



P O N D E R O S A

M I N E F I G H T E R

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #26

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HCESD #28 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

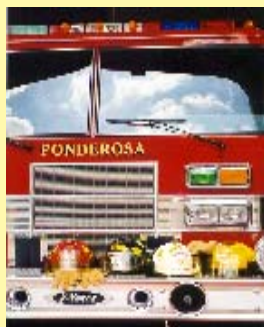
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We Might Be Looking At An Active Hurricane Season, So We MUST Be Prepared!

The destruction, displacement, and in some cases, weeks without power that Hurricane Ike brought to Galveston and Harris counties might be almost two years behind us, but for many, recovery still goes on. Countless beach and bay house owners suffered total loss, and some even paid the ultimate price. Major repairs are still ongoing and countless families are still uprooted. In our neck of the woods, the memories of wild winds and rain, massive trees lying on their sides (or across homes and fences), and sweltering days without A/C can easily bubble to the surface. At times, it can seem like yesterday, but Ike – the third costliest hurricane to ever make landfall in the United States – was a 2008 storm.

Last year's hurricane season was comparatively tame, but unfortunately, predictions for 2010 don't look quite as promising. Predictions are just that... predictions. But it's best to take them seriously. As your Momma used to say – "better to be safe than sorry". Those are definitely words that we live by every day at Ponderosa Fire Department, and the start of the 2010 Atlantic hurricane season (which officially began on June 1st), has us gearing up to handle whatever may come our way. With word from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that this is expected to be an "active" season, with as many as 23 named tropical storms and 8 to 14 hurricanes (3 to 7 of which could become major hurricanes), it is best that we are ALL prepared. If you haven't already put together a plan, now is the time to do it, and, as always, PFD is here to help provide you with the best information possible to help protect your loved ones and property should another big storm head our way. We, too, have our fingers crossed that this will be a joyful and uneventful (in terms of weather) summer, but if we do have to contend with Mother Nature, let's make sure that, together, we get all of our ducks in a row.

County Judge, Ed "Hunker Down" Emmett is stressing four major ideas in preparation for the hurricane season (which runs through November 30th): 1) have a kit (including those important papers you will need), 2) stay informed, 3) check on your neighbors, and 4) HAVE A PLAN!

So, let's get started. First off, know that the Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOEM) has a great website with loads of information on preparing for a storm and staying safe in the midst of one. Check out that site (www.hcoem.org)

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF...

Our business is to help this community...that is our mission. You and your fellow neighbors depend on us to get it right -- every second of every day. To meet, and exceed your expectations, it is imperative that our volunteer and full-time staff be the best of the best...quality people with an unwavering dedication to serve. We are always looking to add passionate volunteers to our team. If you, or someone you know has an interest in pursuing this type of community service, read the recruitment article included in this newsletter and consider giving it a shot.

Did you know: We now have nine full-time firefighters (three on duty at all times) and a cadre of fifteen part-time firefighters (five on duty that primarily work daytime weekdays). In addition, our wonderful volunteers staff Headquarters at nights and on weekends, and respond from home for major events. Together, these brave men and women have made PFD the stellar organization that it is, and I am proud to say that our response time today is less than six minutes **for all calls within our District**. I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our boards of directors, who have allowed us to maintain the best equipment possible. Without it, we wouldn't be able to

achieve the standard of service you have come to count on.

I can never state strongly enough the extent to which our non-profit and our emergency services district boards of directors commit to excellence. These citizens who live in our community are absolutely dedicated to you. If you know them, or see them, please tell them thank you.

At PFD, we never stop learning and we are constantly looking for ways to improve upon our already exemplary response times and service to keep that positive customer feedback coming in. Training is critical and we are big believers in keeping the members of this department – new and not so new – abreast of all the latest and most beneficial techniques and approaches to saving lives and protecting property. Our state-of-the-art training facility has been hugely instrumental in this process and it is utilized on a regular basis. We've certainly gotten our money's worth out of that one! Maintaining and adding to our expertise is very important in a job that presents different situations for every response. Rest assured, we are constantly preparing for your call.

Success can be measured in a number of ways, and I see the obvious successes of our team of-



Chief Windisch

ten. But I also have another measurement tool. By gauging how often I receive and respond to complaints, I can get a real feel for how this community thinks we're doing. Based on how seldom my phone rings with these types of calls, we must be doing something right! Bottom line, your safety is our success and we work daily to ensure it. As always, if you have any questions about our service, or if you would like to become part of our team, just give us a call.

All of us at PFD wish you and yours a happy and healthy summer!

J. C. Windisch

Sparky Says...
Never play with matches!

Fire is a tool...
NOT a toy!

Get Ready for New FM1960 Medians

The FM1960 median project is moving forward at a rapid pace and it will surely be a change for us all. We are confident the medians will produce the positive results intended, allowing better traffic flow and a reduction in accidents.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDot) traffic engineers are very focused on “mobility” – or the least amount of disruption when traveling from point A to point B. Engineering studies have shown that driving in a straight line with less disruptions creates fewer issues when traversing the corridor. Minimizing turn opportunities will certainly improve traffic movement and lead to a drop in accidents. A good portion of the median design was focused on reducing crashes, but we do believe it will also improve mobility more than the original plan.

How does this affect emergency services?

Emergency services utilize the FM1960 corridor (between Willowbrook and IH45) at least 50 times every single day. FM1960 is one of the only east-west roadways (outside of Cypresswood, Louetta and Spring Cypress), and has a high population and business density, in addition to Houston Northwest Medical Center and Methodist Hospital. Initially, we were very concerned that unless traffic signal controls were

not improved we would be in gridlock and your call for help would be delayed. But TxDot, Harris County and our emergency services brokered a fix to our concerns that we believe will be very beneficial.

The medians project came in under projected costs and that allowed TxDot to replace many of the traffic signal controllers. The new controllers are

VERY programmable and will sense traffic counts and adjust accordingly. That will definitely help! In association with the controllers was an agreement to install the latest and greatest emergency signal preemption devices integrated into the entire system via GPS, radio links, fiber optics and transponders on responding vehicles. The Houston Galveston Area Council along with Harris County Traffic Engineering allocated a portion

of those costs directly related to the mobility issues. The partnership allowed for what we believe will be the best of the best for both the travelling public and emergency services. We hope to have the entire corridor finalized by October.

There is no doubt in our minds that emergency services are here for YOU, and you require the best that we can provide. Even though the change in driving habits will be an adjustment, we are confident this project will benefit the public as a whole. ■



There are 97
turn opportunities
between Willowbrook
and IH-45.

Are you who we're looking for?



Ponderosa Fire Department is a predominantly volunteer organization, and we rely heavily on those volunteers to help this department run at the highest level of excellence. It's what we strive for on a daily basis because it's what this community deserves.

At PFD, we consider ourselves an elite organization with goals, policies, performance and philosophy which we feel is a “cut above” other volunteer fire departments. As such, we seek out volunteers who employ those same philosophies. We look for men and women with the highest of standards, the strongest of work ethic, commitment and dedication, and those with that unspoken fire in their belly.

Our community has changed, just like our nation. People are busy, stressed and more in need, but many still have a desire to give back to their communities – maybe now more than ever. For those who are willing, we have the opportunity waiting for you. With our state-of-the-art training facility, highly-qualified instructors, top-notch insurance program and outstanding benefits and incentives package, giving back also gives back to you – in countless ways.

To take the first step in becoming a member of one of the finest emergency services organizations in the area, visit Station 1 at 17061 Rolling Creek @ FM 1960 West to pick up an application package, or call us at 281-444-8465 for more information. New members must attend a free, semi-annual recruit training class to obtain the Texas Basic Volunteer Firefighter certification required to be accepted. The next class begins in August.

**PFD provides training, motivation, protective gear and insurance. All we ask of you is your personal commitment to excellence!*

HURRICANE!

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for detailed tips. In this article, we'll hit the high points...the bare essentials that we should all have in place:

Where to start...

First and foremost, we must all know the hurricane risks in our area and our community's safety plan (such as evacuation routes and schedules and locations of official shelters). In other words, BE INFORMED. You can find this information at www.hcoem.org.

In addition:

■ Develop a family hurricane action plan: In conjunction with the Harris County government, Ponderosa FD is doing everything possible to prepare ahead-of-time and respond as quickly as possible when a storm does hit. But emergency services can't respond if wind speeds are over 45 mph – it is simply too dangerous – and once cleared, we must first take care of those who can't take care of themselves.

Bottom line, during and in the immediate aftermath of a hurricane – especially if you choose to ignore warnings or evacuations; ***the ultimate safety of you and your family rests predominantly in your hands. Do remember that we cannot be everything for everybody!***

■ Make sure appropriate supplies are in place ahead-of-time. This is your disaster supply kit and these are the basic supplies it should include:

- Water (at least a 5 to 7 day supply – or 1 gallon per person, per day)
- Food (at least a 5 to 7 day supply of nonperishable/canned food – and change these out every 6 months)

- First aid kit
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio
- Medications and special items (pain relievers, diapers, etc.)
- Tools and supplies
- Sanitation (toilet paper, personal hygiene items, etc.)
- Change of clothes and bedding
- Cash
- Important family documents (birth certificates, insurance/bank account information, etc.)
- Food, water, medicine and kennels or crates for your pets
- Make sure all emergency equipment is in working order (such as flashlights, radios and generators) and that fire extinguishers are placed in proper locations around your home. Remember that generators carry the additional risk of gasoline storage and use, and carbon monoxide exhaust can kill you quickly. Generators MUST be run outdoors with lots of ventilation.
- Trim trees and shrubbery
- Buy plywood or shutters to protect doors and windows
- Clear clogged rain gutters and downspouts

- Keep gasoline tanks at least half full during hurricane season; never store excess gasoline
- **2-1-1:** For Evacuation Assistance Registration, dial 2-1-1. This will ensure that any folks needing assistance will be registered in a database beforehand and will be first on the list to respond to during an evacuation.
- Another important number to know: Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (713-881-3100)

A storm is on its way, what do we do now

Before the Storm:

- Check media outlets for official news of the storm's progress
- Fuel and service family vehicles
- Have that extra cash on hand
- Prepare to cover all windows and doors with shutters or other shielding materials
- Bring inside lightweight objects such as grills, lawn furniture, and garden tools

During the Storm:

In a Warning Area:

- Check media outlets for official news of the storm's progress



■ Complete preparation activities such as putting up shutters and storing loose objects

■ Follow instructions issued by local officials. In our case, Harris County Judge, Ed Emmett, is responsible for ordering evacuations. We obviously won't experience a storm surge this far north, just wind and rising water (if there are large amounts of rain), so it's most likely an evacuation will not be necessary. But if, for some reason, an evacuation order is issued, leave as soon as you are told to do so. It's hard to forget the bottlenecks during the Hurricane Rita evacuation – but this was a first-time issue and much was learned from it and resolved. Don't let that experience dissuade you from following evacuation orders. **Always** err on the side of safety.

■ If evacuating, try to leave during daylight

■ Notify neighbors and family members of your plan to evacuate

■ Take pets with you. *Note:* Shelters may not accept pets.

Staying Home:

■ Stay at home if you have not been ordered to leave

■ Stay inside a well-constructed building

■ Turn refrigerator to its coldest setting and keep closed

■ Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities

■ Turn off propane tanks

■ Unplug small appliances

■ Fill a bathtub, sink, or large containers with water for sanitary purposes.

In Case of Strong Winds:

***Note: As stated before, emergency responders will NOT respond to calls for help if consistent winds are over 45 mph. If you find yourself in this situation, stay calm and do the following:

■ Stay away from windows and

doors even if they are covered

■ Close all interior doors, and brace external doors

■ Stay in an interior first-floor room, such as a bathroom or closet

■ Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

After the Storm:

■ Check media outlets for official news of the storm's passing and current road conditions. Wait until an area is declared safe before entering. The Ponderosa FD will clear roadways as soon as possible after the storm subsides.

■ Do not attempt to drive across flowing water

■ Stay away from moving water, and do not allow children to play in flooded areas

■ Call in emergency responders to attempt rescues. Many people have been killed or injured trying to rescue others from flooded areas.

■ Stay away from standing water. It may be electrically charged.

■ Have professionals check gas,

water, and electrical lines for damage.

■ Be extremely careful during the time period electricity is being restored. There will most likely be multiple surges and intermittent on/off situations. To prevent damage to air conditioners, refrigerators and other appliances, wait for the electrical grid to stabilize before using.

■ Use tap water for drinking and cooking only after local officials declare it safe to do so.

We all hope this summer will be full of swimming, sports, family barbeques and other wonderful memories, but, just in case, please take seriously the information included in this article and be prepared. And remember, if you ever find yourself in a situation that requires emergency help, dial **9-1-1** or if you're unable to get through, try our direct emergency number: 281-444-3473 (FIRE).

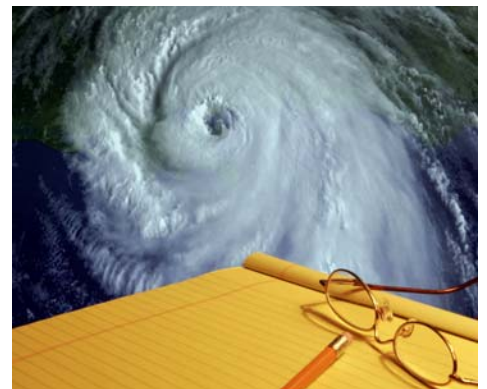
A happy and healthy summer to you all!

IS YOUR FAMILY READY?

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) will be giving a Hurricane Preparedness presentation to the Ponderosa area at Ponderosa Fire Department, July 20, 2010 – from 7:00-8:00 pm at Headquarters (17061 Rolling Creek, in the Ponderosa East Sub-division). Come learn about the four hazards of a hurricane:

- Wind
- Storm Surge
- Flooding
- Tornadoes

Preparation is the best defense, so please join us for this important meeting, and help keep your family safe this hurricane season.





Your Tax Dollars At Work

In our ongoing effort to keep you informed as to how your tax dollars benefit the department and this community – PFD has compiled the below list of recent capital, personnel and equipment purchases. If you have any questions regarding this information, feel free to give us a call at 281-444-8465.

■ **Apparatus:** Three new fire engines are on order for delivery in July. These engines are the second round of a lease purchase arrangement established in 2003. We will trade in two 2004 engines, our 2002 engine, and we are keeping one 2004 engine. These state-of-the-art apparatus will be on an eight year lease purchase cycle, reducing maintenance costs and ensuring we continue to have the best equipment possible for the community.

Project Cost: \$1,540,000 with a net of about \$1,150,000.

■ **Traffic Signals:** This project continues under a partnering arrangement with Harris County and other fire/EMS districts within Emergency Services District #11 (including Cypress Creek EMS). It includes installing and operating emergency vehicle preemption

devices for 200+ intersections (including FM1960) in an effort to enhance mobility after the medians are installed. This project uses GPS, fiber optics and radio links which communicate with Transtar to minimize traffic mobility problems. *Project Cost: \$2,400,000 over the five year project.*



■ **Computers:** This phased approach included - Phase 1 (2007 & 2008): the installation of computers (which utilize GPS, maps, pictures and incident preplanning drawings) into PFD response vehicles; Phase 2 (2009): the installation of web-based, enhanced graphics, maps, pictures, preplans and live vehicle movements with other amenities. *Project Cost: \$80,000.*

■ **Driving Simulator:** A federal grant allowed us to purchase a high tech driving simulator in 2009. The simulator further ensures that our drivers can safely and capably handle the big rigs. *Project Cost: \$135,000.*

■ **Protective Clothing:** Firefighters need the best in protective clothing to ensure their safety. Each year we purchase fifteen sets. *Cost: \$30,000.*



■ **Firefighter Safety:** A federal grant is helping to equip all firefighters in Harris and Montgomery counties with electronic accountability modules. Firefighters enter very dangerous environments and this tool keeps track of them via radio frequency and a computer. The first round of the grant funded over \$750,000 and a just-approved second round provides \$400,000. The PFD value of the grant was \$46,000 for the basics. *Project Cost: \$20,000.*

■ **Firefighters:** To keep up with the demand of a growing and aging community, we've added nine full-time firefighters to our stellar PFD team. The three recent hires were offset by a federal grant where our cost will be 50% over a five year period. *Cost: PRICELESS!*



Driving Simulator Teaches Real World Conditions

In late 2008, PFD was notified that we received a grant for a driving simulator. After careful product evaluation and other research and due diligence, we made a decision to order an MPRI FireSim™ real world vehicle driving simulator. This “machine” utilizes several computers and plasma screens (with software driven scenarios) to improve driver decision-making and behavior over a wide range of vehicle maneuvers.

Just like the real thing!

The MPRI FireSim™ is just like sitting in the driver’s seat. It has forward and side views, an instrument panel and various controls including all the operations of a truck. Even the rear view mirrors are adjustable and the steering wheel has vibration and resistance feedback when a curb is hit or a flat tire occurs. It is so realistic that drivers can actually experience “sea sickness”, or “simulator sickness”, due to the reality of the event. The program can also make it rain, snow, produce darkness and fog; practically any kind of driving condition can be simulated and changed as a student traverses the city, suburbs and rural areas. In conjunction with pre-programmed scenarios, an instructor sits at the “Rabbit” station, where they have control over vehicles that can enter from side streets, head on, or various other situations. Why is this so important? Because just like on the streets driving big rigs, the student driver never really knows what is going to happen next, and that is key to behavior and decision-making driver training.

A tool for all...

Within the simulator training, we have developed three different curricula. The first level is for new members, to address their competence in driving a standard vehicle. The second level is for apparatus drivers in training, and the third level is for the seasoned driver - to hone their skills so that they can be the most prepared rig operators possible. We truly believe this tool is another way to provide you with the highest level of service. Driving is one of our riskiest tasks, especially on our crowded roadways. Training our staff with the MPRI FireSim™ will help us to continue to be the best we can be.

We’re doing our part to keep our streets safe – so we ask that you do the same. Please remember: MOVE RIGHT FOR SIRENS AND LIGHTS!! ■



17061 Rolling Creek Dr.
Houston, TX 77090



Volunteers are needed! If you are hard-working, dedicated and interested in becoming part of the Ponderosa VFD, call 281-444-8465 today!

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

July 2010 8.4k



Board Member Spotlight... Dan Langford

"Until you get involved day in and day out with a citizen's service such as the Ponderosa Fire Department, it's difficult to truly understand what goes into it," said ESD #28 Vice President, Dan Langford.

"The logistics involved in providing funding for essential elements like training, maintenance, insurance, equipment, and top-notch firefighters – all while keeping the lowest tax rate possible - can be challenging. The cost of business is rising, but we have to maintain a high level of service. I'm proud of how PFD and the Board have been able to work together to serve this community in the manner it deserves."

Langford, an ESD #28 board member for two years now,

with a background in reservoir engineering for the oil industry, brings his own unique perspective and solutions to the table. To Langford and the rest of the Board, raising tax rates is a last option, but one that has, in the past been a necessity as business costs rose and revenue was lost due to lowered property values. On the flip side, PFD's high quality of services has provided residents and businesses with reduced insurance costs and Langford is proud of the fact that this department is consistently considered one of the best.

"Looking back now, I'm so thankful that I responded when PFD advertised an open Board position in my subdivision newspaper," said Langford. "It's important for all of us, in some way, to be involved in our community. Working with this quality organization and the superior firefighters is what keeps me excited about this work, and I hope to continue to do my part for many years to come."

PFD thanks Dan Langford for his service and we look forward to working with him, and the rest of the ESD #28 Board to keep challenging ourselves to be the best we can be.

Ponderosa Fire Department Serving the Champions Area Community

The Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Association, Inc. recently contracted (4-1-10) with Emergency Ser-

vices District #29 to provide interim fire and rescue services to the area generally bounded by Veterans Memorial, Bammel North Houston, Cutten Road and Strack Road. The contract for services was requested by ESD29 due to an impasse of unresolved negotiations between ESD29 and the Champions Area Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., ESD29's former service provider.

Ponderosa VFA hired approximately 40 certified firefighter/EMT's to work 24/7 (using 12-hour shifts) assigned to the ESD29 area.

There were seven firefighters on duty during this interim period until ESD29 constituted a new service delivery system. Standard automatic mutual aid continued with neighboring fire departments, and ESD29 reimbursed all PFD costs with an additional 3% service fee. The PVFA insured all apparatus and provided worker's compensation insurance under a reimbursement clause.

The contract with the PVFA was terminated on May 17, 2010 and ESD29 is now running its own emergency response agency. ■

