

## **News From The Ellsburg Volunteer Fire Department 20210203**

Our February meeting took place via Zoom on Wednesday, February 3, at 6:30pm. Our March meeting will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, March 3, at 6:30pm. Spring is coming! Hopefully, we will be able to meet in person again.

Thank-you so much to Karl and Susan Larson for your generous donation to our fire department! We really appreciate your support! We are glad that we could help you when you needed us. Thank-you!

We have been working on renovating our meeting room. The Ellsburg Town Board has agreed to pay for the supplies to epoxy the floor. Thank you! Tyler Swor, who did such a beautiful job with our office floor, donated his time and skill to do the work. It is a beautiful floor! Tyler is certainly skilled in this work! Arrlette Krog, Laurie Mesedahl, Susan Carlsness, Tim Linder, Ray Privett, and Heidi Yokel worked on emptying and painting the room. Thank you, everyone, for all of your help and hard work! The camaraderie of our team members makes the work enjoyable. We take pride in the work that we do, and we take pride in our "house".

Now is a good time to look around your property and begin to prepare for the wildfire season. Start with the first thing that identifies your property-your address sign. Is it visible? Then look at accessibility. Is your driveway wide enough and clear enough for emergency vehicles to navigate? Please read the "Tips for Wildfire Resiliency" article elsewhere in this Chronicle for more information. Gloria Erickson is the local coordinator for the Firewise program. This program uses information from years of wildfire research to make recommendations on what you can do to help reduce the risk of wildfire on your property. Our department works with Gloria and supports the Firewise program. We are happy that Gloria has decided to share the Firewise information in the Chronicle. We understand that, in some situations, you cannot improve the access to your property. If this is your situation, please tell 911 when you call for help. They can forewarn the responding fire department or ambulance so that they can plan their approach, and precious minutes are not lost by vehicles becoming stuck in your driveway.

We have endured a polar vortex and enjoyed spring-like weather over the past month. This freezing and thawing adversely affects the strength of our lake and river ice, especially when there is wind. If you decide to venture on the ice now, make sure you bring an extra set of warm clothes in a waterproof bag, a blanket, a charged cellphone, icepicks, and a companion. Make sure that someone on land knows where you are going. Remember the saying "Thick and blue, tried and true; Thin and crispy, way too risky." Strong ice is clear with a bluish tint. Milky ice, formed by melted and refrozen snow, is very porous and weak. Light gray to dark black ice means that the ice is melting. This can happen even if the air temperature is below 32 degrees. Ice can have brown areas from plant tannins, dirt, and other natural materials that are resurfacing. This ice is very unsafe. Snow on the ice acts like an insulating blanket and can warm up and melt existing ice. The ice under the snow will be thinner and weaker. Stay off of ice where slush has formed. Slush means that the ice is no longer freezing from the bottom. The ice under slush is only half as strong as clear ice. Warm days and cold nights cause the ice to melt during the day and refreeze at night. This results in a weak, spongy, and honeycombed ice that is very unsafe. The inch thickness guide that we use in winter to determine ice strength is no longer valid in the spring. Do not take a vehicle on the ice anymore. If you are walking on the ice, wear a life jacket and bright colored clothing. Spread out if you are with others. Avoid large cracks and depressions. Your winter clothing can trap air to provide warmth and flotation if you fall through the ice. Leave your clothing on. Turn toward the direction that you came from since that ice was stronger. Dig your ice picks into the ice, vigorously kick your feet, and pull yourself onto the surface by sliding forward on the ice. Roll away from the weak ice. Get to a sheltered, warm place and change into your dry clothes. Call a family member, friend, or 911 for help.

During an emergency such as falling through the ice, victims often suffer a panic attack. Panic attacks can happen to people of all ages. They are characterized by overwhelming feelings of fear, a racing heartbeat, shortness of breath, nausea, a sense of detachment from oneself, chest pain, tightness in the throat or feelings of choking, dry mouth, sweating, chills or hot flashes, trembling and shaking, numbness or tingling, headache, dizziness, and feeling faint. Suffering a panic attack results in an inability to think clearly and take necessary action. Hyperventilation is common with panic attacks. While it is very possible to develop a heart or breathing condition from being submerged in the cold water, it is important to distinguish whether or not your symptoms are related to a medical emergency or to panic. Tell yourself that you are no longer in the water and that you are in a safe spot. Hyperventilating will make your symptoms worse. Focus on taking deep breaths in and out through your mouth. Feel the air slowly fill your lungs and then slowly exhale. Breathe in for a count of four, hold for a second, and then breathe out for a count of four. Closing your eyes will block out extra stimuli and make it easier to focus on your breathing. Focus on relaxing your muscles, starting from the feet up to your head. When you have your breathing under control, you will feel calmer and ready to assess what you need to do next. Get in a safe spot. Get warm. Call someone.

Panic attacks have increased during the Coronavirus pandemic. It can be overwhelming to deal with the uncertainty of these times. It is okay to need a little help coping. If you feel panicky, try calming yourself with breathing and muscle relaxation. Call a friend, family member, or 911 if you need help. Calling 911 does not mean that you have to be transported to a hospital. Let us check you over to make sure that you are okay. At least, you won't be alone. Call us and we will be there to help.