



P O N D E R O S A

FIREFIGHTER

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

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HCESD #28 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

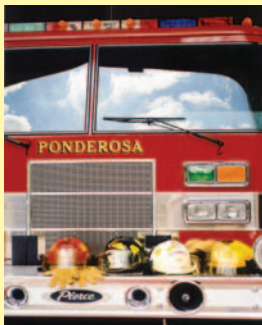
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Fireworks Are No Joke...

Stay Safe This Fourth of July

According to a May 2008 report by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), “**9,200** fireworks-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms in 2006”, and the “highest injury rates were for children aged 10 to 14...whose risk of fireworks injury was **two-and-a-half times as high** as for the general population”.*

With Independence Day just around the corner, it sure makes you think. Fourth of July is a time for fun and family and celebration, but it doesn't need to be a time for emergency room visits...or worse. As always, the Ponderosa Fire Department recommends leaving the fireworks displays to the pyrotechnic experts. There will be plenty of shows to attend, and their brilliance can't be matched on subdivision streets.

Just because fireworks are legal, does not mean they are safe. In fact, “in 2006, nine out of ten (90%) emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that Federal regulations **permit customers to use**”.* If you insist on purchasing your own fireworks, please follow these important safety tips (outlined by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission):

- Do not allow young children to play with fireworks under any circumstances. Sparklers, considered by many the ideal “safe” firework for the young, burn at very high temperatures and can easily ignite clothing. Children cannot understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately in case of emergency. If you must purchase sparklers, get the type with the wooden stick handles (see photo on Page 3).
- Older children should only be permitted to use fireworks under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.
- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and flammable materials, and clear pine needles from your roof.
- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that don't go off.



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF...

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow...

At the Ponderosa Fire Department, we do our best to honor the traditions of yesterday, stay on top of today's demands and prepare thoroughly for the possibilities of tomorrow.

To ensure we don't fall short on our commitment to keep this community safe, the PFD has always kept an eagle eye on future needs. As a result, we now possess state-of-the-art equipment, a fabulous training facility and a top notch staff who dedicates their lives to serving others. These M's (Machines, Methods and Manpower - well, people power, but it didn't work with the M's!) require the appropriate funds to assure timely and professional services. Times are tight and operational costs are climbing.

We are experiencing the same money issues that you are, but because, in the past, we proactively assessed future needs,

our service remains the highest of quality. That service does require money...money that is spent responsibly and invested in the expected, well-researched demands of tomorrow.

Preparing for tomorrow sometimes requires a transformation of previous business practices. Our transition from pure volunteers to paid personnel is a part of that transformation. With our Board of Directors leading the charge, we're able to keep yesterday in perspective, use today as our benchmarks, and sometimes pull out our "crystal ball" to help us not only maintain, but improve, our high level of service.

The recent hiring of three full-time personnel brings us up to six full-time firefighters (joining our existing volunteer and part-time paid firefighters). Why is it necessary to continue along this path? Because the speed of life,



Chief Windisch

changing demographics, and an increased individual commitment have left us with a waning volunteer pool to choose from.

In the "old days", we responded to 700 emergencies per year. Today it is over **1,500!** We no longer live in the world of a "one response at a time" department. Today, we often experience multiple emergency responses, either back to back or simultaneously. Our neighboring fire and EMS departments are in the same boat, and we do our best to compliment each other's services and share resources on a daily basis.

Tomorrow can be an unknown, but with proper planning, commitment and a steadfast dedication to our mission, we will continue to set the pace and improve our services to meet future demands. As always, we thank you for your support.

J. C. Windisch



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- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water and throw them away.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.
- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.
- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place. Check instructions for special storage directions.
- Observe local laws.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a firework while lighting.
- Don't experiment with homemade fireworks.

Also, be aware that some subdivision deed restrictions ban fireworks and that some areas around us are within Houston's Special Purpose Annexation, where they can confiscate fireworks and cite the individual (these areas are generally adjacent to FM 1960).

Stay safe and aware this Independence Day...even one unnecessary injury is one too many.

* **Fireworks**; John R. Hall, Jr.; Fire Analysis and Research Division; National Fire Protection Association; May 2008

Move Right for Sirens and Lights

Your call for assistance is our highest priority, and it is our goal to get to you in the safest and most expedient manner possible. Unfortunately, this goal can sometimes be a bit of a challenge.

"Outside of actually fighting a fire, driving to emergencies is our biggest risk," said Ponderosa Fire Department Chief, Fred Windisch. "We have witnessed drivers stop, move left, speed up or even refuse to move out of our way. Emergency vehicle rules are in place for a reason. There are often lives on the line at our destination and it is our responsibility to get to those in need...quickly."

In an effort to speed up this process, while still ensuring the safety of those on the road, we implemented "traffic signal preemption" on FM 1960 two years ago. The technology allows our emergency vehicles to communicate to the intersection (via its own digital identity), requesting an authorized green light.

Today, we are working with Harris County to purchase and install an even more high-tech

preemption system... one that includes GPS and radio signaling across the fiber optic network. This intelligent system will know where we are, predict when we will arrive at the next intersection, and will be monitored by TRANSTAR to assist in minimizing mobility issues.

Working in conjunction with some of the finest fire and EMS agencies in our country (Cypress Creek EMS, Cypress Creek FD, Klein FD, Champions FD, and Spring FD), this far-reaching project will encompass approximately 240 square miles, with over 200 intersections. The overall cost of over \$2,000,000 will be shared by all agencies and implemented over a five-year phased approach.

These wonderful advancements continue to help us bring you the emergency services you and your family expect and deserve, but we also count on you to do your part when an emergency vehicle approaches. Keep your music or sound system low enough to be able to hear a siren! **Move Right for Sirens and Lights!** ■

MOVE RIGHT
FOR
SIRENS & LIGHTS
Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department

Board Member Spotlight



Steve Sheridan

“It is the board’s role to make sure our community is getting the best fire protection for their tax dollars,” said PVFA 2nd Vice President, Steve Sheridan. “That means providing the Ponderosa Fire Department with the people, training and equipment they need to make it work...and work well.”

Sheridan, appointed to the board in April of 2006, has a long and distinguished history in emergency service. In the twenty years prior to joining the Ponderosa Fire Department - while serving in the Air Force - he was a member of five departments throughout the U.S. He then joined our team and served as a member for almost nineteen years before transitioning onto the PVFA board.

“Steve came to us in 1988 and was one of our finest drivers

and pump operators,” said PFD chief, Fred Windisch. “His background in the Air Force and his knowledge of what we do and what our true needs are really helps in making those sometimes difficult 30,000 foot decisions. He understands the issues and is focused on the results.”

When asked if there was a single event (since being a board member) that stuck out in his mind, Sheridan, in his usual manner, kept it short and sweet.

“Achieving our goals is what’s important to me,” said Sheridan. “We must help the PFD maintain the high standards they are known for...help shape the future. It’s what the community deserves.”

Sheridan has lived in Inverness Forest for twenty years and is currently a Buyer for Fiberspar Linepipe. His wonderful wife of thirty-five years, Sandra, passed away two years ago. He has three grown stepsons - Robert, Ricky and Ronnie Price - and three beautiful grandkids -- Brianna, Stephanie and Daniel.

“We value Steve’s experience and feel truly fortunate to have him on our team,” said Chief Windisch. “We hope he continues to serve on the board for years to come. We’re better off for his service.” ■



Children Aren’t Waterproof

Swimming is a great form of exercise, a fun activity, and also a way to combat the often stifling heat of a southeast Texas summer day. We must be keenly aware, however, of the inherent dangers present when children are in and around swimming pools or other bodies of water.

We’ve all heard the tragic news reports of the drowning or serious injury of a small child in a backyard swimming pool. In fact, children under the age of five are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident in a swimming pool than in an automobile.

Layers of Protection

Many parents put their kids in swim lessons at an early age...and that’s a good thing. But children should also be taught to have a healthy respect for the water...whether they are in it or just around it. Simply learning to swim does not guarantee their safety. The vast majority of people who drown never intended to get in the water in the first place.

So what else can be done to decrease the likelihood of a drowning on your watch? The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) strongly advises that parents use “layers

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Have you ever thought about becoming a Ponderosa firefighter? For more information on how to do this, call 281-444-8465.



Emergency Services District #28 Needs You!

Do you have a desire to make a difference in your community, but you just aren't sure how? Are you interested in fire and rescue emergency services? If so, you may be the perfect candidate to fill current or potential board vacancies on Emergency Services District (ESD #28).

What is an Emergency Services District and why does ESD #28 need your help?

An ESD is a political subdivision of the State of Texas with a mandate to provide emergency services to its residents. In the case of ESD #28, this is accomplished through **The Ponderosa Fire Department**. Since 1972, this organization of volunteers (and now full-time and part-time personnel) has provided the critical "first responder" fire and rescue services to thousands of residents, motorists, and businesses.

The overall mission of the ESD #28 Board is to provide funding and leadership, and to promote excellence in the delivery of fire and rescue services to the residents of the District.

Interested in becoming a part of our team? We are looking for community-minded folks just like you. To serve as a member of the ESD #28 board, you must be:

- At least 18 years of age
- A qualified voter within ESD #28 or the owner of land subject to taxation in the district
- Not related to a member of the fire department, nor
- Not be an elected official on any other board.

For more information, contact our office manager, Teresa Griffin, or Ponderosa Fire Chief, Fred Windisch at 281-444-8465.

Protect Your Home and Family...For Free!

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)*, smoke alarms "have contributed to the almost 50 percent decrease in fire deaths since the 1970s". The NFPA also estimates (based on a 2004 survey) that "95% of U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm, but 65 PERCENT of reported home fire deaths occurred in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms". These statistics hammer home the fact that **smoke alarms DO work**, and living without them could be a life-threatening risk. So, why live without - especially when you can get them for free...

Fire Safety Doesn't Have to Cost You

The Ponderosa Fire Department is partnering with Wayne Wright Lawyers Charitable Campaign to provide and install free smoke detectors. Whether you are living in a home without smoke alarms, or with faulty or old smoke alarms (the NFPA recommends replacing them every ten years), we can help.

"Smoke Alarms in Every Home" Campaign

After a rash of tragic fires over the 2006-year and holiday

season, Wayne Wright and his associates decided to step in and make a difference. On December 15, 2006, they established "**Smoke Alarms in Every Home**" and joined with local fire departments to kick-off and implement the campaign.

"Every person, in every home, deserves the protection that a smoke alarm provides," said Mr. Wright. "It is unbelievable to think that there are families in our community living in homes without this simple, life-saving device."

With the vision to "educate, create awareness, and have available smoke alarms to help save lives", the organization set out to provide the alarms - free of charge to families. And they've been doing so ever since.

Who to Call

To secure your own, free smoke alarm(s), simply call the Ponderosa Fire Department at 281-444-8465. We'll set up an appointment and one of our firefighters will come to your home to take care of the installation. And if your home is already equipped with working smoke alarms, be sure to check them on a regular basis. It can save your life.

*www.nfpa.org

**Smoke alarms
DO work, and
living without
them could be a
life-threatening
risk....**



Ponderosa Firefighter Spotlight...



Twenty-six years ago, **Juan Jose Ycaza** was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador. In 1999, Juan's parents moved the family to the U.S. to provide better educational opportunities for their four boys. Mission accomplished. Juan graduated from Westfield High School and then received a degree in Fire Science from Cy-Fair College.

"I think I was always interested in emergency service," said Ycaza. "When I was sixteen, I joined the Civil Defense (Defensa Civil) in Ecuador...an organization similar to the Red Cross which travels to places in need, like those dealing with natural disasters. Three months after joining, we moved to the U.S. I immediately found out which fire department served our area and made it my mission to someday become a member of the PFD."

On September 19, 2003, he did just that.

"I feel so fortunate that the department gave me a chance, and I've done my best, through dedication and hard work to show my appreciation."

His first few years as a volunteer firefighter, Ycaza enjoyed the camaraderie so much he "practically lived at the station", but a new job as a Customer Service Agent at George Bush Intercontinental Airport has recently taken some time away from the community service and fellow members that inspire him.

"My ultimate goal is to work as a full-time firefighter...to make a career out of what I studied to be," said Ycaza.

Speaking of accomplishing goals...on March 5, 2008, Juan Jose Ycaza became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America.

"It feels amazing to be a citizen of a country that's given me so much," said Ycaza. "I can't forget the people I left in Ecuador...I keep them always in my heart, but I am so grateful for the opportunities my family and I have been offered. In a way, I feel that I now represent both countries, and I hope I represent them well."

Juan: On behalf of all of your fellow PFD comrades, let us say this - you do more than represent yourself well, you make us proud. Congratulations on your recent citizenship and we wish you the best in all your endeavors! ■

Chris Crady began his emergency service career in 1995 as an EMT...with no intention of becoming a firefighter. But fate had other plans.

"I stopped by the Jersey Village Fire Department one day to speak to their chief about putting my EMT skills to use," Crady said. "I really liked the people and was impressed with the equipment, gear and trucks, but I didn't have firefighting on the brain."

Over time, Crady developed friendships with members of the department and would often hang out at the station when off work. On one of those occasions, the alerts went off and Crady was given an opportunity that would change his life forever.

"It was a Mutual Aid assignment two alarm apartment fire. The engine was already out, but two more alarms soon came across the radio," Crady said.

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“The JVFD chief came out of her office and asked me if I’d like to go. I was hesitant, but she told me to grab some gear and go. When we arrived at the fire - which encompassed an entire building - the captain told me to put the gear on and help. So I did. That same captain ended up being my mentor for five years.”

Crady took a year off from work to attend San Jacinto Fire School and is a Commission Certified Structural Fire Fighter. In 1999, while teaching an SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus) class with the Cy-Fair Fire Department he met, and was extremely impressed with some Ponderosa members. In late 2001, he joined the Ponderosa Fire Department and is now a Lieutenant at Station 1.

“I’ve made some great friends at PFD and have had many memorable moments,” said Crady, “but the most memorable would have to be extinguishing my own neighbor’s house when it caught fire back in November.”

Crady, a dedicated husband to wife, Kelley, and a devoted father to 2 ½ year-old, Madeline, and two month-old, Aiden, is a native Houstonian and a Process Control Engineer for Hunting Energy Services. When not working or volunteering at PFD, he likes to spend as much time as possible with his wife and children.

“Life is way too short,” he said. “I want to be there for my family.” ■



Kevin Wiseman may be just 27-years-old, but he’s been a member of the Ponderosa Fire Department for over ten years now...and counting.

“I became interested in fire service after witnessing a fire at the end of my street when I was fifteen,” said Wiseman. “The activity...the trucks...the firefighters all doing their job...it all seemed very exciting. When I told my mother about it, she revealed that my grandfather had been a firefighter and I had several other family members involved in fire service in Michigan. I joined PFD just after my 16th birthday. Guess you can’t fight genetics!”

Wiseman received a BS in Fire Protection and Safety Technology from Oklahoma State University. He is a Lieutenant at Ponderosa’s Station 2, a full-time firefighter for The Woodlands Fire Department and a fire protection engineer for Risktec Solutions. Whew! Not only is Kevin busy,

he has clearly found his calling!

“It can sometimes be challenging to juggle it all,” said Wiseman, “but it’s what I love to do, and I consider my fellow firefighters my second family.”

In fact, the Ponderosa Fire Department, and its members, played a significant role in one of the most important days of Kevin’s life.

“At my wedding, my wife and I stood on the pumper truck and took pictures with all the other firefighters. We even left the wedding in one of the trucks,” said Wiseman. “You just don’t forget moments like that. They stay in your heart and mind forever.”

Kevin hopes to continue on with the Woodlands and Ponderosa fire departments for many years to come. When not engaged in one of his many fire service careers, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Elisa, attending Astros games, fishing and watching Nascar. He also dreams of one day owning his own beach house, which would be a great vacation getaway for this growing family (they are expecting their first child in December).

The members of Ponderosa Fire Department wish this family the best of luck and we hope to see the next generation standing at our bay doors in sixteen years!

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.”

~ Aristotle



Sparky Says...

Be especially careful if you go anywhere near FIREWORKS... Never play with fireworks without supervision by a parent or adult!

Children Aren't Waterproof...

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of protection” around the pool. **Here are some important tips:**

◆ Never swim alone. Experts insist that no one -- of any age -- should EVER swim alone. Drownings are often called “silent” accidents...they usually happen quickly, without a cry for help. Parents should not take their eyes off children when they are in or around water...not even for a second.

◆ Check that barriers are secure at all times. Children are naturally drawn to the sparkling allure of water. A sliding glass door that successfully separates a child from a backyard pool one day can be opened by young fingers the next. Doors to pool areas should be secured with out-of-reach locks and protected with audible alarms.

◆ Steps and ladders leading from the ground to the pool should also be secured and locked, or removed when the pool is not in use. Never take barriers for granted; constantly check to see that they are secure to prevent unwanted access to a pool area.

◆ Set pool rules - and enforce them. Insist that all who use the

pool are aware of, and follow, strict rules. There should be no running, no pushing others under water, and no diving (except in designated areas with adult permission and supervision).

◆ Be prepared if an emergency situation arises. Preparation in case of emergency is imperative. Keep rescue equipment (pole, rope and personal flotation devices) and a cordless or cellular phone near the pool whenever it is in use, and make sure those supervising children learn CPR and are able to administer it at a moments notice. These skills can prevent death or brain injury, which can occur in two to six minutes after oxygen is cut off from the brain.

◆ Flotation devices cannot be relied upon to keep a child safe in the water. Teach children how to float on their back and reach the side of the pool if they should ever fall in. Also instruct them to YELL FOR HELP immediately - it could be your only indication that they are in danger.

◆ Always remember to check the pool first if a child is missing. Seconds count in preventing death or disability. Go to the edge of the pool and scan it in its entirety.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each



year, nationwide, about 300 children under five years old drown in swimming pools and more than 2,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for submersion injuries.

To minimize the risk that you or someone you love will be involved in an aquatic accident, follow the simple rules and suggestions outlined in this article and enjoy summer water activities for what they can be...a great way to spend quality time with family.

For more information on proper barriers or other pool safety tips, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at www.cpsc.gov, or the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org (click on “Health & Safety Services” then “Swimming & Lifeguarding”). ■

P O N D E R O S A
FIREFIGHTER
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!

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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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