NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 20191204

Our December meeting was held on Wednesday, December 4, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our January meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 8, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend! We usually meet on the first Wednesday of the month, but we will meet the second Wednesday in January because of New Year's Day. We are happy to announce that we have a new member! Susan Carlsness has decided to become a member of our department! Thank you so much, Susan, for volunteering to help Ellsburg residents and visitors, as well as the surrounding communities. We look forward to having you on our team!

Elections of the officers of our department always take place during our January meeting. Last month, I reported that our president, Ray Privett, is stepping down from his position. This month, I must report that our fire chief, Jeff Dulinski, is also stepping down from his position. Jeff has been a member of the Ellsburg VFD for about 30 years. In fact, Jeff helped to design and build the Bass Lake Firehall! There is no one that knows more about running this volunteer fire department than Jeff. He arranged the purchase of each one of our vehicles and stocked them with everything that they need. Only Jeff knows exactly what is in each vehicle, where it is located, and what it can be used for. The firehall is filled with tools, hardware, and assorted odds and ends that can be used to fix anything we need. Our team regularly teases Jeff about being a pack rat or a hoarder. He can come back from conventions or the DNR offices with armloads of free stuff. Yet, we have all seen that when something breaks down or needs a modification to work the way we need it to, Jeff has the knowledge and materials at hand. "Be prepared" has always been Jeff's motto. He made sure that our department is prepared for any emergency that we might encounter. When we work with other fire departments in the area, they frequently comment on the fact that Ellsburg has the equipment that is needed to do the job. Jeff knows every road and trail in Ellsburg Township. No matter where you are when you have your emergency, Jeff will find you. Jeff is a firefighter and an emergency medical responder. He has responded to almost every page of every year that he has been on the department. If he is not in the area when a page comes in, he can be counted on to call a responder to offer advice and expertise. His radio and pager are always turned on, and always attached to his belt. Jeff volunteers over 40 hours a week to our fire department! That is dedication! Five years ago, this department almost closed due to lack of membership and lack of equipment. Today, we are fully stocked with equipment and we have 21 members. We can thank Jeff for that! The Ellsburg VFD would not be what it is today if it wasn't for all of the hard work and hours of service by Jeff Dulinski. Yet, Jeff has decided that it is time for him to step down as chief. He leaves a legacy that he can be proud of. It will take a strong person to be his replacement. Tune in next month to see who the department elects to be the fire chief of Ellsburg VFD!

Every year since the Mesedahl family has been members of EVFD, they have hosted a holiday party for our department. This year, the party was on December 7. Laurie, Loren, Loren, and Courtney invited us into their beautifully decorated home for a scrumptious meal of pheasant, mashed potatoes, wild rice, salad, apple pie, and carrot cake. Delicious! This is always an enjoyable evening because we spend several hours in pleasant conversation learning about the personal lives of each other. We do not talk about fire department matters! Thank you so much, Mesedahl family! We had a wonderful time!

Ice fishing is a popular sport in our area during these cold months. It can be a fun, family activity, or an opportunity for someone to be by them self and contemplate the mysteries of the world. As with any activity, there are things to consider to make sure your ice fishing experience is a safe one. Before venturing on the ice, dress yourself in layers. The layer closest to your skin should be made of a wicking fabric, such as polypropylene, to keep you dry if you perspire. Layer on a heavy shirt, pants, two pairs of socks, and a wool or fleece sweater. Cover your extremities with a warm hat that covers the ears, lined mittens or gloves topped with mittens, and waterproof boots. Dressing in layers allows you to take off one layer at a time if you start to overheat.

Check the thickness of the ice by making test holes with an auger at regular intervals to make sure that there are no thin ice spots where you plan to fish. The ice should be a minimum of 3 inches thick to support you walking on it, and 7-10 inches thick to support driving on it. Avoid areas where the ice is cracked, or you hear loud cracks and booms. These sounds mean that the ice is shifting and could be unstable.

Be aware of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning that could result from an improperly functioning heater in your icehouse. Know the signs which include a dull headache, muscle weakness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, confusion, drowsiness, blurred vision, and chest pain. With continued exposure to the carbon monoxide, seizures and death will result. Get out of your icehouse if you experience these symptoms!

Keep an eye on your pets and children. They can fall through thin ice if they wander away from you, or fall into that nice hole that you just cut out of the ice. Mark your holes with a branch when you leave the ice so that nobody else falls in. Bring a rope, blankets, cellphone, spikes, and a first-aid kit out on the ice with you in case there is an emergency. Always let someone know where you are planning to fish and when you plan to be back. It is a good idea to wear a life jacket while ice fishing. This will prevent you from sinking completely below the surface if you break through the ice. If you do break through, your first priority is to get out of the water. This is where those spikes or any other sharp objects are helpful. Jab them into the ice where you broke through to pull yourself out. Remember that the ice is stronger behind you where you were just walking than in front of you where it broke. Once you have pulled yourself out of the water, don't stand up. Spread your weight over the ice and roll or crawl away from the hole.

Hypothermia, or the lowering of body temperature, will result from being submerged in the cold water. This condition can make you pass out and then drown in as little as 10-15 minutes if you don't get out of the water. Once out of the water, your body temperature will continue to drop until you get out of your wet clothes and get into a warm environment. This is where the blankets are helpful, as well as getting into a car or house. Call 911, because hypothermia progresses rapidly. Hypothermia starts with shivering and feeling tired, and progresses with confusion, slurred speech, a weakening of the pulse, shallow breathing, clumsiness, pale or blue coloration of the skin and lips, and then unconsciousness and loss of heartbeat. CPR may be necessary.

If someone other than you falls through the ice, do not run toward them to pull them out or you might end up in the water also. Lie down on the ice and stretch your rope, your auger, a pole, or a branch toward the victim. After he grabs on, pull him to safety. If you have nothing available to reach out to the victim, but there are several people around, you can form a human chain. Everyone should lie on the ice, one in front of the other, while holding on to the feet of the person in front of you until the victim can be reached and pulled out of the water. Again, hypothermia progresses rapidly and can be fatal, so call 911 as soon as possible. We will be there to help!