

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 2018.02

Our February meeting took place on Thursday, February 8, at 7pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. We changed the night of our meeting this month because several members had scheduling conflicts. We have two members attending firefighter classes twice a week and two members attending EMR classes twice a week. These classes require about 6 hours a week in a classroom as well as reading and studying at home. Our firefighter students must also commit to one Saturday a month for hands on training. Our EMR students will be finished in March, and our firefighter students will finish in May. We applaud Loren, Loren, Hannah and Chris for taking on this commitment to serve the people of our township! Christopher Berg is a new member of the EVFD. He expressed interest in joining our department during the Melrude Winter Frolic on Saturday, February 10. On Sunday, Feb 11, he was sworn in as a member, and on Monday, Feb 12, he began EMR classes. Talk about jumping right in with both feet! Welcome, Chris! We look forward to working with you!

Ellsburg is a double township of 72 square miles. The EVFD also provides coverage for 13 sections of Unorganized Township 55-15 located on our eastern border. Because of the size of the area that we cover, we must maintain two firehalls. One is near our eastern border, and one is 15 miles away by road toward the western border. Each of these halls must house an engine, water tender, rescue vehicle, and brush/quick attack vehicle to handle fires and basic medical needs. Our township has miles of ATV and snowmobile trails that we must be able to access. Therefore, our department also houses an ATV and 6x6 side-by-side. We were fortunate to be able to acquire a snowmobile from the DNR this month that will help us respond to accidents on the snowmobile trails. We have an Orion Rescue sled that has been used to transport injured people out of the woods. These vehicles require maintenance and repair, most of which our members do themselves. The cold days of January and February encouraged our mechanically-inclined members, especially our chief Jeff, to hang out in the warmth of the firehalls and catch up on this vehicle work. We are also in the process of converting our Freightliner to a tanker. The EVFD was outraged to learn that someone stole the four batteries out of our Freightliner sometime at the end of December or beginning of January. Who would sink so low as to steal the batteries out of a volunteer fire department vehicle? These batteries will cost us about \$1000 to replace. Actually, it is the taxpayers of Ellsburg that have been robbed since the EVFD is funded by them. Of course, a police report was filed and an investigation initiated. We have also installed security measures. If anyone has any information about this crime, please contact Jeff at 218-391-4319. This behavior should not be tolerated in our community.

At this time of year, our department must prepare for the wildfire season. We did not get as much snow this year and that drought increases the chance that a wildfire occurs. 90% of wildfires are caused by humans. Other causes include lightening and wind. In our township, wildfires have been started by unattended campfires and sparks emitted from train wheels and machinery on dry vegetation. The danger of wildfires is the potential to spread to structures. Look around the outside of your home and evaluate it for wildfire potential. There should be at least a 30 foot radius around your home which has been cleared of flammable vegetation and wildfire fuel. Ideally, a green lawn should be maintained within this radius. Plant nothing within 3 to 5 feet of your structure, especially if it is sided with wood, logs, or other flammable material. Do not store your firewood within this 30 foot radius. Lay gravel under your decks, or enclose that area with metal screening or sheeting. Conifer trees are among the most flammable trees. It is recommended to remove all conifer trees from this 30 foot radius. If not, make sure that they are spaced at least 10 feet apart at the crowns, and that they are pruned up at least 8 feet. Remove all tall grass, small shrubs, and other material that would allow fire to climb into the tree. Trim all branches that hang over your roof or that are within 20 feet of a chimney. Place propane tanks at least 10 feet from your structure, and clear all grass and bushes 10 feet away from the tank. Have a hose that is at least 100 feet long attached to an outside faucet so that you can wet down your structures and lawn if a wildfire threatens. Plan and discuss an escape plan with your family, including your pets. Make sure that your house number is clearly visible and that fire department vehicles can come down your driveway. Contact the EVFD if you would like information on landscaping or wildfire prevention.

Our department was on call at the annual Melrude Winter Frolic on February 10. It was a wonderful day for the Frolic. The weather was perfect, there were no injuries, and we received a few inquiries about joining our department. We brought our medical vehicle, Rescue 8, that contains most of our medical equipment. We brought our Orion Rescue Sled, which currently has skis on it, in case we had to transport someone down the hill. We brought our ATV, which currently has tracks on it, to pull the Rescue Sled. We brought our snowmobile so that someone could respond quickly to an accident scene on the hill or on the lake. We

brought our 6x6 side-by-side to transport responders to an accident scene. The Winter Frolic has been held for about 50 years. While there have been minor injuries throughout the years, no one can remember a tragedy. However, the potential is there and the EVFD must be prepared with all the necessary equipment. There is an average of 20,000 children taken to emergency rooms each year because of injuries resulting from sledding. Several children have already died this year from sledding accidents. Most sledding injuries occur in those aged 14 and under. 43% of these injuries are traumatic brain injuries.

There are several safety tips that can help ensure that a sliding experience is a safe experience. Wearing layers of thick winter clothing will protect you from frostbite as well as offer protective padding. Snow boots and waterproof gloves are a necessity. A long scarf is not recommended because it can get caught underneath a sled and cause a neck injury or even strangulation. Studies have shown that the average speed a sled slides down a hill is 19mph. A steep or icy hill will increase this speed. A serious injury, such as a traumatic brain injury, can occur if a sled crashes into something at this speed. Wear a helmet. Sled seated with feet first to avoid a head on collision. Avoid trees, rocks, poles, and snowbanks. A snowbank could be concealing a rock. Make sure that there is a large, flat landing area that does not end on a road, playground, fence, parking lot, or frozen body of water. A sled that is able to be steered allows the rider more control. Snow discs, tubes, and saucers go faster than the average sled, but the rider has no control. Snow tubes are responsible for more traumatic brain injuries than any other sled. Children less than 5 years old should ride with an adult. Do not exceed the passenger limit for the sled. A sled is not designed to be used for performing tricks or jumping off ramps. Sled in the daytime and never sled alone. 6000 children were injured over a 10 year period by sledding while being pulled by a car, ATV, or snowmobile. Walk up the side of a hill to avoid those sledding down the hill. If you are about to crash, roll off the sled. If there is an accident, move the victim only if it is necessary. Broken bones, spinal injuries, and head injuries may not be immediately identifiable, but could be made worse by movement. Call 911. We will be there to help!