



October 23, 2017

Fire Chief's Report

Community Events – Our annual Haunted House is coming up at the end of the month. Presentations were given to the Methodist Church Men's group on October 14th, the AAUW Candidate Forum on October 18th, and at the Windermere office on Wednesday, 18th.

Fire Prevention Week (October 8th – 14th) – We have been making many visits to the elementary schools on the Island and have a few more left to reach out to.

Armed Forces Benefit Association – 25 of our members signed up for the free \$5,000 term insurance and five members took advantage of their other products.

Wildland fire – The possibility of a wildland fire on Camano Island similar to what has been happening in California is a question I have been hearing a lot about lately and I even stopped publication of our next newsletter so I could add a quick note about this topic. Interestingly enough the most common type of fire we respond to on Camano Island is a brush or grass fire. Typically they are very small and extinguished quickly. For us to have a fire the size of those in California, or even those we've seen in Eastern Washington the last few years, would require a long stretch of extremely dry weather along with a major wind event at the same time a fire started. What we call "Red Flag" conditions. It could happen and as a Fire Chief in Colorado it was an event I saw happen many times. All of our firefighters are trained in the basics of wild land firefighting such as protecting homes in a wild land urban interface and about a third of my firefighters have gone on for certification as wild land firefighters. These career and volunteer firefighters make up the CIFR Wild Land team under the supervision of Capt. Allen. I am also a member of the Northwest Incident Management Team and this team is often called to assist with wild land fires around the state. Having Firefighters with advanced certification allows us to send people throughout the State of Washington to assist in the event of a major wildland fire. The State reimburses us for 100% of the cost to deploy our resources so there is no cost to our citizens. But say that we did have an extremely dry stretch of weather, someone ignored the burn ban which would definitely be in place or there was a lightning strike, a major wind storm was happening, and a fire started. If these types of conditions were prevalent we would most likely preposition resources around the Island if possible. Our philosophy for all types of calls is to call for more help than you think you might need and turn them around if their assistance is not required. In this hypothetical case of the potential for a large fire we would request mutual aid from Snohomish County Fire units and then even Skagit and King County fire units. We could also request Federal assistance from the Department of Natural Resources and the Forest Service. They typically only have staff available during the summer months but if the State Parks were involved, or could be involved, we would ask for their help immediately. We could also request air support including helicopters and airplanes capable of dropping water on the fire. At the same time we are fighting the fire we would be working with other county resources such as ICSO to begin evacuations if necessary. As before we would error on the side

of safety first, get people out before it becomes a matter of life and death, when possible. This is often more difficult than it sounds because many people don't understand the speed and ferocity of a wild land fire being driven by the wind. They are reluctant to leave their homes and possessions which often requires us to drop personnel from fighting the fire and perform rescues because they didn't leave when requested. While I am confident CIFR can handle a wild land fire on Camano Island it's important for our citizens to remember that there is little that we can do when a forest fire is being pushed by 60 mph winds. That's why it is critical for our residents to help us by ensuring that brush and trees are cleared from around their homes to create what we call a defensible space. So, even though I think the chance of a major wild land fire on Camano Island is very small we are ready.