

Summer 2013

The

DISPATCH

News and Information from Travis County ESD No. 2



**PUBLIC
SAFETY
IS A RIGHT
IN THIS
COMMUNITY**

FIRE CHIEF MOELLENBERG

**WE ARE THE
PEOPLE WHO
ARE CALLED UPON
IN AN EMERGENCY**

ASST. FIRE CHIEF CROEGAERT

**SUMMER IS HERE,
BE PREPARED**

ASST. FIRE CHIEF CRANE

A Conversation with Fire Chief Ron Moellenberg



For this edition of The Dispatch, we sat down with each of the ESD No. 2 Chiefs to bring you information about the department as a whole and within their divisions. Chief Moellenberg has served the fire department for over 30 years, beginning as a volunteer and now leading the busiest ESD in Travis County. In addition to his responsibility for operational activities related to fire suppression, fire prevention, fire service rescue and first response emergency medical services, Chief Moellenberg oversees administration of the fire department as well.

What would you like to tell the community about the fire department?

We are dedicated to doing whatever we can to serve the citizens of this community every minute of every day. I want the community to know that we are here for them. We instill in our people the motto *Because We Care*. We believe that. We live that. To us, it isn't a job. This is a lifestyle.

As we read through your bio on the department's website, clearly it is a lifestyle for you.

I have a strong sense of civic responsibility that began well before I was elected alderman for the City of Pflugerville. Serving the community within our District as well as the fire service community is important to me. If I have the opportunity to share my leadership, skills and experience, then I am compelled to do so. I live our mission to protect lives and property and after a significant loss to property, in 1995 I was determined to introduce Compressed Air Foam (CAF) Technology as part of the District's fire suppression protocol. This technology improves fire suppression, increases effectiveness of personnel resources, and conserves valuable water resources for the community. In 2001, I presented information about CAF Technology to the 77th legislative session to provide homeowners insurance credit for communities that utilize CAF systems. Today, communities that use CAF Technology for structural firefighting gain a credit of 1.5 points in the Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating system.

I am passionate about giving back and honored to again serve as the President of the Capital Area Fire Chiefs Association (CAFCA). In my role as the CAFCA president, area fire departments and elected officials rely upon me to provide

guidance relative to fire department issues, including financial concerns. I previously served as Vice-President for the Rural Fire Advisory Council with the Texas Forest Service and worked diligently to establish legislation authorizing grant funding for training and equipment for volunteer and small community fire departments. I feel a responsibility to continuously look at how we best serve the community, whether it is budget, fire suppression, prevention, public education, or first response medical.

We understand organizations grow and develop. Where do you see the District today?

The District has changed significantly. When I began as a volunteer the community was much smaller with 300-400 people. In 1977, I think we had seventy-two calls and that was considered a busy time. Today we have over 6,000 calls each year. We're doing in just a few days what we did in a whole year. Today the fire department serves nearly 100,000 residents over 100 square miles of land.

In 2012, we presented the State of the Department and reported less funding than needed to adequately fund service demands in the District. I think I heard the other day that over 100 people move to the Austin area each day and if you look around, you will see they are moving to Pflugerville as well. Growth has affected the department and continues to place a strain on both budget and service. It is a bit of a domino effect. Growth translates into increased service demand. Increased service demand means, not only is our equipment used more frequently, but we need staffing to respond appropriately. Current funding is inadequate to cover the cost of replacing equipment and adding personnel.

The community will see the impact if funding remains inadequate. However; we are a solutions-oriented organization and we continuously look at viable options for funding. Back to your question, this fire department has evolved with the community it serves. We began as a volunteer department, converted to a Rural Fire Protection, and then to the current Emergency Services District and now we are at that next stage of funding needs. We are interested in pursuing all

continued on page 5

What is the role of the Operations Division?

We're looked upon as first responders – so, we're the people who are called into any emergency situation: structure fires, car accidents, emergency-medical service. When we get a call for someone falling out of bed, we put them back in bed. We consider ourselves emergency responders, but we're really customer-service focused. We interface with thousands of people in schools and so on. We do public education and tours. When block parties are going on, our folks are there: not just to show fire trucks, but to educate. So while we're showing fire trucks, we're there talking about smoke detectors and home-escape plans. We view ourselves as the emergency component, but we do most of the customer interaction.

As the Assistant Chief of Operations, how many people do you manage?

The Operations Division has sixty-nine employees: two of those employees are training captains, while each of the other sixty-seven employees is assigned to one of five companies. We have four fire stations, so the largest fire station houses two companies, while each of the other fire stations house one. We're a paramilitary organization, which means we have an established chain of command with descriptive titles and ranks, for example, Apparatus Specialist and Battalion Chief. We operate with three rotating shifts: A, B, and C which each work 24 hours on duty and then 48 hours off duty.

How do you keep sixty-nine people trained?

We train seven days a week, 365 days a year: Christmas, Sundays, everyday. It takes us two years to get through an entire training cycle. We have department training in which our training captains train each company on new techniques, and then evaluate the companies on how well they perform. We have company training which builds those individual skills: each company is trained

We consider ourselves emergency responders, but we're really customer-service focused.

for four hours at a time, and then that company's lieutenant continues to hone those newly-learned skills. After a month of training on those skills, for example, those skills are put into practice on our training fields – with real fire – and evaluated. We practice EMS, structure firefighting, confined-space rescue, water rescue, wildland firefighting. We have other types of training, also. For us, Mondays are Mayday Mondays: we stage a drill in which everyone who is working has to practice helping a fellow firefighter out of a fire.

What advice would you like to give Travis County residents this summer?

The first and simplest piece of advice is to be very careful with smoking material – not just on your property – but even in your vehicle or when you are in public places. Be careful of how you dispose of your cigarette butts. Last year we had fifty-seven wildland fires in Travis County ESD No. 2. The second is to make sure that your smoke detectors work – and if you don't have them, get them – so that you have a fighting chance to get out of your house when a fire occurs. And finally, about this time of year, the concern is really dry vegetation. Keep vegetation away from your fence or house. Fences and houses dry out just like fuel loads do, which means that all the moisture comes out of your wooden siding, or out of your wooden fence; fire easily travels from the vegetation to your fence, and then from your fence to your house. When the vegetation is dry please do not use fireworks; if you do, please use them with extreme caution.

A Conversation with Asst. Fire Chief Kevin Croegaert



The Phoenix Award recognizes first responders who resuscitated cardiac arrest patients. TCESD No. 2 recipients were honored with 2012 Phoenix Award during the February 2013 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Tips from Asst. Fire Chief Tom Crane



Preparing for Summer

Summer is here and we want to continue our living safe and well effort by providing you with information so you are better prepared and safe.

With knowledge comes power and in the summer edition of *The Dispatch* our Prevention Division is working to bring you renewed awareness of fire prevention and safety. We encourage you to visit our website at pflugervillefire.org and educate your children and neighbors on topics such as Pool Safety, Keeping Kids Safe In and Around Cars, and Exit Drills in the Home (E.D.I.T.H.). Also, be sure to check out our video demonstrating the Proper Use of Fire Extinguishers.

For our high risk population, we can conduct a smoke-alarm check. Call our administration office at 512.251.2801 to inquire. Check our website's Public Education page for information on the Vial of Life program that allows senior citizens to document medical information in advance that can be used by emergency personnel when responding.

I encourage you to protect yourself and your family. Draw a map of your home and create a home fire escape plan with all members of your family present. If you'd like, you can download *How to Make a Fire Escape Plan* at www.nfpa.org/homeescape to get started. Then, use the checklist on the following page to make sure your escape plan includes all the elements needed to ensure your household's safety from fire.

Seven people die each day in reported U.S. home fires NFPA releases new report on home fire statistics

April 23, 2013 – The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) new report on home fires shows that U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 366,600 home structure fires from 2007-2011. Seven people died each day in U.S. home fires, on average, and older adults were the age group most likely to die in a home fire. Cooking equipment remains the leading cause of home structure fires and home fire injuries; however, smoking materials persist as the leading cause of home fire deaths, according to the report.

Roughly one in every 320 households per year had a reported home fire during this five-year period. These fires caused an estimated average of 2,570 civilian deaths, 13,210 civilian injuries, and \$7.2 billion in direct property damage per year.

One-quarter (25 percent) of the home fire deaths resulted from fires that originated in the bedroom, another quarter (24 percent) from fires in the family room, living room, or den, and 16 percent from fires starting in the kitchen. Half of home fire deaths were caused by incidents reported between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Home fire deaths from fires in which no smoke alarms were present, or in which smoke alarms were present but did not operate, accounted for 60 percent of all home fire deaths. Smoke alarms were lacking in 37 percent of home fire deaths, and at least one alarm was present but non-operational in

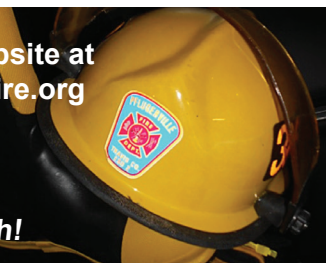
23 percent.

"Three out of five home fire deaths occurred in homes without working smoke alarms, which emphasizes the importance of taking personal responsibility when it comes to protecting yourself and your family from fire," says Lorraine Carli, vice president of communications for NFPA. "Installing and maintaining these alarms could save a majority of the lives lost in home fires, especially if they work in conjunction with home sprinklers."

Fire sprinklers were present in only 6 percent of reported home fires between 2006-2010, according to a 2012 report - U.S. Experience with Sprinklers. That report, referenced in the home fires report, also noted that the death rate was 83 percent lower when wet pipe sprinkler systems were present, compared to reported home fires without any automatic extinguishing systems.

The report is based on data from the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the NFPA's annual fire department experience survey.

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pflugervillefire.org
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edition of
The Dispatch!



A Conversation with Fire Chief Ron Moellenberg

continued from page 2

funding options and recently helped establish a non-profit fundraising organization as another avenue. We are excited about the possibilities that the FirstIn Pfoundation brings as they hit the ground running with the Hi-Five for Firefighters campaign. The fire department belongs to the community and funding is essential to our ability to continue in our mission to serve.

What is your greatest concern for the community in the summer months?

The ongoing drought has already been documented as the worst drought on record in Texas. We have had some rain this year, but we have been in such a prolonged drought that unless it's literally raining today, fires can be a problem. And we are more likely to injure and hurt firefighters in a wildfire. Wildfires are unpredictable – the dragon is moving on, if you will. In a wildfire, conditions change without warning because everybody is spread out – a wildfire is like a dangerous animal. The fuel loading (flammable material) that we have on this side of the county is more akin to a prairie savannah. We have an urban landscape in P

Pflugerville and Wells Branch, but if you look at the country in general, we have a lot of grasses and light fuels. We call them flashy fuels. Literally, they burn like tissue paper. The training and preparedness that the Operations division has undertaken for wildfires will again be invaluable through this summer for the community.

Sounds like we have circled back to the need for a safe community and lifestyle.

Public safety is a right in this community. We have a committed fire department and community living safe is a community living well. Through the efforts of our Prevention Division, under the leadership of Assistant Chief Crane, we work with the community, from pre-school children to senior citizens, to educate and promote safety. Chief Croegaert, our Assistant Chief of Operations takes safety very seriously. We train personnel to do the job of protecting lives and property safely so that they can go home after every shift.

Bookmark
This →



Honor our First Responders and have a safe summer!

Photo courtesy of Pat McCord



Home Fire Escape Checklist

- I have made a map of our home indicating all windows and doors that can be used to get outside if the smoke alarm sounds.
- All members of my household have walked through the home with me to identify two ways out of each room.
- The home fire escape plan includes two ways out of every room in the home (usually a door and a window).
- All ways out of each room and the home are clear, free of clutter and can be opened easily.
- Security bars on doors and windows have a quick-release device so they can be used to get outside in case of a fire.
- There is a meeting place (a tree, neighbor's home, street light) outside in front of our home where everyone knows to meet upon exiting.
- Our house number can be clearly seen from the street.
- Our plan includes the local emergency telephone number (or 9-1-1) to be contacted immediately upon leaving the home.
- There are working smoke alarms in all required locations throughout our home; there's at least one on every level of the home (including the basement), inside all bedrooms and outside each sleeping area.
- We all know what the smoke alarm sounds like, and what to do when we hear it.
- We have practiced our home fire escape drill, and will continue to do so at least twice a year.
- Everyone in our home knows how to get low and go under smoke, in case we need to escape through smoke.
- We all know if the smoke alarm sounds, get outside of the home and stay outside, and understand that we should alert the fire department to any people or pets trapped inside.

Keeping Your Community Safe with Home Fire Escape Drills

NFPA • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169
•www.nfpa.org/education



KEEP CALM AND HI-FIVE A FIREFIGHTER

ESD No. 2 By the Numbers:

57 – the number of wildfires responded to in 2012

\$535 – the maintenance cost each day spent on aging fleet

1 in 5 – the number of medical calls that are cardiac related events

Ignite the Cause!

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FIRST IN PFOUNDATION
promoting safety and expanding response to meet the needs of the community and first responders.

FirstIn Pfoundation is Established

Even before the City of Pflugerville became incorporated in 1965, the fire department was there to serve the community. Along the way the department has faced challenges, steered the course, and has continued to provide first response emergency services. “We want to continue to be an integral part of this community. We see ourselves being threads in the fabric of this community throughout economic challenges, growth, and demographic changes,” states Fire Chief Moellenberg.

The increase in demand combined with things such as aging fleet, station maintenance, and personnel shortages, has prompted the department to create the FirstIn Pfoundation as a mechanism to find additional funding sources. The fire department lacks essential basic equipment and personnel. Assistant Chief Croegaert states, “I have trucks that should have left the fleet. I do not have trucks I should have.” Funding for the fire department is primarily provided through voter-approved property taxes capped at ten cents per \$100 valuation and a voter approved half-cent sales tax.

Long-time, active district resident; former TCESD No. 2 Commissioner, and now Pfoundation Board President Mike Howe understands the challenges the department has faced and continues to encounter. “It has been an amazing process of paying for the level of fire service which the community deserves, and with the economy to scale, the ability to effectively deliver the service economically. Even with the sales tax there has been a realization that we have to find additional funding to continue this level of service to meet the needs of the community.”

Allowing the fire department to focus efforts on protecting lives and property, the Pfoundation will dedicate additional funding efforts for community outreach, equipment, personnel training and firefighter assistance through individual-and-corporate donations, grants, and fundraisers. Howe, who runs a drinking water non-profit with over 3,000 volunteers, sees great potential for the community to come together for the Pfoundation. “When you get a passionate group of volunteers together...see what they can do, that is an extraordinary thing to see happen.”

The Pfoundation began their grassroots effort with the Hi-Five for Firefighters campaign at the district’s Living Safe and Well Expo on April 13th with an old-fashioned lemonade stand sponsored by Chick-Fil-A. The campaign is an opportunity for the community to give individual donations. Howe enthusiastically states, “We do not have to wait for a tragedy and it doesn’t necessarily have to be significant contributions. Donations can be small to medium sized, but when you are able to aggregate those dollars, you can make a difference in the ability of first responders to be effective in their job and in the lives of people within the community.” The campaign will continue into the fall season.

Hi-Five a Firefighter and visit the district’s website page Support Us at pflugervillefire.org to send your donation, scan the QR code on this page, or return the pledge card on the back page of this publication.

*The Pfoundation will be competing in the Pflugerville Pfall ChiliPfest October 19th. Come taste our **Priority 1 Chili**--so good you gotta get to it fast!*



The Second Annual Living Safe & Well Expo

A message of a community coming together living safe and well began with the Firefighter Fit boot camps and a 5K Pfun Run at Lake Pflugerville and continued at Pflugerville Hall with the Living Safe and Well Expo, April 13th. The Department hosted the event for the community with exhibitors and activities all in the spirit of living safe and well. Thank you to our sponsors who made the event possible.



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Detach and mail to: FirstIn Pfoundation 203 East Pecan St. Pflugerville, Texas 78660