



DISTRICT FIREFIGHTER HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

Winter 2003

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 nationally.
- Careless smoking is the leading cause of fire deaths.
- In the first eleven months of this year, PVFD responded to more than 1094 fire, EMS and mutual aid calls.

HCESD #28

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

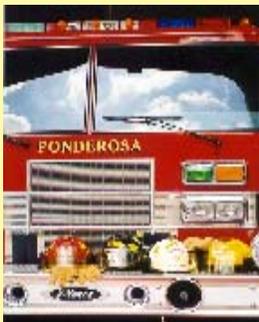
Curtis Cook - President
Ponderosa resident

Bob Palnau - Vice President
Northview resident

Edson Dronberger - Treasurer
Westador resident

James Chatterton - Secretary
Cypresswood resident

Dan McDermott - Assistant
Treasurer, Ponderosa resident



Left to right: Fred Windisch, PVFD Fire Chief; Rep. Senfronia Thompson; Rep. Debbie Riddle; and Fire Service Chaplain Skip Straus participated in the Dedication Ceremony.

Elected Officials Gather for Training Facility Dedication Ceremony

Neighbors, firefighters and their families, elected officials, and other community leaders attended the Official Dedication Ceremony for the PVFD Training Facility located behind the department's Station 3 on Imperial Valley. The 4-story tower is situated on a pad of concrete and asphalt in a 3-acre tract that was donated to the department in 1992 and offers unique training capabilities for current team members and new recruits.

The completion of this brand new, state of the art training facility was the fulfillment of a decade-old dream. The event celebrated this achievement as well as the dedication and perseverance of the PVFD team that made it possible.

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PROVIDED AS A COMMUNITY SERVICE TO PROMOTE FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION

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The Fire Chief's Philosophy...

“We appreciate the opportunity to serve you.” That is the operating philosophy that has been the cornerstone of the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department's success story. We believe that our community is our focus, and that we need to continually adjust to assure that you are being served to the best of our

abilities. Fire Chief Fred Windisch shares some philosophies of his own.....

Be nice. Even during the bad times. We deal with people, we deal with the “worst day of their lives”, we deal with our own members, and we deal with government, fire service organizations, and the businesses that provide service to us.

Strive to succeed. We are a very labor intensive service. We must always try to do better. We must always want to be the best. We must protect ourselves.

Teams Win. The entire team concept is defined as a fire department getting the job done. This is not a one-man show; it takes a dedicated cadre of individually talented, highly trained, and committed people to do what we do.

Be an Advocate...For fire prevention, public education, personal safety, building safety, driving safety, environmental issues and operations, personal health, and most of all, be an advocate of the preservation of life.

Be Professional. Never stop learning. Participate with our peer groups. Attend the National Fire Academy. Achieve fire service credentials via learning and certifications. Place the organization ahead of personal interests. Foster this philosophy in others, and be a mentor to others.

The Fire Chief's “job” is more than responding to emergencies. The job entails skills -- counseling, people, business, vision, planning, and demonstrating all of them on a continual basis. Expectations are many, but the rewards are special. ■

Ponderosa ReHab 60 -- Help at a moment's notice.

There's a very special group of spouses and family members who are ready at a moment's notice to provide critical assistance to firefighters when they are at the scene of major incidents. Their main concern is to monitor the well-being of the firefighters by keeping them hydrated and watching for the effects of heat exhaustion and other potential impacts.

These women provide food and refreshments at the scene of extended operations or emergencies, and they lend support and encouragement to the families of injured firefighters, as well. Fighting fires is an exhausting task and temperatures inside the flame retardant suits promote dehydration relatively quickly which makes it essential to drink plenty of fluids while on the emergency scene.

ReHab 60 is “paged out” just as the firefighters are to respond to all in-district working fires, and may be requested by the Incident Commander to respond to any scene where firefighters will be utilized for any extended periods of time.

On the lighter side, ReHab 60 also “works” at other PVFD functions, like the Dedication Ceremony, along with children's activities at PVFD functions,



Front row, left to right: Stacey Casner, Karen Wiseman, Dana Young, Kim David. Back row, left to right: Jackie Luplow, Andi Simpson, Misty Kainer, and Katrina Luplow. Not pictured: Holly Klumpp and Judith Schultz.

public education appearances, family “morale” events (e.g., bridal and baby showers), and other department recreational activities such as picnics and holiday parties.

Kim David is currently the group's leader and is enthusiastic about providing ReHab 60's life-saving services while family members are in harm's way.
Thanks, ReHab 60, for all you do! ■

Training Facility Dedication Ceremony

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Chief Windisch says that they are discovering new training uses for the center every time it is used. "The vision that resulted in this fine facility could not have happened without people, leadership, commitment and dedication. We especially want to acknowledge the Board of Directors of the Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Association and Emergency Services District #28 whose hard work and foresight paved this path to success and turned this dream into reality.

Chief Windisch also acknowledged the contribution made by Assistant Chief Tony Spitzenberger and Captain Jim Luplow (below receiving a plaque of appreciation from the Chief) for their tireless work in designing and building this extraordinary training center. ■



Young visitors enjoyed playing in a "pop up" firehouse set up by Public Education Coordinator Marti Stein.

Curtis Cook: Meet a Genuine PVFD Legend...

People who meet Curtis Cook don't usually forget him. He tends to be passionate about everything in which he becomes involved -- and that list gets longer all the time. Fortunately for PVFD, one of the things he cares passionately about is Ponderosa!



His childhood was spent in a small Oregon town where Curt says he really did have to walk uphill to and from school -- usually in waist-deep snow. He remembers having an "icebox" instead of a refrigerator, having water heated on a wood cook-stove, and he and his younger brother having to take baths in a concrete laundry tub. His tough childhood prepared him for bigger challenges ahead. He graduated with honors from high school, went to Southern Oregon College on a scholarship, and then finished up at Oregon State University with a degree in Business and Technology and a minor in civil engineering.

Curt joined Shell Oil Company in Los Angeles after graduation and subsequently was transferred to Houston in 1974 where he immediately got involved with Spring VFD. Curt is one of the original founders of Ponderosa VFD and has been involved with the department ever since. He serves as President of Harris County Emergency Services District #28.

In 1998, Curt was diagnosed with throat cancer and he approached this challenge as he had everything else that ever got in his way -- with a single-minded commitment to purpose. Today, he speaks with the assistance of a hand-held amplifier, but it doesn't prevent him from expressing his opinions. Curt continues to be very involved in making his community a better place in which to live and he frequently shares his advice with elected officials both here and in Austin. He is a tireless advocate for fire safety issues.

At the recent PVFD holiday event, Curt was honored as the recipient of the Chief's Award. He and Anita, his wife of 40 years, have four children. ■



Harris County Citizen Corps Graduates First Emergency Response Team

In August 2002, Harris County Judge Robert Eckels introduced a program designed to help neighbors help their neighbors in times of crisis when law enforcement and emergency agencies are often “stretched to the limit.” Tropical Storm Allison provided the impetus for the idea when entire subdivisions experienced flooding and residents in some areas required dramatic high-water rescues.

According to Eckels, the **Harris County Citizen Corps** is committed to creating opportunities for people to volunteer to help prepare for and respond to emergencies. The primary objective is to have residents participate in making their neighborhoods safer by providing them the tools and training needed for preventing and handling threats of terrorism, crime and natural disasters of all kinds.

The **Citizen Corps** is a component of President Bush’s **USA Freedom Corps** that brings together local leaders, citizen volunteers, and the network of first responder organizations, such as fire and police departments.



The **Community Emergency Response Team** (CERT) training is accomplished through a Federal Emergency Management Agency program that offers hands-on education about the hazards

faced in communities in the aftermath of 9/11, and training for participants in lifesaving skills. These citizen-responders are then equipped to use their training as part of a neighborhood or workplace team to help others when professional responders are overwhelmed or not immediately available.

This summer, 21 members of the newly trained Westador Community Emergency Response Team and 9 members of the Harris County Sheriff’s Department Citizens Police Academy CERT team participated in the graduation ceremony at Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department. They were the first to complete the comprehensive education and training program and to receive the handsome certificate awarded to graduates.

Westador is a subdivision where many of its residents have lived for more than 30 years and where there is a strong neighborhood spirit. During Allison, they were especially hard hit with about



200 homes flooded and some families required high-water rescue.

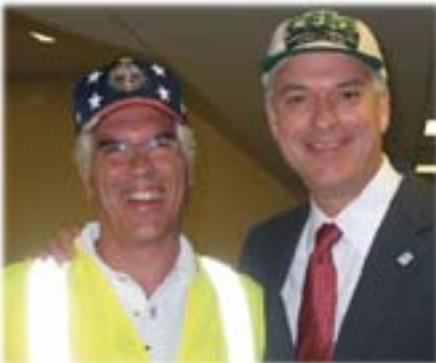
The Westador Civic Association used the subdivision newsletter to inform residents about the new CERT program, and subsequently attracted 21 volunteers – with some over age 60. They participated in a 20-hour training program held at Ponderosa VFD’s Station One that featured instructors from a variety of County and Volunteer agencies. Disaster preparedness was provided by the Harris County Office of Emergency Management; classes on suppression of small fires and fire proofing were conducted by Ponderosa VFD; and basic first aid and “triage” training was taught by Cypress Creek EMS. One of the most critical skills training was in triage -- how to assess a disaster situation where there are multiple victims requiring emergency care.

In November 2002, Harris County also applied for and was the only county in Texas to be

awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help fund the coordination of volunteer health professionals during major emergencies.

This grant allows Harris County to establish a Medical Reserve Corps to assist emergency response teams, provide care to victims with less serious injuries, and remove other burdens that inhibit the effectiveness of doctors and nurses during a large-scale crisis. Nationwide, 177 grant applications were submitted. Of that number, 42 were awarded. Harris County received the maximum award available.

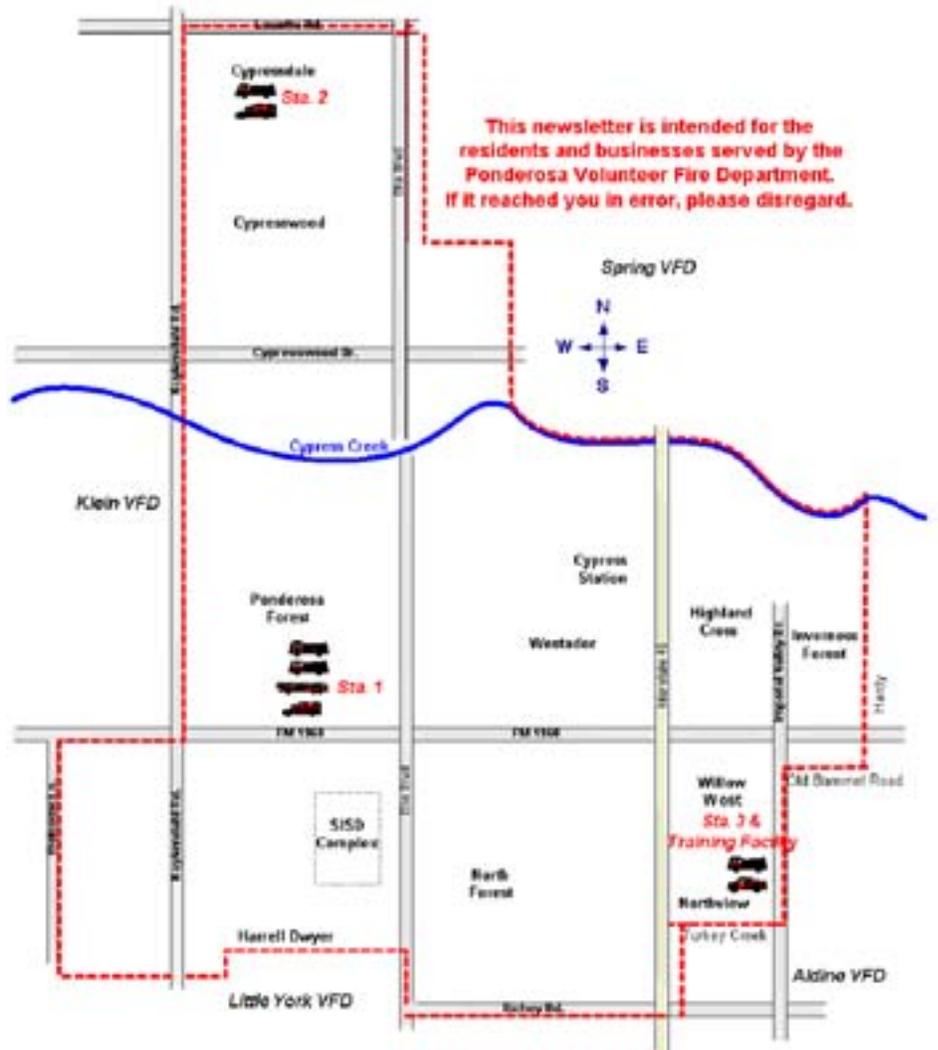
Additional information about this program is available on the Corps' special website: www.harriscountycitizen corps.com or by contacting Mark Sloan, Community Services and Special Projects, 713-755-4077. ■



Donning a CERT hat himself, Judge Eckels congratulates Westador CERT team member Richard Murphy.



The Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department Service Area



Candles are lovely...but they can also be deadly.

Candlelight generally signals a special occasion and, when used safely, candles can add a special glow to holiday events. The not-so-pleasant reality, however, is that the number of home fires caused by candles has soared in recent years!

Here are some safety tips: ● Never leave candles burning unattended. ● Put them on a heat-resistant surface. ● Position them away from curtains, fabrics and furniture. ● Watch your clothing (and yourself!) when around candles; don't lean across the open flame. ● Keep pets and children away from lit candles. ● Scented candles turn to liquid to release the fragrance, so be sure they are in a metal or glass holder. Finally, ● Avoid using candles that contain combustible items embedded in them. ● Use your good common sense when candles are lit, and always double check to make sure they are out! ■





MEET YOUR PONDEROSA FIREFIGHTERS...



**Bob Schmanski,
Captain, Station 2**

This third generation volunteer firefighter has been around fire stations since the 1980's because of his dad's service when he was a kid. Later, while studying to become a Fire Protection and Safety Engineering Technician at Oklahoma State University, he lived at a local VFD because there were no dorm rooms available, so he became a student volunteer.

Bob's firefighting experience provides valuable assistance in his career as an underwriting manager for AIG (American International Group) a large insurance company, where he writes high risk property insurance policies. "Understanding exactly what happens in a structure fire, for example, and knowing how a fire department responds," he explained, "helps me identify realistic fire risks for clients, and to write appropriate policies for them."

Bob volunteers at PVFD nights and on weekends, and likes Station 2 because it is a little slower

paced with fewer calls than Station 1. He and his wife, Dana -- who he says is truly his very best friend -- are the parents of Jared, 9 and Madison age 5. Bob says that during some recent family illnesses, he was amazed at the incredible support they received from PVFD members. "Thankfully, everything turned out OK, but everyone was so helpful, and we certainly appreciated this."

Sometimes, Bob says, something happens that reminds you why you volunteer. "We were at a PVFD BBQ at Station 2 a year or so ago when a family pulled up in their car, and a teenaged boy got out using crutches. After a while, he came over to me and said, 'You cut me out of my car...I remember your voice. I just wanted to thank you in person.' That meant a lot to me."

Bob says that after 9-11 there's no such thing as a routine call. He believes that the public is more understanding about what it takes to be a firefighter. "More folks stop us to just say 'hi' or 'good job' and they really seem to respect this volunteer role."

Bill Pilkington (right) is Lieutenant at Station 2, and serves as 3rd Vice President on the PVFA Board of Directors. He, too, comes from a firefighting family -- four out of five brothers, his sister and his Dad are also volunteer firefighters. (The other brother had back surgery or he'd be one, too.)

Bill attended Texas A&M

where he earned his degree in Accounting and Finance. When he moved to Houston to practice as a CPA, he moved into the Ponderosa service area, so he joined PVFD. At a Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce *Business After Hours*, he met his future wife, Marva, who was the sales manager at the hotel where the event was held. Today, they are the proud parents of daughter Kelley (three and a half) and son Chris (one and a half).

Bill is an "extreme" athlete and competes in Triathlons and Marathons. He, too, is especially interested in helping the younger volunteers at Station 2. "There is so much we can do to help those coming up in the department to gain sound, hands-on experience. This provides the necessary encouragement to the young volunteers to keep up their training to advance, and it also contributes directly to building PVFD's future."

"There is so much about being a volunteer firefighter that builds a sense of belonging and pride. Here's something that you can do that satisfies a sense of adventure and action, allows you to spend time with folks who share your interests, and, at the same time, allows you to do something positive for your community." ■



Practice these simple fire safety tips when trimming the tree.

Each year, some 200 house fires occur where Christmas trees are the initial source of the ignition. Household fires during

the winter holiday season kill about 500 and injure about 2,000 people -- and cause more than \$500 million in damage.



Practicing fire safety did.

PREPARE. PRACTICE.
PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE.

www.usfaparents.gov



Be sure to use safe tree lights intended for indoor use. All lights should be listed by a testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use the lights, and replace any strings with worn, frayed or broken cords or with loose bulb connections. Always unplug Christmas tree or in-home decorative lighting when leaving the house or retiring for the night.

Choose a sturdy tree stand for a live tree that won't tip over. Needles on a fresh tree should be green and not fall off easily. If selecting an artificial tree, make sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. Make sure that the tree is placed at least a yard away from any heat source and try to position it near an electrical outlet so cords don't have to be stretched for long distances. Use only nonflammable decorations, as well.

Don't let youngsters play near the tree. If there are pets in the home, don't leave them unattended around the tree...cats just love to climb up the inside branches -- an activity that can send the whole thing crashing to the floor.

Try to keep the tree as moist as possible, and check the water level in the stand daily. Two weeks is about the "life-expectancy" of a Christmas tree. As trees dry out they become more flammable and should be properly disposed of when they begin dropping needles.

Practice common sense fire safety tips and have a wonderful Holiday Season. ■

DISTRICT
FIREFIGHTER
HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

17061 ROLLING CREEK DR.
HOUSTON, TX 77090



NEW

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!