

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 2018 Jan

Our January meeting took place on Wednesday, January 3, at the Bass Lake Firehall. The annual elections took place. The 2018 officers are: President Ray Privett, Vice-President Loren Dean Mesedahl, Secretary Heidi Yokel, Treasurer Sharron McKechnie, Safety Officer Bill McKechnie, Chief Jeff Dulinski, Assistant Chief Justus Peterson, and Assistant Chief Bob Skafte. Congratulations! May you all enjoy a productive year. We have a new member! Hannah Kloss has volunteered to be a member of the EVFD. Hannah brings medical experience to our department as she previously worked at the St. Cloud Hospital and was also an EMT. Welcome, Hannah! Thank-you for your commitment to help the residents and visitors of Ellsburg.

Our department responded to 33 calls in 2017. There were 10 medical calls, 10 accidents, 4 wildland fires, 3 structure fires, and 6 other calls for welfare checks, power lines down, and missing persons. We had more calls in 2017 than in 2016, but we maintain our record of 100% response. Our department has had a busy 2017 with calls, equipment updates, training, clerical organization, maintenance, and repairs. We are a dedicated group and we look forward to what we will accomplish in 2018.

The Minnesota State Fire Marshal reported that there were 56 deaths due to fires in Minnesota in 2017. That is 30% more than in 2016. This number does not include the 6 victims of fire in the last week of December, four of which were in Hibbing. A fire can become life-threatening in two minutes. A home can become engulfed in flames in five minutes. This is why it is so important to have working smoke detectors that can alert you to a fire. Have fire extinguishers available and know how to use them. Consider installing a sprinkler system. Sleep with your door closed. Keep a phone near your bed so that you can call 911. It is very important that each member of your residence knows and practices your home fire escape plan. Find two ways out of each room. Practice exiting each room and the residence in the dark or with your eyes closed. Make sure windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out easily, and security bars can be opened. Teach children not to hide behind or under furniture if there is a fire. If there is a fire, crawl low under the smoke to your exit. Feel the doorknob and door before opening it. If it is hot, or there is smoke coming around the door, leave the door closed and find a second way out. If you open a door, do it slowly and be prepared to close it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is there. If you cannot exit the room, close the door and cover the cracks around the door and vents with cloth or tape to keep the smoke out. Call 911 and tell them where you are. If your clothes catch fire, remember to stop immediately, drop to the floor or ground, cover your face, and roll over and over or back and forth until the fire is out. If someone else is on fire, smother the flames using a blanket or towel. If you cannot get to someone trapped in the house, leave the home and call 911 and tell them where the person is located. If pets are trapped, tell firefighters.

People can become trapped in a burning residence because they stop to try to retrieve their important documents. It is a good idea to make digital copies of your valuable documents such as house deeds, financial accounts, birth certificates... The perfect time to do this is now while you are going through your documents preparing for filing taxes. After a fire, contact the Red Cross if you need help with housing, food, and medicines. Contact your insurance company for help with protecting your property, taking inventory, and contacting fire damage restoration companies. Do not enter your residence until the fire department tells you that it is safe to do so. Notify your mortgage company. Save receipts for anything you spend related to the fire.

Cooking and smoking are common causes of fires. Frayed wires and appliances not plugged in correctly can start electrical fires. Portable space heaters, fireplaces, and woodstoves are also potential fire hazards if not maintained properly. Take the time now to look through your residence and identify potential fire hazards. Help make 2018 a safer year by being proactive in preventing fire in your residence and keeping your family safe. And don't hesitate to call 911. We are here to help you!

Heidi Yokel
Secretary, EVFD