for its continuation.

Continued on page 3

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF..

You have high expectations for your fire department and Ponderosa VFD is committed to meeting and exceeding those expectations. Our values are strong and we continue to strive to:

- Provide a safe and environmentally friendly emergency response system
- Support our volunteers and paid staff with adequate incentives and awards to achieve superior performance
- Meet or exceed local, state and federal standards for emergency agencies
- Utilize a business model that addresses adequate service levels within available resources
- Communicate openly and honestly within the organization and with the public and related organizations

Present-day challenges often create barriers to maintaining the highest level of service, and it is only an open, honest partnership with our community that will help us to overcome those challenges. In short, we continue to require your help to keep this department running at the level we both require.

We are not a nine-to-five widget factory. We are here for you every second of every day, and are often called upon to help you and/or your neighbors in your time of greatest need. As you know, we are not a profit center, but we fully understand that our quality of service costs you money. We take that responsibility very seriously and work to spend every dollar as you would expect...on value-based services.

Our community continues

to grow -- and age -- and as a result, we have witnessed a 15-20% increase in emergency responses just this year. In analyzing these staggering numbers, we've concluded that, in addition to area growth, we have more vehicle miles to travel and have required more mutual aid. Every single citizen who called us for help dialed 9-1-1 in their time of need, and we were there. You called, we came and we helped.

Rising Costs

As they have in your own household, our costs continue to escalate. Fuel has skyrocketed and protective clothing for our dedicated members now surpasses \$2,300 each. Equipment repairs on those pretty red fire trucks continue to challenge our budget (e.g., an alternator failure alone now costs over \$2,500 plus labor), and when the plumber pays us a visit, we generally break out a thousand dollar bill.

Utility costs, as well, have seen an almost 30% increase. Our mission is to provide you with outstanding service and that service comes at a price. There are no frivolous expenditures...in fact, we are constantly scrutinizing costs and working to stretch every dollar to its limit without compromising our abilities.

Combination Fire Department: Adapting to a New World

Due to a continuing drop in volunteers (our numbers are the lowest I recall since 1975), the PVFD has transitioned into what is called a "Combination Fire Department" -- an organization that utilizes both paid and volunteer



members. People volunteer less today -- I guess it is a sign of the times -- and firefighting can be an intense and risky adventure. To counteract the decline in volunteers, we now have three full time firefighter TECHNICIANS and we will add three more in 2008.

For many years, our part-time paid positions and volunteers did an outstanding job keeping up. We even implemented nighttime staffing at headquarters two years ago in an attempt to satisfy the increased demand on our services, but needs continued to increase and the changing times required a new way of doing things. So we made the necessary changes.

This department doesn't work without you...and it is our mission to keep you involved in the key decisions made to keep our service where we all require it to be. We thank you dearly for your support and hope we can count on you as new needs arise in the future.

J. C. Wondrus

County HazMat Team

Continued from page 1

Q Chief Royall...when an event occurs, the HC HMRT works together with other emergency services teams like the Ponderosa VFD. How do you make this partnership as seamless as possible?

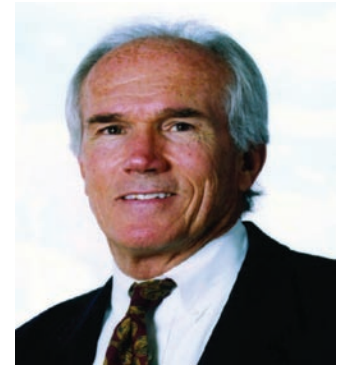
A First, let me say that in past situations involving the coordination of PVFD and HC HMRT, the integration has been just that...seamless, and has really created a level of comfort and trust for all those involved. When the HC HMRT first responds to assist local fire departments, we report to the Incident Commander and receive their assignment.

The Team then works within that established organization to accomplish the task assigned - all the while, closely coordinating with all fire service units on the scene. In most cases, the local fire department will be asked to assist by providing Decontamination, Medical Surveillance, or Rapid Intervention support for Technicians entering the "Hot Zone". Any formal HazMat operation requires a great deal of close coordination between all response assets on the scene.

Check out the rest of this interesting and informative dialogue at www.ponderosaufd.org.



Precinct 4 County Commissioners Office and PVFD: A Partnership that Works



With 2,700 miles of road, 5,400 miles of ditches, thousands of acres of developed and undeveloped parks and 350 employees to take care of, the Harris County Precinct 4 County Commissioners office has a big job to do.

"We are the third largest precinct in the U.S., with over 850,000 constituents," said County Commissioner, Jerry Eversole. "There are 400 million dollars in must-do projects to handle in the next five years, so you can imagine the amount of planning involved. We do our best to plan for growth as opposed to letting growth plan for us."

Part of that planning includes working with local Emergency Services Districts (ESDs) to stay on top of road needs and provide necessary training facilities. Ralph Bartholow, Precinct 4's Operations Director and liaison between Harris County ESDs and the Precinct, understands the importance of working closely with departments such as Ponderosa VFD and values their input.

"PVFD is an aggressive, forward-thinking department," said Bartholow. "They are known as a leader in fire prevention and operational readiness and Chief Windisch has used his International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Board position to bring additional training opportunities to the area and share them with neighboring departments. It is that kind of dedication, along with a necessary ongoing dialogue that will help keep this office on top of ESD needs today and in the future."

The Houston area is expected to grow in population from 3 1/2 million to 8 million by the year 2030, and that brings with it additional challenges for those in the emergency services industry.

"Chief Windisch was instrumental in the successful transition of the PVFD from an all-volunteer department to a combination department in an ongoing effort to better serve the citizens of the community," said Commissioner Eversole. "But that does not diminish the importance of bringing in new volunteers. There has been a decline in fire department volunteers in our area, and we need to get back to giving back. Volunteerism is what America has always been about, and I hope we see a resurgence of that commitment."

The PVFD thanks the Precinct 4 County Commissioners office for their past and present support, and we look forward to working together to provide the best emergency services possible to this community in the years to come.

Board Member Spotlights



Mike Jones

The years of relevant experience that **ESD #28** Vice President, **Mike Jones**, brings to the table is not only respected, but appreciated. Involved in Fire and EMS services for close to 30 years, Jones' past includes a five-year stint as a volunteer firefighter for Northwest Fire Department, eight years as a paramedic for a volunteer 9-1-1 EMS provider, and ten years of experience as a fire and EMS dispatcher in Denver, Colorado and North Harris County.

For the past 16 years, Jones has worked for a residential drug and alcohol treatment program as a paramedic. In that position, he provides medical care for approximately 400 patients and is responsible for purchasing medical supplies and assisting in the maintenance of expenditures under budgetary constraints...invaluable experience which he uses to help the ESD #28 Board balance the EMS needs of a growing and changing community with available taxpayer funds.

"It is the Board's role to ensure this fire department has the funding necessary to provide our community with the highest quality fire suppression and safety," said Jones. "That includes the purchase

of state-of-the-art equipment, the ability to attain and retain quality volunteers and staff, and the materials and facilities necessary to properly train them."

Jones is a 26-year resident of the North Harris County area and is currently a homeowner in North View subdivision, which is served by PVFD.

"If something happens to my home, it's PVFD that will respond," said Jones. "That means the decisions I help make as a member of the ESD #28 Board have a direct impact on myself as well as my community. Knowing that this Board has made a difference in our area -- by providing PVFD with the funds necessary to continue to maintain excellent response times, dependable equipment, and adequately-staffed, well-trained crews -- is very rewarding and keeps me interested in continuing my service on this Board."

At PVFD, we are grateful for Mike's two years of service, and we hope he's with us for many years to come. Thanks,



Dan Vogel

For **Dan Vogel**, involvement in the firefighting world is a

family affair. Both his son, Daniel, and son-in-law, Trent are members of the Houston Fire Department. It was, therefore, an easy leap to consider becoming a Board member for the very department that served his community.

A resident of the Westador neighborhood since 1979, Vogel has been 1st VP of the **PVFA Board** for close to three years now, and is proud to be a part of an organization which helps the PVFD continue to provide their citizens with the experience and care they deserve.

"It is the Board's responsibility to continue to support the PVFD in a way that keeps them moving forward," said Vogel. "We must provide them with what it takes to maintain their excellent service to our community."

Vogel has also made it a priority to focus some of the Board's efforts on obtaining more qualified volunteer firefighters in a world where stressors and overloaded commitments have resulted in a dramatic decline in volunteerism.

"Obtaining more qualified volunteers is a major concern of mine," said Vogel. "Our community continues to grow in population and in property and structures that the PVFD must serve. Although needs have moved us into the world of a combination fire department, I still have high hopes that we will be able to educate the community on the importance of volunteering - in whatever capacity - with their local emergency service providers. It is not only a way to give back to the community, but

Continued on page 7

Saving Energy is Easier Than You Think

How many times have you heard the word “green” in the past year? Odds are, quite a bit. The Going Green message is hitting us from all sides...every TV show tackled the subject during sweeps week, giant wind power turbines are popping up across the country and most car manufacturers have changed their advertising messages from “luxurious” and “powerful” to “fuel-efficient” and “eco-friendly”.

Saving energy, gas, water...even our planet, seems to rest squarely on our shoulders - and, let's be honest - the subject can be a bit overwhelming. Plug “going green” into your favorite internet search engine and it won't produce hundreds or even thousands of results...oh no...it will produce hundreds of MILLIONS.

Helping to preserve and protect our natural resources is a good thing, but how do we get started? Sure, you can buy a new hybrid vehicle, but maybe that kind of big expenditure isn't in your budget right now. You want to help make a difference, but how do you do so without breaking the bank?

It's as Easy as Changing a Light Bulb

The key to changing energy-wasting habits is to start simple. Minor changes can have a major impact...especially over time. And many options require very little effort on your part. One simple option is as easy as changing a light bulb. In fact, that's exactly what you do.

Your common light bulb - or incandescent bulb - is notoriously inefficient. Ninety percent (yes, you heard that right) of the energy incandescent bulbs use is simply wasted as heat. As a result,

Congress is working to enact a national energy-saving lighting standard...one that requires more light per energy unit than is currently yielded by the popular light bulb.

CFLs

A likely replacement for the inefficient incandescent is something you've probably already seen in your local grocery or hardware store. It's the CFL, or “compact fluorescent light bulb”. This funny-looking bulb looks more like a curly-q than your traditional bulb, but don't let the looks fool you. This highly efficient alternative converts 75% of electrical current into light and will save you \$50 over an expected 10,000 hour life span (that's 6 to 10 times longer than your current bulb).

If every American home replaced just one incandescent light bulb with an ENERGY-STAR-qualified CFL, America would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars...and if ALL incandescent bulbs were replaced, estimated electricity savings could be as high as \$18 billion per year.*

Choosing the Right Bulb

The first thing you'll notice when considering a CFL is the higher price, which can easily run 10 to 15 times the price of incandescents. But remember, we're thinking long term...not short term. Depending on usage, they can pay for themselves in as little as six months and, as stated earlier, last up to 10,000 hours. So,



you're saving loads of energy (and the resulting cooling cost to counteract the wasteful heat output of regular bulbs) and money. It's a win-win.

When choosing wattage (or “lumens” as they are called in CFLs), consider the following:

- Where will the bulb be located and for what purpose will it be used: CFL light output can be a bit dimmer, so if you are replacing a bulb in a reading lamp, you may consider replacing a 60 watt bulb with a CFL with lumens comparable to 100 or more watts. For other uses, you may find a 60 watt equivalent to be plenty. It's all about finding what works for you.

- Read the packaging to be sure that the type chosen works for the fixture you have in mind (e.g., if a light fixture is connected to a dimmer or 3-way switch, select CFLs that are labeled for this use).

- For recessed fixtures, use a “reflector” CFL versus a standard-shaped bulb.

- Choose the color that works best for you (e.g., while most CFLs are created with warm colors for the home, choose a cooler color for task lighting).

Want more information on proper usage of CFLs, what to do if a bulb breaks, and proper disposal options? Visit this website: www.energystar.gov/index, and then go get those CFLs and start saving today!

*Source: Philips/Wall Street Journal

PVFD Fire- fighter Spot- light...



For **David Paige**, firefighting isn't just a job...it's a way of life. Not only is he a volunteer firefighter at PVFD, but he is also a full-time, paid firefighter with the Houston Fire Department.

"I volunteer because I enjoy firefighting and everything that goes along with it," said Paige. "There's a camaraderie that you can't get anywhere else. Some of my best memories have been seeing guys who I helped along at PVFD go on to fire school and become successful firefighters."

Paige grew up in Houston and graduated from Klein Forest High School. He is the oldest son of Leo and Susan Paige and has two younger brothers: Brent, who lives in Austin and the youngest, Jeff, who is currently in firefighter school and a volunteer at Ponderosa's Station 2. In addition to his family, Paige truly values the friendships formed at the fire station.

"We are family," said Paige.

"We work together, we laugh together...many of us even live in the same neighborhood. I just bought a house in Country Lake Estates, where my Captain, Assistant Chief and our other Lieutenant live. We all have the same interests. We care about our community and being part of making it a better, safer place to live. It's natural that those friendships would extend outside of the fire house as well."

When someone is as dedicated to their career as Paige, it can be difficult to accept the realities that first responders sometimes face.

"The toughest times have been on emergency runs when you do everything in your power to help, but the outcome is just out of your hands," said Paige. "We have an amazing team, so this doesn't happen often...but the reality is -- in this business -- we aren't going to win them all...and that's a tough pill to swallow. You've just got to focus on the majority of folks you are able to help and continue on. The bottom line is...there's nothing else in the world I'd rather do."

In his "off-time", Paige enjoys spending time with his girlfriend, Erica, and playing softball and golf with his friends. As for work? Well, we already know the answer to that. Paige plans on continuing his career with both HFD and PVFD for many years to come.



"The Ponderosa VFD is truly a team environment," said Chief Fred Windisch. "**Teresa Griffin** plays a pivotal role in that team. She is an expert in book-keeping, communicating with our public and putting up with 'the boys and their firehouse toys!'"

Teresa's extensive background in customer service and public contact makes her a perfect fit as PVFD's Office Manager. For more than seven years, she has represented and supported our department and successfully interfaced with the wide variety of people and organizations she encounters. From administrative and payroll duties to Board meeting support and everything in between, Teresa keeps this office running like a well-oiled fire truck! But it's the volunteer nature of this organization that touches Teresa

Continued on page 7

the most.

“PVFD is non-profit,” said Griffin. “To see the volunteerism and genuine concern of our firefighters, EMT’s and Paramedics is really amazing. They are here because they truly care and want to help. These folks willingly risk their lives for the greater good of this community. It’s impossible to not be affected by that, and it’s an honor to be considered part of that team.”

Supporting Chief Windisch

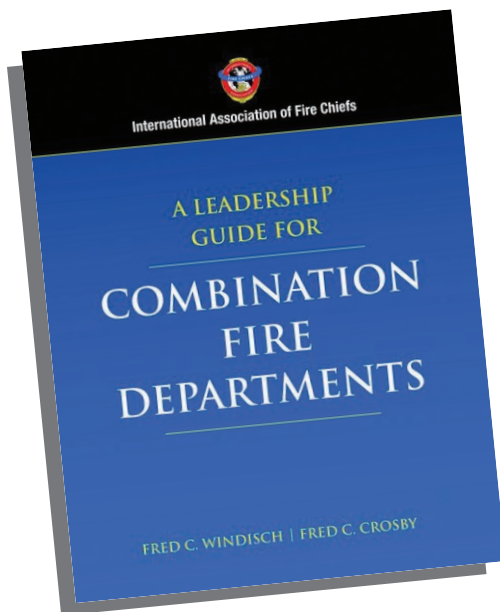
and the rest of the gang has surely been an interesting experience for Teresa, and we appreciate the professionalism and humor she brings to sometimes difficult days.

“I’ll never forget the time Teresa called me into her office on a particularly hectic day,” Chief Windisch recalls. “She looked up through the chaos, smiled and said, ‘Where else can you work this hard and be entertained at the same time?’ Teresa is so right. We’re a family here...we work

hard and we have our good days and our bad days...but we always watch out for each other and we always have fun.”

Teresa and her husband, Ed, have three boys, a Doberman and a Jack Russell mix. They live in Tomball, but recently purchased 37 acres of land near Crockett, TX. In the coming years, they plan to build a log home on that land and enjoy a nice, relaxing retirement. But not too soon, Teresa...we need you here! ■

Chief co-authors new book



Kudos to our own Chief Fred Windisch -- co-author (along with Hanover County Virginia Fire & EMS Department Chief Fred C. Crosby) of the newly published book -- **A Leadership Guide for Combination Fire Departments**.

Combination fire departments (those which utilize volunteer and paid members) are becoming much more common, but can be a challenge to their leaders. Designed to provide chief and officer-level personnel with the tools necessary to lead this type of department, A Leadership Guide for Combination Fire Departments compiles best practices and lessons learned...information the Chiefs gathered through solving the real-life, day-to-day issues inherent in combination systems.

Congratulations Chief Windisch! We’re proud to have you as our leader!

Dan Vogel

Continued from page 4

it is very fulfilling for the individual as well.”

In addition to working with other members of the PVFA Board to improve the PVFD, Vogel enjoys spending time with his wife, Sherilyn, his sons, Chris and Daniel and their spouses, Suzie and Heather, his daughter, Keri and her husband, Trent, and his wonderful grandchildren, Danielle and Brandon.

We thank Dan for his service to this department and hope he continues to serve his community well into the future. ■



Sparky Says...

Be especially careful this Holiday season... never leave lighted candles unattended!

Eliminate the Oil. Eliminate the Danger.

At PVFD, we work hard to bring you the latest in fire safety information. During the Holiday season -- when fire hazards dramatically increase -- this information takes on even greater importance. To celebrate the season, our homes and Christmas trees are covered in lights, festive candles cast a warm glow on decorative scenes and -- for many -- turkeys fried in hot oil adorn the Holiday dinner table.

We've talked to you many times about the potential dangers of frying turkeys, and the many fires we respond to each Holiday season involving this cooking method. Let's face it, heating several pints of oil to extremely high temperatures is risky at best, and often results in severe oil burns and/or difficult-to-extinguish fires.

This year, the members of PVFD are excited to provide you with an alternative: a new product that will not only eliminate the fire hazards caused by oil, but will allow you to cook a delicious "fried" turkey in less time.

The Big Easy

The State Fireman's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas has partnered with Char-Broil to bring communities information about a much safer, healthier alternative to frying a turkey: Char-Broil's The Big Easy.

This innovative new cooker uses infrared heat instead of oil to safely deliver the same moist, crispy and favorable results in less time than it takes your traditional turkey fryer, smoker, grill or conventional oven. It can cook most large cuts of meat in about 8 to 10 minutes per pound, and because the infrared heat cooks from the outside-in, the meat stays moist on the inside and crispy on the outside. Our mouths are watering already!

For more information on The Big Easy, including a virtual tour, a "how-to", and ordering information, visit Char-Broil's website at: www.charbroil.com and click on The Big Easy.

Also, please visit PVFD's website (www.ponderosavfd.org) for a refresher on the full list of Holiday safety tips. We wish you and yours a safe and happy Holiday season and a prosperous New Year! ■



P O N D E R O S A
F I R E F I G H T E R
HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

17061 ROLLING CREEK DR.
HOUSTON, TX 77090



Volunteers are needed! If you are hard-working, dedicated and interested in becoming part of the Ponderosa VFD, call 281-444-8465 today!

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

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