

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 20190403

Our April Meeting was held on Wednesday, April 3, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our May meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 1, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend. We had a special guest at our April meeting. Brandon Cavanaugh is a resident of our township. He raises and trains horses. Brandon gave us a presentation on two of his horses that are specially trained to do search, rescue, and recovery operations. These horses can work on trails where vehicles cannot go. They can be up to their chest in muck or swamp and still plow through. They can swim, and they do not spook at noises such as trains or gunshots. Brandon has offered their services to us if needed. Our township has swampy areas where people could get stuck with their recreational vehicles. We have a lot of muddy trails, especially in the springtime. There are many acres of woods and open areas that are wonderful for recreational activities. Yet, people can also get lost there. Thank-you for offering your services, Brandon! We will be sure to call you when we need you!

Spring, summer, and autumn are popular times to be recreating in the woods. Hiking, camping, and four-wheeling are very popular in our township. It is wise to plan ahead, even if you are only going out for a few hours. You will need to pack enough food, water, and clothing so that you can stay hydrated, fueled, and prepared for weather changes. Let someone know that you are going out, where you are planning to go, and when you expect to return. Take a charged phone and a GPS device. But remember, these can fail to help you if they cannot get a signal. Take a compass. Look at a map of where you are planning to go so that you can see the terrain and know what to expect. Wear sturdy, comfortable hiking boots to protect your feet and give you stability. Even if you leave on a motorized vehicle, you may have to plan on walking back if your vehicle breaks down. Pack extra socks in case your feet get wet. Pack a blanket, flashlight, matches in a water-resistant container, medication, and anything else you think you need in case you have to spend the night outdoors. If you get lost, stop. Stay calm, because panic is your worst enemy. Think about what landmarks you should be seeing. Get out your compass and plan where you should go. Do not walk aimlessly. If you are not confident that you can find your way, stay put. Call 911 if you can. Rest when you feel tired, before you are exhausted. Drink enough water to avoid dehydration. Dehydration can cause headache, irritability, and tiredness. If you decide to continue, mark your way with rocks or piles of sticks. This way, you will know if you are walking in circles. Try to find a higher vantage point so that you can see around you. Look for signs that others have been in the area, such as campsites, litter, or tire marks, and try to determine which way they went. Listen for sounds of traffic or running water. Try to get into open country so that you can be seen. Have something that you can use to signal for help, such as a mirror or bright piece of clothing. If you come across a river, follow it in the direction that the water is running. It could lead to a lake where there are people. Stay put when it gets dark. Hopefully, those you have told of your plans will notice that you have not returned and they have notified authorities. If you have been following a river, move at least 200 feet away from it before settling down for the night. Nocturnal animals are active around waterways at night. Planning ahead and being familiar with the terrain and direction that you plan to travel will help you avoid the stress of getting lost.

Ticks are common at this time of year. In our area we see the deer tick, wood tick, and the Lone Star tick. These can all carry one or more infectious diseases. Symptoms of tick infection are fever, chills, stiff neck, headache, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, nausea, and rashes. Some infections can lead to confusion, speech difficulties, seizures, and life-long complications. A bite from the Lone Star tick can even result in developing an allergy to meat, especially red meat, pork, and venison. This allergy surfaces between 2 weeks and 3 months after a bite. Clearly, prevention of tick bites is important. Ticks live in wooded and grassy areas. They cling to the tips of branches, plants, and grass, and get picked up when clothing or skin brushes against them. During tick season, travel on well-cleared trails and stay away from tall vegetation. Wear long sleeves, tuck your long pants into your socks, and wear closed-toe shoes or boots. Use a tick repellent with at least 20% DEET on your exposed skin. Wear clothing treated with permethrin. Scan your exposed skin and clothes frequently

for ticks. Take a shower within 2 hours of returning inside. Wash your clothes immediately. Ticks like to hide in your warm and moist areas, groin, armpits, back of knees, scalp, behind the ears, and the back of the neck. Make sure to check your children and pets for ticks. If you find a tick, remove it as soon as possible using a fine point tweezer or tick removal device such as the Tick Key, or TickCard. Grasp the tick as close to your skin as you can and pull it straight out without squeezing or twisting the tick's body. Wash the area and monitor it for infection or rash. Remember, it can take a few weeks for a rash to develop. See your doctor immediately if symptoms of tick infection develop.

On April 10, our department trained in fighting wildland fires with Pat Wherley and his team from the DNR Forestry Department in Cloquet. DNR wildland fire-fighting teams in our area come from Duluth, Cloquet, Floodwood, and Hibbing. The main causes of wildfires in our area are debris in firepits, sparks from mechanical equipment and vehicles, railroad traffic, and arson. Grass is the most dangerous fuel for a wildfire because it allows the fire to move and grow quickly. Other fuel sources are shrubs, timber, and logging slash. 88% of wildfires are caused by humans. Watch your campfires and the wind direction. Don't burn aerosol cans, pressurized containers, glass or aluminum cans. These items can explode or shatter and create harmful fumes or dust. The wood in your campfire should burn completely to ash and then pour lots of water on it until the hissing stops. If you don't have water, shovel dirt or sand on the fire. Stir with a shovel until the material is cool. Remember, if it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave. Do not burn yard waste when the vegetation is very dry or it is windy. Choose a safe burning site that is away from powerlines, overhanging tree limbs, buildings, vehicles, and equipment. The site should be surrounded by gravel or dirt at least 10 feet in all directions. Keep this area watered down while burning. Keep your fire small and drown it completely when finished. Look around your home or cabin for wildfire fuel. Create a 30 foot zone of fire-resistant space around your home using fire resistant plants and landscaping. If you smoke, watch where the ashes land. Strong winds can topple trees onto powerlines. This can create sparks and lead to a wildfire. If this happens in an unpopulated area, the fire can grow large before it is noticed. This happened in our township last year. Luckily, the DNR was able to help extinguish the fire using a helicopter. The DNR will respond to all wildfires. They have helicopters which can scoop up to 100 gallons of water from a lake to drop on the fire. They also have fixed wing planes which can carry up to 800 gallons of water or foam. The DNR uses spotter planes to patrol the area during high fire danger conditions to look for wildland fires. You will see these white and red planes circling our area. We have our wildland fire-fighting equipment ready to go. If you see a fire, call 911! We will be there to protect our township!