



DISTRICT FIREFIGHTER HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

ESD FACTS

- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the U.S. It is also the leading cause of home fire injuries. Cooking fires often result from unattended cooking and human error, rather than faulty stoves or ovens.
- Direct property loss due to fire is estimated at \$8.6 billion each year.
- Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths.
- In the first six months of this year, PVFD responded to more than 700 fire, ems and mutual aid calls.

HCESD #28

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Ponderosa resident

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IT SURE DIDN'T LOOK MUCH LIKE CAMELOT...

Ponderosa's Engine 61 was returning to the fire station at 3:59 a.m. after responding to a dumpster call at Sugar Pine and FM 1960 West, when firefighters spotted heavy smoke coming from a new motel still under construction, located just east of Rolling Creek on FM 1960. In just minutes, the **Camelot Inn** was showing extremely heavy smoke and flames were breaking out at the eaves. Engine 61 (E61) called for a box alarm -- calling out three more engines, two ladder trucks, and a rescue vehicle. As E61 was attaching hose to a hydrant and preparing to apply water to the structure, flames leapt out along the entire length of the building. A second alarm was requested.

Fire Chief John O'Gorman arrived as E61 began applying water to the structure, assumed command and requested a third alarm. Command declared that this would be a *defensive fire*, which meant that the fire would be attacked from the perimeter with no entry into the structure, and instructed all arriving apparatus to work on protecting the exposures on the three sides around the fire. E63 set up on the east side and protected the Kentucky Fried Chicken building. Tower 61 set up on the west side and protected the storage buildings and Sonic Drive In. E62 was positioned on the south side to protect the balance of the storage buildings.

Mutual aid companies supplemented Ponderosa units in providing water, extinguishing the fire, and back-in assistance. Assistance was received from Klein, Spring, Champions, Little York, Cypress Creek, Cy-Fair, Northwest and the Woodlands.

Our objective was to prevent the fire from extending to other buildings and we accomplished our objective. The other buildings got very warm and there was some melted siding, but there was no extension of this fire. The fire is currently under investigation by the Harris County Fire Marshal's office and the ATF. ■

PROVIDED AS A COMMUNITY SERVICE TO PROMOTE FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

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From the Chief's Desk...

There's a brand new piece of equipment at Station 1, and it came all the way from the Pierce factory in Appleton, Wisconsin to its new home at Ponderosa VFD. It is always exciting to take delivery of a powerful new fire truck, and this occasion was no exception.

Four of us made the trip north to escort "her" home and had the opportunity to tour the Pierce facility while we were there. Seeing this brand new, shiny masterpiece of performance and efficiency, made me remember back to the start of our organization...30 years ago.

We purchased our first fully-equipped Pumper for \$27,495. (The price tag on our newest Pumper was \$309,000, equipped only with a light bar.)

Back in December of 1972 when PVFD first formed, we had to rely on the fire engine from Spring Station #1. That's because we had no station, no truck, and no money. We went door to door asking our neighbors for contributions and had some bake sales and fund-raisers to scrape together enough money to purchase our own fire truck. Having access to Spring's equipment was great, but the response time was just too long.

Back then, let me remind you, FM 1960 was only two lanes and there were only about 10,000



ENG-61 2002 Pierce Saber Pumper

people in our district. Today, of course, that little "farm to market road" is seven lanes and we have more than 50,000 people in our service district!

Our first full year of operation -- 1973 -- our small band of volunteers responded to 60 fires. We'd collected enough money (\$18,000) to go buy our first Rescue truck in 1977 and, believe it or not, it is still with us today.

Ponderosa VFD has come a long way in 30 years. We are extremely proud of our extraordinary group of volunteer firefighters and our ability to serve the community in which most of us live and work. We have the highest standard of training and practices, and we are fortunate to have state of the art equipment with which to battle fires and perform rescues.



ENG-5 1972 Ward LaFrance First Pumper

At the core of these capabilities is our Board of Directors who understand what it takes to meet our commitment to the community we serve. Their sound decision and strong leadership have helped us emerge from a small, fundless-but-ambitious crew to a team that has earned a reputation for excellence country-wide.

As we approach this milestone anniversary, it is appropriate to extend a hearty "thanks" to our Board -- both current and all previous members -- as well as to our dedicated volunteers who provide the heartbeat of the organization. In addition, we say "thank you" to area residents for their continuing support and encouragement, as well.

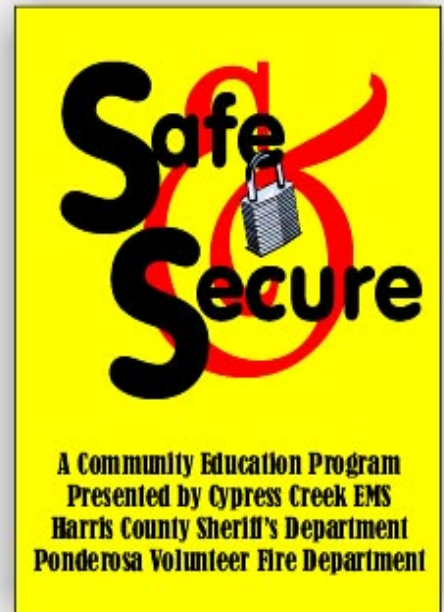
As we learned during the tragic period of 9-11, the NY firefighters and paramedics were able to rely on an inner resource to keep going under the most horrific conditions. Our firefighters also demonstrate this same commitment and dedication to serving our neighbors, and they are well trained and prepared to meet emergencies that may impact our community. So, we'll be there when we are needed...with seconds to spare. ■

Kids aren't the only ones at "Home Alone"

Recently, Ponderosa VFD, Cypress Creek EMS and the Harris County Sheriff's Department teamed up to hold a special preview of their new **Safe and Secure** education program. The multi-faceted presentation was created for people who are "home alone."

There are thousands of northwest area residents of all ages who are experiencing living on their own -- some perhaps for the first time. There are many young adults who have left the nest, are out on their own for the first time and are living independently. Many of these new "single" residents have relocated after a divorce, and some are retired, moving to be near adult children and other family members. Some are elderly, living alone for the first time in their adult lives after the death of their spouse.

These residents may have several things in common: they may not know anyone living nearby; they may never have lived alone before; they may never have lived in an apartment before; and they may be used to relying on others (a spouse or parents) to take care of things like security and safety issues. And, perhaps most importantly, these new single residents may not be familiar with basic measures to protect themselves or know what to do in the event of an emergency requiring fire, law enforcement or medical assistance.



Deputy Lemon talks with some youngsters about being Safe and Secure at home.

The student version of SAFE & SECURE contains segments on learning to define a true emergency; when to call 9-1-1 and what to expect when they do; creating escape routes; who are strangers and what do they want; saying NO to drugs, cigarettes and alcohol; to and from school rules; house and phone safety; and avoiding danger on the internet.

The firefighter will discuss what happens when there's a fire at home; how to escape and avoid injury; dealing with heavy smoke; and how to prevent a fire emergency at home in the first place.

PERSONAL SAFETY...

The concept of safety in today's complicated society involves a whole lot more than just locking a door. Each of the three professionals -- trained representatives from Harris

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Many older residents have special needs including health and mobility problems and may be especially anxious about what would happen if an emergency occurred. Seniors living alone must develop new coping skills for accessing the things and services they want and need while remaining as independent as they would like.

There have been many changes in our community over the past decade, and this team of emergency services personnel have joined forces to provide some very real assistance in the form of a free seminar program to help them live alone with confidence. The new program, SAFE & SECURE, will be conducted on two levels -- one for middle school youngsters who are on their own before or after school, and adults who are new to independent living. Each program will be age- and situation-appropriate.



The Presenters...left to right: Mitch Hubbard, PVFD; Kendra Windisch, CCEMS; and Deputy Anthony Lemon, HCSD.

CELEBRATING OUR FIRST 30 YEARS

It was an ad in his subdivision newsletter about starting a fire station that captured John O’Gorman’s attention back in 1972. He had recently relocated to Houston with his employer, Shell Oil Company, to continue his career in their Emergency Response Department. As something of a fire buff all his life, John decided to investigate how he could get involved with the new neighborhood fire department.

O’Gorman signed up as a volunteer, and completed training with the Spring Fire Department before going on to Texas A&M for an intense, week-long training session. (As things turned out, John became an instructor for this training program, and continued teaching new firefighters for 25 years...)

“Thirty years ago,” O’Gorman explains, “we had no station, no truck, and no money. When there was a fire, we’d have to rely on the fire engine at Spring Station #1, which really added to our response time. Before long, we were going door to door in the neighborhoods asking for contributions so we could buy a truck



Fireman’s Training School, Texas A&M, July, 1974, left to right: Top -- John Lehman, Dave Azbill, Ron Kuhns. Front -- Warren Reininger, John O’Gorman, and Sam Netterville.

and gear. We also had some fundraisers...bake sales, I recall...to bring in some cash.”

The first big fire that the new Ponderosa Department fought was at the apartments across the street from the station. According to John, it was quite an experience for the volunteers.

“We only had five sets of gear, so we had to share them. One firefighter would use a set for a while, come out and take it off, and someone else would scramble to get into it and take his turn...and so on. While on its way to the fire, Engine 5, a pumper, simply sputtered out at the intersection of FM 1960 and Rolling Creek. Dick Burke, one of the original firefighters, got burned by hot tar on his hands. If it hadn’t been so serious, it would have been a real comedy of errors.”

O’Gorman soon became dedicated to the growing station’s success, and he participated in everything from the door-to-door fundraising to the firefighting. In 1975, he made Lieutenant, a rank he held for four years before being elected Assistant Chief in 1979. John became Fire Chief in 1981, and continued in that role until 1985. As Chief, he had the responsibility for the overall operations of the entire Department and his corporate management experience served him well in knowing how to delegate the many assignments necessary to keep everything running smoothly. He returned



as Chief briefly in 1995, and again in 2000.

John recalls a number of dramatic fires that have occurred over his 30 years with Ponderosa VFD. In 1977, for example, there was the 3 story medical building on Saint Edwards Drive by the hospital that was installing a new operating theatre. An explosion ignited by an oxygen leak blew a bottle of O₂ through the roof and hundreds of feet into the air.

The horrific 1992 Nantucket Square fire that drew so much media attention was a true nightmare, the Chief explained. Workmen on the apartment building’s roof had been heating masking materials when the fire started. The blaze was soon out of control, and people reported seeing the smoke as far away as the Ship Channel. Complicating the situation, there was no convenient water nearby. A car accident had



cracked the nearest hydrant's pipe -- a fact that had gone undetected until the water was needed. Amazingly, while one whole building was lost, there were no injuries.

A COLLECTOR...

In 1977, while still at Shell, John began collecting Fire Department patches as he taught HazMat (Hazardous Materials) courses around the country. Today, he has almost 8,000 patches from around the world. When he and his wife, Elaine (a flight attendant) travel, John makes it a point to visit local fire stations, and always has a Ponderosa patch to trade. His collection now includes 310 different foreign patches. This huge assortment is catalogued on computer and kept in row after row of notebooks. John says that the "mystery patches" -- those for which he does not know the origin or the history -- have been narrowed down to 24. These patches are aggressively traded by firefighters and fire buffs worldwide.

The Chief also has another amazing collection of Code 3, Corgi, and Matchbox fire truck models. Some are limited editions and have increased in value over the years, but they are all important to John. Especially poignant are the ones decorated in Stars and Stripes commemorating September 11th.

John has his own unique 9-11 memories. He was attending a fire conference in Fairfax, Virginia when the terrorists crashed a plane into the nearby Pentagon. The images and the response of the local firefighters are not something he will easily forget.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department has already had an impressive and exciting history, and has earned a reputation for excellence literally around the world. They have a full staffing complement of 87 volunteers who fight fires -- "We put the white stuff on the red stuff..." The fact that about 25-30 of the members are now career firefighters with other departments demonstrates the dedication and commitment of these volunteers for whom fighting fires is inextricably interwoven into their lives. They live with the danger every day. And, if you ask any of them "Why?" they will tell you "because folks rely on them to be there in an emergency." And...they will be. ■



Safe & Secure...

Continued from page 3

County Sheriff's Department, Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department, and Cypress Creek EMS -- address specific safety concerns.

The Sheriff's Deputy provides advice about how to protect yourself and your property from would-be criminals or intruders. The firefighter discusses what to do in the event of a fire and how to get out alive, and the emergency medical representative focuses on how 9-1-1 works, CPR and first aid.

ADULTS ALONE...

Whether you are 26 or 66, the fear of falling or other injury while you're alone and not being able to get to a phone to call for help is the fabric of nightmares. And fear can be especially debilitating for seniors. Focusing on the negative ("What would happen if I fell...") can make an elderly person so afraid that they begin to resist doing anything at all. Self-imposed isolation can make their existence especially lonely, and the lack of exercise and personal interaction can bring on a decline in health.



The SAFE & SECURE sponsors are sensitive to these kinds of issues, and have structured the adult program to be informative but not preachy, and to help

those living alone learn how to keep their apartment or home secure (inexpensive measures for locking and securing property); how to prevent spills and falls; how to plan an escape route in the event of fire in the complex but not in their unit; and how to help EMS crews if they do experience a medical emergency and call 9-1-1 for assistance. Adults, too, need to be reminded how to prevent kitchen fires and what to do in this kind of emergency.



Unfortunately, personal security concerns arise in situations away from home, too. There have been car jackings, and "follow home" crooks who accost their victims after observing them at malls, grocery stores and other public parking lots. The law enforcement representatives will address these situations and personal protection issues, as well.

The **Safe & Secure** program is available free of charge to area groups and organizations, and especially to multi-family locations such as apartment or condo complexes. Please contact Teresa Seabold at Ponderosa VFD (281-444-8465) for additional information or about scheduling a presentation. (NOTE: Because of time and personnel constraints, the program is available for groups of 25 or more.) ■

Right: Mitch Hubbard demonstrates some fire rescue equipment to some youngsters and their parents.



Left: Fire/Arson Investigator Tom Petty and his partner Hunter, demonstrate how this specially trained K-9 officer can sniff out gasoline and other accelerants used to start fires.

HEY KIDS...



What do you know about fire safety? Take this short quiz...

1. Smoke alarms need brand new batteries at least once a year.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. When escaping from a fire:
 - a. Take time to find your favorite toys and pets.
 - b. Get out fast.
 - c. Hide.
3. A working smoke alarm can warn you early to escape when a fire breaks out.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. You should plan to have _____ escape routes from each room in your home.
 - a. Zero
 - b. One
 - c. Two
5. Home fire escape plans:
 - a. Are just for adults.
 - b. Should be practiced often with the whole family.
 - c. Are not needed if you have a smoke alarm.

ANSWERS: 1. a. True; 2. b. Get out fast; 3. a. True; 4. c. Two; 5. b. Should be practiced often with the whole family.



MEET YOUR PONDEROSA FIREFIGHTERS...

JIM LUPLOW didn't start out wanting to be a fireman when he grew up in Saginaw, Michigan. Instead, he had flying on his mind. After attending Eastern Michigan University, Jim joined the U.S. Marine Corps and spent the next 8 years in the Corps' Infantry and Heavy Weapons unit and then in the Marine Reserves. In 1994 his wife, Jacqueline, was offered a teaching position with Aldine ISD, so they packed up daughter Katrina and moved to Houston. His military training proved useful when Jim applied to join the Houston Police Department, and after being admitted as a cadet, he attended the Academy for 6 months. Today, Jim is a patrolman with HPD in addition to volunteering with Ponderosa. He made Lieutenant at PVFD Station 3 and was subsequently elected Captain in November 2001. Jim is dedicated and experienced in providing emergency services, and says what little spare time he has, is spent either with his family or at the station.



TREY FORBES has been with Ponderosa VFD for 6 years, but has one way or another been involved in fire services for more than half his life. He grew up with the Kerrville, TX FD Station 2 in his back yard, and by the time he was 10 years old or so, he was always "hanging around" the station, helping wash the trucks -- or doing whatever the firefighters would let him do. By the time he was old enough to drive, however, he began getting involved in other teenage pursuits, such as athletics. He was a pitcher and outfielder on his high school baseball team, and earned a scholarship to St Edwards University in Austin, TX. His dad played in the minor leagues, and Trey figured he would follow his lead. While in college, Trey met and married Missy Spitzenberger. Trey had an injury-plagued college career and began to seek other option. He worked several jobs while awaiting admission to the Texas A&M Fire School. After he graduated from the School, the young couple moved to Houston, where Missy obtained her law degree and Trey began applying for fire department jobs, and joined the PVFD. After a brief stint with the Kerrville FD (where their first son, Quaide, was born), Trey began working for Missouri City Fire and Rescue, where he is now a Firefighter/ Engineer. The family moved to Cypressdale Subdivision, where Trey has served as PVFD Station 2 Captain since 1999. Their second son, Noah, was born in 2000. Trey will become a Licensed Paramedic in August and is certified as a Pump/Operator Engineer and Intermediate Firefighter with the Texas Commission on Fire Protection. ■

SUMMERTIME FIRE HAZARDS

Every year we look forward to summer vacations, camping, family reunions, picnics, and the opportunity to get out there and commune with Mother Nature. Summertime, however, also brings fires and injuries due to fireworks and outdoor grills. Annually more than 8,000 Americans are injured by fireworks and grill fires.

The National Fire Data Center estimates that each year, outside cooking grills cause more than 6,000 fires, over 5 fatalities, more than 170 injuries, and \$35 million in property loss. Gas grills alone cause over 2,700 fires, 80 injuries, and \$11 million dollars damage. Most of the gas grill fires and explosions were caused by gas leaks, blocked tubes, and over-filled propane tanks.

Here are some B-B-Q safety tips:

- Before using a grill, check the connection between the propane tank and the fuel line. Make sure the venturi tubes - where the air and gas mix - are not blocked.
- Do not overfill the propane tank.

- Do not wear loose clothing while cooking at a barbecue.
- Be careful when using lighter fluid. Do not add fluid to an already lit fire because the flame can flashback up into the container and explode.
- Keep all matches and lighters away from children. Teach your children to report any loose matches or lighters to an adult immediately. Supervise children around outdoor grills.
- Dispose of hot coals properly - douse them with plenty of water, and stir them to ensure that the fire is out. Never place them in plastic, paper or wooden containers.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Many families also enjoy camping in the summer. It is important to follow the park's rules for the use and extinguishing of campfires. We have all seen the tragic damage wildfires can cause and need to be extra careful to prevent them.



Follow some simple, common sense safety rules to enjoy safe family cookouts and picnics.

Campfire Safety Tips:

- Build campfires where they will not spread, away from dry grass and leaves.
- Keep campfires small, and don't let them get out of hand.
- Keep plenty of water and a shovel around to douse the fire when you're done. Stir it and douse it again with water.
- Never leave campfires unattended.

DISTRICT
FIREFIGHTER
HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

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in your smoke detectors!**

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