

## Ellsburg VFD update 20220504

Our May meeting was held on May 4. It was necessary to reschedule our June meeting due to a training need. We will now meet on the second Wednesday of June, June 8, at 6:30pm, at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. All are welcome to attend.

The Melrude July 4th Parade and Picnic will be here soon! The parade will start at noon on July 2, and the picnic and games will follow. We are planning our raffle items, games, and things to give away. We will put some of our vehicles in the parade. The parade and picnic lasts about 2 hours, but this occasion requires a lot of planning. We have our big raffle item. I won't tell you beforehand what it is! Basket raffles are always fun. We have several people who have already told us that they will donate a basket to be raffled. Anyone is welcome to assemble and donate a basket. It is always interesting to see what themes people come up with.

There are plenty of fireworks on July 4th and the days surrounding this holiday. Fireworks can be beautiful to watch. It is always best to watch a show that is put on by professionals. Fireworks are made out of gunpowder, which is composed of potassium nitrate, carbon, and sulfur. An oxidizing agent is added to cause these fuels to explode. Essentially, fireworks are a bomb. Colorants, in the form of additional chemicals, are also added to produce the beautiful colors. Every year, about 245 people end up in the emergency room EACH DAY in the month surrounding Independence Day with injuries related to fireworks. These injuries are caused by lighting off your own fireworks, or being too close to where someone else is lighting them. Sparklers are responsible for most of these injuries. 34% of those injured are ages 25-44. 14%, the next highest group, are ages 0-4, and 13% is ages 15-19. Fireworks can cause serious burns and injuries. In fact, 44% of fireworks injuries are burns. Most of these burns are to the hands, fingers, head, face, ears, and eyes. If you get burned by a firework, go to the emergency room immediately. Although you may not think that the burn is serious, the chemical residue can continue to burn your skin and damage the underlying tissue until it is properly removed.

Never allow young children to ignite fireworks or play with them after they have been ignited. Sparklers are frequently given to children to hold. Yet, sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2000 degrees. That is hot enough to melt some metals! Never allow any part of your body to be directly over a fireworks device when you are lighting the fuse. Light it and back up immediately to a safe distance. Fireworks can be faulty and shoot sideways instead of upwards. Never re-light or pick up fireworks that have not deployed. Never point or throw fireworks at anyone, or carry them in your pocket. Do not shoot them off in metal or glass containers. Keep a bucket of water or garden hose close by. Douse the burned firework completely with plenty of water to prevent a trash fire. Dry weather and windy conditions can cause the fall-out from the firework to blow around. These hot particles can injure people watching the show or ignite a wildfire. Play it safe and watch a professional show rather than put on your own.

Our department had wildfire training in May. Last year, we responded to seven wildland fires. Wildland fires are a big risk in our township because of the many acres of grass and forest. Our instructor was from the DNR. We watched videos from the 2011 Pagami Creek fire in the Boundary Waters which burned 92,000 acres and was caused by a lightning strike. We also watched videos from large wildfires that occurred in Cherry and other parts of our state. The focus was on how to fight a wildfire. We learned to always keep 1 foot in the blackened area. Start the firefight at the rear of the fire where it has already burned away the fuel and move up the flanks until you can pinch it off at the front. Never be in front of a fire that is traveling towards you. Fires can move fast, and you will be overrun. Wildland firefighters carry fire shelters with them that they can deploy as needed if they cannot escape from the fire. In the videos, we saw how those shelters were deployed by personnel trapped by fire on land and in the water. Those trapped by the Pagami fire had to hunker down in their fire shelter for a little over an hour until the fire burned over and past them. Just imagine wrapping yourself up in a thin, fireproof, sleeping bag type of shelter, with your face pressed against the ground, hoping that you have all the ends tucked in properly, while the fire rages around and over you for about an hour. Terrifying! We train so that we are prepared. Wouldn't you know that about a

half hour into the training, our department was paged out for a grass fire on East Bass Lake that was started when the strong winds toppled a tree onto the power lines. Luckily, this fire was only about 3 feet by 3 feet. Since we were all already at the firehall, we responded with 4 vehicles and 11 people! No fire shelter was needed.

We have had many windy days this spring. These strong winds can snap trees or branches which land on the power lines. A tree which lands on a line can tear the line down. Once the line is damaged or downed, the wires can contact the tree, a branch, grass, and shrubbery. These become an ignition source for the high voltage wire, and also a conductor of the electricity. Sparks from the burning tree or branch can fall to the ground and start a grass fire. If this occurs in a remote area, the fire can grow large before it is noticed. If you see sparks coming from a power line, move at least 20 feet away and call 911. If you see a power line on the ground, stay at least 100 feet away to avoid being shocked. Again, call 911.

A compromised power line is hazardous and can still be charged with a strong electrical current that can severely injure or kill you. Assume that all power lines have current. There is no way to determine if a power line is live by just looking at it. If you do find yourself near a downed power line, keep both of your feet on the ground and shuffle away from the area. Keeping both of your feet on the ground helps to "ground" you so that you will not become a conductor of the electrical current. Birds can land on power lines and not get shocked because they land with two feet and fly off with both feet at the same time.

Water is also a conductor of electricity. If a downed line lands in a puddle, stay far away. If a downed wire is across a road, do not drive over it. Doing so could cause the line to pull down the pole onto your vehicle. If a power line is touching your car, and you are in the car, stay inside of your car. The ground around your car may be electrified. Honk your horn or yell at others to warn them to stay away from you. Call 911 and stay inside your car until you are told that it is safe to exit it. If you absolutely have to leave your car, such as if the car has caught fire, first remove any loose clothing that could touch the car. Try not to touch the car as you jump away from the car. Remember to land with both feet together! Stick that landing! Keep your feet as close together as possible and shuffle until you are a safe distance away.

If a power line falls on your house, remain inside and avoid touching any metal or water. Avoid running any water. Call the electric company. It is only safe to exit after they have cut the power to your home. Warn others to stay away from your home until the power is out.

A lightning strike may rupture a transformer causing air to rush into the tank and the oil to explode. This explosion results in a blast of radiation which scatters flaming oil, steel shrapnel, gaseous products, solid insulation, and molten conductor material around the area. This can result in downed power lines and fires. With any electrical fire involving power lines and their hardware, the best action is to stay away from the area and call 911.

When our department is paged out for a power line emergency that may or may not have started a fire, our first priority is to keep everyone away from the scene. A small fire that starts from a spark may put itself out, or grow larger. If it grows, we will put it out. But, remember that water also conducts electricity so we have to be careful of how we put water on the fire. A single stream may conduct the electricity right back to the hose. A mist is better. The best course is for us to wait until the power company shuts off the power and then assess what is needed. Sometimes, during severe storms, it may take the Power Company 1 or 2 hours to get to the scene. We will be waiting there to protect the scene until they arrive.

Electrical shocks can cause burns, blisters, muscle pain and contractions, nerve injuries, sensations of pins and needles, problems with vision or hearing, headaches, seizures, unconsciousness, inability to breathe, and abnormal or loss of heart rhythms. An electrical current that passes through the body can cause burns at the entrance or exit sites or leave no visible marks on the skin. It can cause severe internal organ and muscle damage even if there was only a small amount of electricity. Do not touch an injured person if they are still in contact with the electrical current or you will be electrocuted also. If possible, move the electrical source away from the victim and you using a dry, non-conducting object made of cardboard, plastic, or wood. The source of the

electrical current must be turned off. Do not move a person with an electrical injury unless they are in immediate danger of further harm. Begin CPR if necessary. Loose fibers in blankets or towels can stick to the burns, so cover any burned areas with a clean cloth before covering with blankets. Prevent the victim from becoming chilled. A victim may say he feels fine, but internal damage can continue to spread if not treated. Always seek medical help for any electrical shock. Call 911. We will be there to help!



Practicing deployment of fire shelters