

HOT TOPICS



News and information for Rural District residents.

Reminder: Spring open burning ends on June 15.

Spring – 2015

Protecting the lives, safety, property, and environment of all persons in the community and the surrounding areas we serve.

Facts About Cooking Fires

By Fire Marshal Jeff Prechel

Nationally, the most common cause of fire in a single-family residence is “unattended food on the stove.” The Corvallis Fire Department’s statistics mirror the national statistics. In over half of the cooking fires in Corvallis, no one was present in the kitchen at the time of the fire. This



fact changes the nature of the fire and the outcome for the property. A witnessed cooking fire is typically confined to the object on the stove and easily controlled by the occupant with minimal damage to the home. When a cooking fire occurs

on a range top and there is no one to immediately control fire growth, the fire has a high likelihood of extending from the object of origin to the cabinetry and then beyond the room of origin. This uncontrolled growth will often result in the loss of the entire structure in rural areas where increasing smoke can go undetected until the free-burning fire breaches the windows and roof.

In post-fire interviews, the excuses for leaving the room while cooking vary:

- I took a quick trip to the store;
- I was visiting a neighbor;
- I ran to work;
- I had to pick up my kids;
- I was chasing the dog down the street;
- I was working in the garage / doing laundry / taking a shower / getting the mail / studying / sleeping / etc.

Sound familiar? We’ve all done it. Yes, firefighters have done it too. In fact, there are several stories worldwide of firefighters (*in other cities, of course*) burning down their fire stations while responding to someone else’s emergency. They, too, have left food cooking on the stove when the alarm bells went off. This has happened so often, in fact, that our fire stations have an automatic shut-off switch to disable the kitchen appliances when an emergency call is dispatched -- just so we can’t forget. Regretfully, it happens. So we came up with a creative way to prevent it from occurring again -- pretty cool if you think about it.

There is a predictable pre-event path that leads to each of these incidents. Each time we are not faced with a negative consequence for leaving the kitchen while we are cooking, we will experience a false sense of security. In the future, we feel more comfortable taking the same or greater risk with each occurrence. *“Yeah, I probably shouldn’t do this, but it’ll just be for a minute or two...”*

We continue this pattern of behavior until a unique set of conditions is in place, and then a catastrophic event occurs.

Some people would call these events accidents, but in truth our behavior has caused the event. It was just an unintentional outcome. Another term for this type of behavior is the Normalization of Deviance, which often precedes a Predictable Surprise. We humans have a tendency to normalize or justify our bad behavior out of convenience, and the surprise is only in the timing of the fire -- not that it actually happened. Renowned speaker [Mike Mullane, a former NASA Astronaut, has a great video series on this topic if you would like more information about it.](#)

In the case of our kitchen fire, we can retrospectively see the flaw in our decision-making process. It was precisely the moment that we decided to leave the kitchen with the burner on "high." *"I left the kitchen to go to the bathroom,... then my son called and needed a ride home from his friend's house -- it's just a couple of blocks away And then.... we saw fire trucks in our neighborhood."* And what will I say to the fire investigator? *"Yes, the stove was turned 'on,' but I've done that a hundred times. The fire in the kitchen couldn't have been caused by..."*

These are easily preventable incidents that contribute to almost half of our residential structure fires, and the data shows a consistent increase over the past several decades. Why? Because as the population increases and the number of housing units increases, the number of structure fires caused by people cooking also increases. No one thinks that it will happen to them, but the odds are that in time it will. The data supporting mandatory seatbelts in motor vehicles wasn't as compelling; the use of seatbelts was just easier to regulate.

So what should we do next? In the interest of reducing the number of kitchen fires, the Corvallis Fire Department has partnered with several property management groups in developing a Public Education campaign directed at addressing the issue. But the reality is that the burden for preventing these types of fires lies with the chef. Please stay in the kitchen while cooking, and test your smoke detectors regularly.

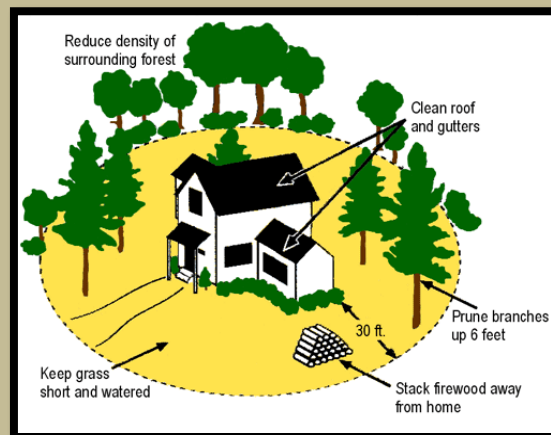
Save the Dates:

- Benton County Fair – July 29 – August 1
- Fire Department Open House – October 10

Firewise – Defensible Space

This year is proving to be another drought year in the State of Oregon. The Corvallis Fire Department would like to remind home owners to start preparing for this year's wildfire season by moving any combustible materials, such as dead leaves and pine needles, at least 30 feet away from structures. It is recommended to extend the 30 feet out as far as 100 to 200 feet, depending on the surrounding forest and grasslands.

Also prune shrubs and small trees that are within 30 feet of the house. Large trees should be trimmed so that the



lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet high to prevent a fire that is on the ground from spreading to the tree tops. Now is a good time to create or update your family emergency evacuation plan and practice the plan to prepare for an emergency. For more information on defensible space, please contact Fire Prevention Officer Jacob Backer at 541-766-6502.

Burning Regulations

Backyard burning during the spring runs from March 1 through June 15, and the fall burn season runs from October 1 to December 15.

You must receive permission from your local fire department; you can do that by calling the burn advisory number at 541-766-6971. The burn advisory is updated by 8:15 every morning.

For more detailed information, including an explanation of the different types of burning, please refer to this link [Corvallis Burning Regulations.](#)

“Risk Watch” Program in Schools

The Corvallis Fire Department is offering a fire prevention program known as Risk Watch to 3rd grade classrooms in the 509J District and private schools in Rural District. Fire Prevention Officers, Carmen Westfall



and Jake Backer, have been visiting schools to deliver a 40-minute presentation on fire hazard identification, home escape plans, and fire prevention. The

Corvallis Waldorf School was the first Rural District school to receive the program. Children have been very receptive and inquisitive on the matters of fire prevention and safety. At the end of the program, children are asked to go home and check their smoke detectors and work on a home escape plan with their families. For more information about Risk Watch, or fire prevention strategies, contact Carmen Westfall at 541-766-6909.

Rural District and City Agreement

After months of negotiations, the Rural District and the City have come to an agreement on a new one-year contract. This new contract is for the 2015-16 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2015, and running through June 30, 2016. This gives the new city council, the mayor, and the new city manager time to get in place before having to deal with a longer-term contract agreement. It is also a fixed-rate contract; the Rural District agrees to pay the City a sum of \$1,200,000 instead of a percentage of property taxes as in past years. This allows the Corvallis Fire Department to better plan its revenue stream to meet its expenses. The contract continues the close cooperation between the Rural District and the Fire Department in the protection of homes and businesses in the Rural District. As in the past, the Rural District will offer scholarships to interns living at the Locke Fire Station in return for their participation in the Corvallis Fire Department's Volunteer program.

Jim Patton Receives “Golden Sparky” Award

We are very proud to announce that Fire Prevention Officer Jim Patton was honored this spring as the recipient of the Oregon State Fire Marshal's “Fire Service Public Educator of the Year,” aka the “Golden Sparky Award.” Jim was nominated by his peers in recognition of his efforts in Fire Prevention over the course of his career.



In addition to his many years of public education campaigns in the community, Jim is nationally recognized as a campus fire safety speaker and has been the Fire Department's liaison to Oregon State University for 20 years.

Sign it So They See You!

[Order an address marker](#) to help visitors and emergency personnel locate your home.



New Wildfire Evacuation Route

Residents of the Zinfandel area should be able to rest a little more comfortably knowing that an additional wildfire evacuation road has been completed and is ready for use on NW Zinfandel Lane/Nettleton Road, just north of Cardinal. The road leads to forestry roads that take you to NW Sulphur Springs.



The new 200-foot road segment was completed last June through a combined venture of the Oregon Department of Forestry,

the Oregon State University Forestry Department, and the Vineyard Mountain Road District. The road was realigned to allow for expedient emergency vehicle access. Additional gravel was laid to support heavier vehicles, and an access gate installed to limit non-emergency use of the road. The gate is currently locked, and keys are held by a number of nearby residents, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODOF), the Benton County Sheriff Office, and the Corvallis Fire Department. The intent is to allow additional exiting for residents at the north end of the residential area as well as additional emergency crew access in the event of a fire or other natural disaster. Previously, northerly egress/access to the area was severely limited.

The gate can be opened by residents once the gate access code is shared through an emergency phone tree process. Fire crews can unlock the gate to gain access in an emergency with a master key carried on every fire engine.

Residents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this emergency route prior to a potential future emergency and to make this part of their alternate emergency evacuation plan.



According to Stephen Fitzgerald, Director of OSU Research Forests, funds for the project, as well as time and expertise for engineering and other services, were provided by both ODOF and OSU.

[The Corvallis Gazette Times did an article on the new access road](#) back in August. Any questions regarding the gate and route can be directed to any Vineyard Mountain Road District member.

Building in Corvallis?

The Corvallis Fire Prevention Division has created a user's guide to assist homeowners in the Rural District with the various Fire Code requirements associated with new construction. [A copy of the "CRFPD Fire Plan Review Guide"](#) is available for your use.

Meet Your New Fire Prevention Professionals:

Locke Station Lieutenant Kevin Fulsher

Kevin joined the Corvallis Fire Department in 2002 as a Resident Volunteer Firefighter and became an Intern at the Locke Fire Station in 2003. From the Portland area, Kevin has lived in Corvallis since 2000 when he relocated here to attend OSU. He was hired full-time as a Firefighter / EMT in October of 2004, became a licensed paramedic in 2010, and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in September of 2014.

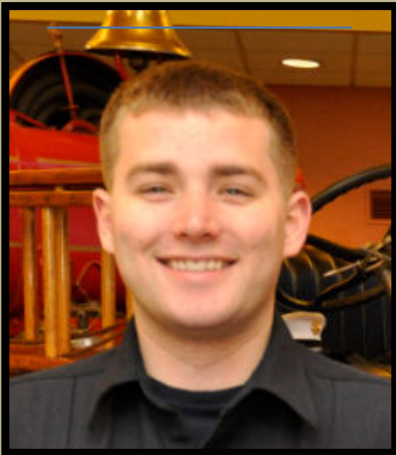


Kevin serves as the Locke Station Lieutenant and manages the Intern and Volunteer Firefighter programs at that station. Currently, he is working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Services Administration through Eastern Oregon University.

Kevin lives in Corvallis with his wife, Claire, and daughter, Audrey.

Fire Prevention Officer Jake Backer

Jacob Backer joined the Corvallis Fire Department in April of 2008 as a Volunteer. In 2009, Jake became an Intern Volunteer Firefighter at the Locke Station and attended Linn-Benton and Chemeketa, working toward his paramedic certification.



While attending college, Jake worked as a Fire Prevention Assistant with Corvallis Fire. His duties included the Weed Abatement and Hydrant Flushing programs. He also assisted with fire prevention activities around the

community, including the Benton County Fair and the Fire Department Open House.

In November of 2014, Jake was hired as the new Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) to fill the levy-funded position that was passed in May of 2014. One of FPO Backer's primary areas of responsibility is the Rural District.

Jake and his wife, Tiffany, reside in Albany, close to their family and friends.

National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is May 15, 2015; and the National Fire Protection Agency is encouraging citizens and communities to commit a couple of hours – or the entire day – to join others around the nation in making communities safer places to live.

Efforts will raise awareness and will help protect homes, neighborhoods, and entire communities, while increasing the safety of firefighters during future wildfires.



[More information is available](#) on the National Fire Protection Agency's website.

REMINDER FOR THE UPCOMING SUMMER

Use care before, during, and after the barbecue. If you use a charcoal grill, discard ashes in an airtight metal container with a metal lid (do not dump them into plastic garbage containers or paper bags).

Pay attention to the possibility of ashes and coals falling from the lower vents of the barbecue onto wooden decks (especially on windy evenings). Wet down the deck when you leave it for the evening.



Who Are Your Board Members, and When Do They Meet?

The Board generally meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at Locke Station. The meetings are open to the public, and we encourage you to come and learn more about your fire district.

The Board members are:

George Mears, Board Chair

George.Mears@corvallisrfd.com

Dick Ragsdale, Vice Chair

Dick.Ragsdale@corvallisrfd.com

Bob Conder, Secretary

Bob.Conder@corvallisrfd.com

Frank Pericardo, Treasurer

Frank.Pericardo@corvallisrfd.com

Alex Polikoff, Member at Large

Alex.Polikoff@corvallisrfd.com