



P O N D E R O S A

FIREFIGHTER

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

Fall 2004

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Here's Help Extinguishing StoveTop Fires...

Every now and then, an invention comes along that makes you slap your forehead...and say "I wish I'd thought of that!" When it also has the potential to save lives, you take your hat off to the inventor and say, "Thanks."

There is just such a product available today that was designed to extinguish stove top fires...automatically, effectively and inexpensively. This fire department has earned a sound reputation for developing creative, workable action plans when problems arise, so we've made special arrangements with the manufacturer to help our residents order the FireStop®. ***There's a convenient order form onpage 8.***

As you'll learn by reading the article about fire statistics on page 4, three in 10 reported fires start in the kitchen...more than in any other place in the home. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires.



Williams Pyro (visit online at www.williams-pyro.com) has

developed **StoveTop FireStop®** that attaches magnetically under the vent hood over a stovetop. The canisters work in pairs and cover a standard residential four burner cooktop.



When a stovetop blaze touches the bottom of the FireStop®, a small pyrotechnic opens the petals of the can, and dumps out bicarbonate of soda to smother the fire in the pan. As it is deployed, the FireStop® also sends out a 146 decibel alarm.

The device is safe; it requires no maintenance; and needs replacing only every five years. Registered owners even get a notice from the company when replacement time approaches -- a date which also appears on each canister's heat-resistant label.

For information about ordering StoveTop FireStop® and the FireStop America™ Program, please e-mail FSA@williams-pyro.com. ■

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF... Volunteers Needed !!!

That is the headline for this column and a very important message. We have been fortunate throughout our history to have enjoyed a very respectable recruitment and retention rate for our fire department, but times they are a'changin'. These days, it is hard to ignore the "speed of life" -- the months just seem to fly by at a frenzied pace.

To be consistent with the way we live today, we realize that our recruitment and retention efforts have to change. We need to be more aggressive in reaching out into the community we serve and extending an invitation to come discover what it means to be a firefighter...and to experience the special reward that only comes from making such a personal commitment.

Our next membership recruiting class will begin in January 2005. If you (or someone you know) are willing to participate in a great organization -- and to earn the satisfaction that you've helped to ensure the safety of your family and neighbors through this participation -- we have just the right volunteer opportunity for you!. Our "participation requirements" are relatively easy to maintain, our insurance portfolio is great, the fellowship and camaraderie is unequalled, and our equipment is outstanding. Our volunteer incentive program is well received and we are evaluating initiating a volunteer savings plan similar to a pension. Finding just the right individuals -- with a strong commitment to excellence -- is the piece of the puzzle that is the most difficult to complete.

The Ponderosa VFD is a department in transition, and one of the ways we're changing is based on the reality that volunteer hours are harder and harder to come by....which translated into the fact that we'll have to pay more people for their work. Our limited revenue, however, cannot fund a significant number of paid staff. Currently, we fund seven full-time employees, with one more being discussed for the 2005 budget cycle. Revenue growth is fair, but at some point, an increase in the salary structure will come at the expense of our capital replacement program. **Volunteers continue to be our most important asset...and we are actively encouraging more people to join this elite (and very much appreciated!) group!**

So, to paraphrase.. "Now is the time for all good citizens to come to the aid of their community fire and rescue department!" Take a moment to consider -- really consider -- volunteering with us. If you have ever thought about becoming a fire fighter, this would be a good time to schedule an appointment to explore all the details of this great opportunity. We realize that this is not an option for everyone, but give us a chance before you rule it out. You, your family and your neighbors will benefit. ■



Chief Fred Windisch

COOKING SAFETY: Deep Frying

Almost every year, our firefighters respond to some type of fire involving frying turkeys. Lots of common sense and extreme caution must be exercised when preparing this entree. Just think about it...you're heating several pints of oil to extremely high temperatures. The oil can not only cause terrible burns, but it can go up in flames. In fact, it's an ideal

fuel for a fire, and quite difficult to put out.

Here are a few safety tips:

■ "Test-drive" your cooker. Fill with water first, dip the unseasoned bird into the container and mark the correct level for the cooking oil, then remove, dry, and season the turkey; replace the water with oil; heat and cook according to the instructions..

■ Test the temperature with a small piece of bread or potato. If it crisps quickly, the oil is hot enough.

■ If the oil starts to smoke don't put the food in. Turn off the heat and allow it to cool.

■ Don't ever leave the cooker unattended -- not for a minute!

■ Never throw water into the hot oil. The water will react violently.

Always keep the LPG as far away from the open flame as possible, and check for leaks prior to using the cooker.

If deep fried Turkey is on your menu this year, be very careful...don't be a statistic! ■

Autumn Safety Tips

By the time autumn finally comes to Houston, folks are ready for cooler temperatures and ready to get outside. Seasonal activities, like hiking, sports, biking and camping, are not without risks. There are some routine fall-related household maintenance tasks -- like turning the furnace back on, or cleaning the chimney -- that present their share of hazards, too.

Enjoy Autumn by following the following tips:

Chimney maintenance is vital to your family's safety.

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned on a regular basis.
- When possible, burn only seasoned woods in your fireplace because dryness of the wood is more important than hard wood versus soft wood.
- Smaller, hotter fires will burn more completely and produce less smoke than larger fires.
- Do not burn cardboard boxes or trash, as they can spark a chimney fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers, which help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, then adjust burning practices as needed.

Fall Outdoor Cleanup

- When lifting heavy bags of mulch, use a wheelbarrow when possible, and remember to lift with your legs, not with your back.
- Be careful when pruning. Pruning from a ladder is especially dangerous.
- To avoid blisters when doing yard work, wear gloves.
- If you are doing a lot of raking, try an ergonomic rake, which can be found at most hardware stores and garden centers.

As you enjoy the beautiful Autumn scenery -- especially during camping or hunting trips -- think ahead, be prepared, and stay safe.

- Check the weather forecast before heading outdoors for a hike. It is not safe to hike when thunderstorms or heavy snowfall is expected.
- Carry drinking water. Don't drink from streams, springs, or lakes without first properly treating the water.
- Observe wildlife from a safe distance. Don't try and get too close to wild animals.
- Stay on the trail — if you leave it, you may get lost.
- To help prevent food poisoning, keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Don't store perishable foods in a hot car.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils that come into contact with raw meat or meat juices before re-using them.
- Wash hands frequently when preparing food, and before serving and eating.
- Keep kids away from grills and lighter fluid, and keep grills away from anything that can burn.
- Be aware of tiny deer ticks that



carry Lyme disease and know which symptoms to watch out for. When in a potentially infested area, apply insect repellent, wear light-colored, long sleeved-shirts, pants, and socks.

- Do not build a fire near tree trunks, fallen trees, or over hanging branches.
- When extinguishing a campfire, let it die down, then break up the coals or logs, spread the pieces, soak them with water, and then cover the area with dirt or sand.

Have fun! Be careful! ■

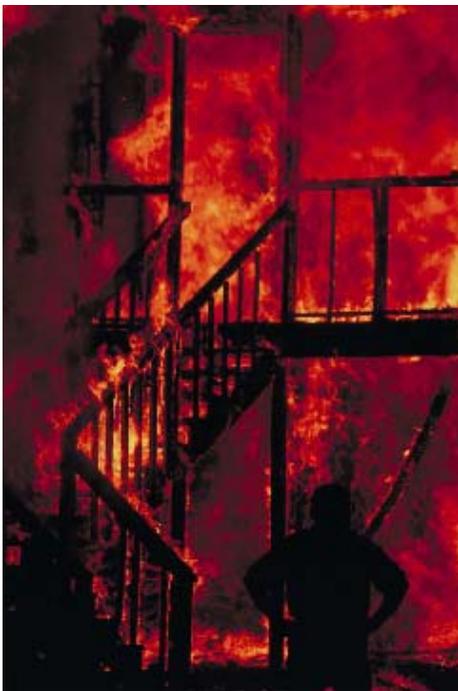
According to *Fire Loss in the United States During 2003*, a recent report released by the National Fire Protection Association:

- **Fire occurs in a structure an average of once every 61 seconds.**
- **A civilian is injured in a fire every 29 minutes, and dies in one every 134 minutes, and**
- **Four out of five fatal fires occur in the place where people feel most safe: *the home.***

A new fire study with some chilling statistics...

Americans may like to think of their home as their castles...but according to a new U.S. Fire Administration study, all too often that castle can turn into a casket, instead. **Residential structures account for only one-fourth of all fires, but result in three-fourths of fire fatalities and injuries -- along with half of all dollar loss.**

In 2000, 23 percent of all fires occurred in residential structures, and they resulted in two-thirds of all fire deaths, almost three-fourths percent of all fire injuries, and almost half of all dollar loss. Residential structure fires are more deadly and cause more injuries than all other fires. On average, they produce twice the property loss of fires generally, and almost three times the rate of fatalities and injuries.



Approximately 72 percent of residential structure fires occur in single-family homes or duplexes (one- and two-family homes). One-fourth occur in multi-family dwellings, with a much smaller number taking place in hotels/motels and

- In 2000, 379,500 residential structure fires resulted in 3,445 fatalities, 17,400 injuries, and \$5.7 billion in property loss. The majority of fires (and losses) occurred in one- and two-family dwellings.
- Kitchens were the area of the home where the highest percentage of fires started.
- The three leading causes of residential fires were cooking, heating, and incendiary/suspicious (arson) fires.
- Residential structure fires in winter outnumbered those in the other seasons; summer was the season with the fewest fires. The peak period for residential fires was between 5 and 7 p.m.
- No smoke alarm was present in more than half of all residential structure fires. When an alarm was present, it operated in only 32% of these fires.

other residential-type structures. Within residential structures, the leading area of fire origin is cooking areas/kitchens, followed by bedrooms and common rooms/living rooms.

One reason for the higher percentage of fires in one- and two-family homes (and the subsequent higher percentage of losses) may be that more stringent policies, codes, and restrictions are imposed on multifamily residential structures than on single-family and duplex homes. In these structures, the actions of one individual with regards to fire can have a serious impact on the lives of others, so building and fire codes for apartment buildings and condominium complexes may mandate the installation of sprinklers and smoke alarms and require regular fire inspections.

Cause of Residential Fires...

Cooking is the cause of more than one-fourth of all residential structure fires, so it is no surprise that the leading area of origin for residential structure fires is the kitchen. The leading heat source for residential structure fires is radiated or conducted heat from operating equipment, followed by electrical arcing from

equipment, other forms of heat from equipment, and cigarettes.

While it may be difficult to gauge the level of human interaction in the ignition of the fires, we can assume that cooking and incendiary/suspicious fires require human involvement -- while heating fires often do not.

When Fires Occur

Although there is no obvious seasonal pattern for fires generally, more residential structure fires occur in the winter months than during any other season.

The highest number of residential structure fires occur in the early evening. This trend could logically be related to cooking -- the leading cause of structure fires -- since many folks are in the kitchen at that time of day. The lowest percentage of fires occurs in the late night and early morning hours when most people are sleeping.

Smoke Alarms

In residential structure fires, in 53 percent of the fires no smoke alarm was present; alarms were present and operated in 32 percent of them. Some fires may go unreported because a smoke alarm alerted the occupant, who then successfully suppressed the fire. ■

Survey: Americans Underestimate Fire Risk

A new survey from the National Fire Protection Association has found Americans underestimate their risk of fire. Choosing from a list of disasters, slightly less than one-third of those surveyed said they felt most at risk for tornado, while only 27% named fire as the highest risk, followed by hurricane (14%), earthquake (9%), flood (9%) and terrorist attack (5%).

But among all those disasters, fires are actually more common -- and many times more deadly. Fire departments responded to 1.6 million fires in the United States in 2003. While tornadoes average 70 deaths a year, fires killed 3,925 people in 2003, most of them in the home.

Asked which kind of disaster they feel most prepared for, the highest percentage of respondents (31%) said they felt most prepared for fire. Their answers to other survey questions suggest they are prepared -- *but not prepared enough*.

Ninety-six percent have smoke alarms (a new high for the nation), but only one-fourth have developed and rehearsed a plan for escaping their home in a fire. Only 8% of people whose smoke alarms went off responded as recommended -- that is assuming there was a fire and leaving the house immediately. ■



PVFD'S SPITZENBERGER RECOGNIZED BY 1960 EXCHANGE CLUB ~ CONGRATULATIONS!

Tony Spitzenberger, Assistant Fire Chief for Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department, was recently selected as *Firefighter of the Year* by the 1960 Exchange Club.

Tony has been a member of PVFD since 1979 when he became a junior volunteer. For the past two decades, he has played an integral leadership role at Ponderosa, especially in connection with the Training Facility.

Tony is a Paramedic, a Master Firefighter, Level II Instructor, and serves as PVFD's Training Officer Coordinator for our \$400,000 Training Facility. He was instrumental in designing and serving as job superintendent for our Training Facility.

The Training Center encompasses live fire fighting, pump testing, rappelling, rescue, ventilation techniques and other hands-on training methodology. Tony's new training program utilizes a team of experts from both within and outside the organization. He developed requirements and a specific course outline for

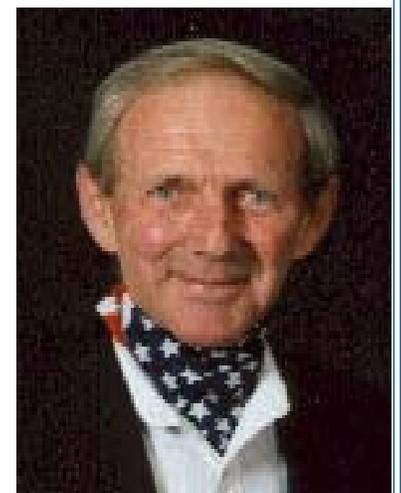


Scott Windisch (left), PVFD Deputy Chief, introduced Tony Spitzenberger when he received the Exchange Club Award.

instructors that allows flexibility for adjusting class content as needed.

Tony works full time with Houston Fire Department, where he is a Captain/Paramedic/Supervisor. He attends classes and specialized schools to maintain and improve his skill base, and has attended the National Fire Academy. This strong leader is well respected by the members of PVFD, and they congratulate Tony for receiving this much-deserved community recognition. ■

The **Curtis J. Cook Firefighter Education Fund** was established after the death of Curtis Cook, who served as our President since 1976. The Fund will be used to provide education for our members. Consider a tax deductible donation today...to help honor this beloved volunteer's many contributions to PVFD and to help continue his commitment to providing only the BEST emergency response for our community. Many employers will provide corporate matching funds for these donations.



FAQ -- Harris County Emergency Services District #11

Q. What is an ESD?

A. An Emergency services District (ESD) is a local government agency, created by a vote of the public to provide emergency services. The governing stature for an ESD is Chapter 775 of the Texas Health & Safety Code. In this case ESD 11 was created in May 2004 at an election.

There are two types of ESDs. One is for fire protection and the other is for EMS. This ESD 11 was created to provide EMS only. There are other ESDs located within the boundaries of ESD 11 that were previously created, however those ESDs provide fire protection and rescue, *not* EMS.

Q. What are the boundaries for ESD #11?

A. The boundaries for the District were identified in the Petition for its creation. They include: roughly Beltway 8 on the south, to 1 mile east of Hwy 290 on the west, to Hwy 59 (Humble City limits) on the east; to Montgomery County line on the north.

Q. How is this new ESD tax going to benefit me? I already have access to an ambulance service.

A. For the past 29 years, that ambulance service has been Cypress Creek EMS; funded through donations and ambulance transport billing. That funding method may have been a good way to pay for EMS in past years; however, as costs and service demands have increased so has the need for reliable and predictable funding.

Tax revenue from the ESD, on the other hand, is reliable and dependable. Also, donations are not the fairest way to fund the emergency medical services. A

donation is *voluntary*, so those who donate are subsidizing the rest. The tax bill is uniform and universal. Equally as important is the reliability of the service. As a local government agency, the ESD becomes a permanent fixture and source of funding for the EMS service in the community.

This year -- within the boundaries outlined above -- there will be approximately 19,000 calls for emergency medical services through 9-1-1. Ambulances – Mobile Intensive Care Units – are dispatched, as well as highly trained and skilled First Responders, to calls involving injury and illness.

The cost of providing the caliber of EMS assistance that we have come to take for granted has continued to escalate over the years, as the number of residents within our service area has continued to increase at a dramatic pace and the demand for services threatened to outstrip the available revenue stream.

A fair and equitable tax to underwrite the cost of emergency medical services throughout our community will assure adequate funding for the EMS response infrastructure and staffing to assure that our citizens will continue to receive the highest standard of care they expect and deserve.

The Board of Commissioners has selected Cypress Creek EMS as the District's provider, and negotiations are currently underway for the 2005 service contract.

Q. I live in a \$120,000 house. How much more tax will I have to pay?

A. The tax rate has been set by

the HCESD 11 Board of Commissioners at **\$0.03 per \$100 valuation**. Therefore, owners of a house appraised at \$120,000 would pay a tax of \$36 per year. It is likely that the resident had been paying a *voluntary* \$3* per month contribution to the EMS provider on his/her water bill – which produces the same \$36 per year (*these amounts vary by the respective water district/community).

In setting the tax rate, the Board of Commissioners also adopted a **Senior Citizens/Disabled Exemption** of \$50,000.

While many businesses have made voluntary contributions and actively participated in community fundraising events to support EMS, it is important to point out that, for the most part, local businesses and those who live in apartments have not traditionally donated to EMS. Higher density residential areas such as apartments, hotels and long term healthcare facilities generally utilize EMS services more than single family residences. All taxable properties within ESD11 will be paying their fair share for outstanding EMS service which makes it better for all of us.

Q. I already pay taxes for an ESD...why am I being "double-taxed"?

A. (See above) Many residents within the new district are included in ESDs that provide fire protection for their neighborhoods. According to the Texas Health and Safety Code, an ESD for emergency medical services may overlay a fire ESD if they do not already provide medical or ambulance services. The new tax covers EMS *only* and does, in fact,

Continued next page

overlap 9 fire districts. Areas that already provided medical services were excluded from the new ESD (e.g., CyFairVFD – ESD#9).

Q. I have always supported EMS services by a donation included on my water bill. When can I stop doing that?

A. Taxes will not be received until January 2005 so any donations to the current EMS provider can be ended at that time if desired. By mid-2005 we believe that this donation option will no longer appear on the water bills. ■

(For more information about ESD #11, visit: www.esd11.com.)

SPECIAL THANKS...

Vince Perusic, owner of **Spring Body Shop** (located at 21707 IH 45 North; 281-353-2405), recently donated his expertise and supplies to paint our Rescue Boat 63. Also, **Line - X Protective Coatings** -- Fred Schultz, Chad Fitzgerald, "and crew" -- (located at 14733A SH149; 281-397-8789) generously donated expertise and materials to coat the interior of the boat.



Striping and lettering will be applied very soon. A HUGE THANK YOU to Spring Body Shop and Line - X Protective Coatings for their contributions. We are always grateful for this kind of "partnership" that allows us to maximize our resources. ■

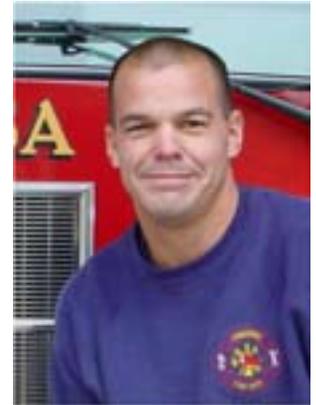
MEET YOUR PONDEROSA FIREFIGHTERS...

When **Rick Reeg** was a youngster growing up in Chicago, Illinois, he never dreamed of becoming a firefighter. That decision hit like a sledgehammer one day many years later while he was at work, pursuing a career for which he was very possibly ill-suited.

"I was on a contract assignment doing auto cad design for a fire sprinkler system when I had an opportunity to actually go inside a building where a fire had occurred," Reeg explained. "I was stunned -- and fascinated at the same time -- by the incredible amount of damage. I was in absolute awe of the courage displayed by the firefighters who had to tame the flames resulting from a natural gas leak."

"On the way home, I was stopped at the traffic light at FM 1960 and Rolling Creek when the whole fleet of Ponderosa VFD fire engines thundered past me, sirens screaming...I was hooked, right then and there."

Reeg visited the station the next day and picked up a membership application. He met some of the firefighters and experienced what he called an "instand bond" with them. From there, he went to Fire School at the College of the Mainland to earn his Fire Certification and EMT. He became the first full time career firefighter with PVFD, and now serves as Junior Captain, Station 1. He plans to continue to pursue advancement opportunities in the career he loves. In his spare time, you can find him at the Willowbrook Aerodrome playing ice hockey, or "hanging out" with his fellow firefighters at the station.



As an oilman's son, **Bill Prell** spent many of his childhood years in other countries, including Canada and Venezuela. The family was back in Houston in plenty of time for Bill to graduate from Spring High School before going on to Texas Tech. While he was home during the summer of 1977, Bill and a group of his friends joined PVFD as volunteers. At summer's end, Bill stayed and his friends moved on. He went on to attend Fire Schools at Texas A&M and accepted a job at Discount Tire, where he has worked for 18 years.

Bill participated in the Gillette, Wyoming exchange program last summer. "I was amazed at the difference in the equipment available to the two fire departments. Back when I started at Ponderosa," he explained, "the Department was very young and had only the basics for fighting fires. We had only three air packs on the truck, so the rest of us had to crawl on our bellies if we had to go into a fire...it was really very primitive. Today, of course, we have very sophisticated tools to help us fight fires and for rescues, and we have a state-of-the-art Training Center to keep our skills fine-tuned. You need to be at your best when, as I've said, 'you're crazy enough to go into a place that the roaches are leaving!'"

In his spare time, Bill enjoys hunting, four-wheeling, bowling and Scuba diving.

HEY KIDS! Do you know about **Sparky's ABCs?** fire safety alphabet will help keep you safe if there is a fire! Learn how fires start, how to prevent them, and what to do when there is a fire.

Get out fast when you hear an **Alarm** because **B**ig fires start small. Once you're out, **Call** the fire department. Smoke **D**etectors will warn your family to **E**scape. On your way out, **F**eel the doors before you open them. **G**et out and stay out! Don't ever **H**ide! Don't ever stay **I**nside! **J**oin Sparky's Fire Prevention Team, and **K**eep **L**ighters and **M**atches out of children's hands. **N**ever play with them. **O**rganize your family and make a **P**lan to get out of your home **Q**uickly. If your clothes catch on fire, **R**oll, don't run. **S**top, drop, and roll. Always know **T**wo ways out and crawl **U**nder smoke. **V**olunteer to learn these things and we will **W**in! Check for **eX**it signs in public places. It's up to **Y**ou, and it's up to me, fire safety is as **e-Z** as **ABC!**



FIRESTOP AMERICA™ PROGRAM

\$10 will be donated to benefit firefighters for each pair of StoveTop FireStop® automatic fire extinguishers purchased. Mail this order form with payment to:

FireStop America Program, Williams-Pyro, Inc., 200 Greenleaf St., Ft Worth, TX 76107

For more information, e-mail: fsa@williams-pyro.com or call: 817.872.1500 x 101

Ship to:

Name _____ Date _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone: (____) _____ E-mail _____

ORDER:

Quantity	Item	Price/pair	Total
_____	STFS	\$49.95	\$ _____
	Tax (see chart)	8.25%	\$ _____
	Shipping	\$6/PR	\$ _____
TOTAL			\$ _____

TX tax chart: 1 pair = \$4.12; 2 pair = \$8.24;
 3 pair = \$12.36; 4 pair = \$16.48; 5 pair = \$20.60

Payment Information:

Check (Payable to Williams-Pyro)
 Credit Card
 Name on card _____
 Card Type:
 VISA MasterCard
 Card # _____
 Expiration ____/____
 Signature _____



17061 ROLLING CREEK DR.
 HOUSTON, TX 77090



NEW

This publication is intended for the residents within the Ponderosa VFD service area. If you received it in error, we hope that you'll still read it and utilize the fire safety information.