



# Smoke Signals

SMOKE SIGNALS is published monthly for Volunteers, Staff and Friends of IVFD.  
681 Caves Hwy, Cave Junction, OR 97523  
541-592-2225



**March  
2017**

## Chief's Message

By Dennis Hoke: Fire Chief, Paramedic, EFO [dennishoke@ivfire.com](mailto:dennishoke@ivfire.com)



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### Decisions!

In our business we have to make decisions in a split second. Lives are on the line and the public expects we will make the right ones. Not all decisions are life threatening. We make decisions every day that do not have such a significant impact. I would like to discuss a couple of them looming in the future and I need your input.

Our banquet is a first rate event and it has become the largest event in the Illinois Valley. This is an opportunity to give thanks to all the hard work by our volunteers. We are spending money and staff time on this event. We pay to use the IV High School and we have to set up and tear down. We have to supply all the

dishes and return them to Station 3. We believe we can save money and time by having this event in Grants Pass at an event center or the golf course; we will have no set up nor clean up. I have spoken to Applegate and Rural Metro and they have agreed to cover our District. We would take a few rigs to Grants Pass for a large event. Yes, there would be a cash bar for those who partake and have a designated driver. This is the same type of event RM, GP Fire and AMR have. I need your thoughts.

This newsletter that you are reading costs the District to print. What we have noticed by way of a few hidden messages, very few read the information and most just want to see the pictures. I receive more feedback on the newsletter from the public



than we do from you, the intended reader.

In my 40+ years in this business the number one complaint I receive is lack of information or involvement in what is going on. We send out the staff notes to your email. How many of you take the time to read them? Do you take the time to read the newsletter and the pertinent information we write? It takes a lot of time to write articles that would be informative and beneficial to you, the readers and members of IVFD. Neal and Pramada Kisela are frequent authors of very good articles and great recipes. Have you ever thought of writing an article? We would love to have your submission.

So again, I am looking for your feedback. I believe that all means of communication to the membership (and public) is important. I am willing to spend the funds but I need to know that it is important to you.

I have written in past articles, about business models. Playboy Magazine's new business model failed. Why? Because they forgot to ask the customer what they wanted. Last year Playboy stopped publishing photos. They assumed people purchased Playboy for the articles. Their sales plummeted so the photos are now back.

I am asking for your input. What do you want? A newsletter electronically, not printed? No pictures? No articles? Or suck it up and keep it the same? Will you attend the Awards Banquet if we hold it in Grants Pass? You have the opportunity for input on District decisions. Make your opinions known!

Until next time... Let's be safe out there!

Dennis

# A Wonderful "Thank You" from our community





# Operations & Prevention

By Kamron Ismaili; Division Chief Operations and Prevention

For me, there are some simple ideas and concepts that can make a firefighter exceptional versus middle of the road. These concepts not only apply at the firefighter level, but to all ranks within the fire service. By bearing them in mind, you can help to improve both your fire suppression efforts and your safety on the fire ground.

## KNOW YOUR DISTRICT

Preplanning is a concept that goes beyond knowing basic hazards of your district's occupancies. Be familiar with everything about them, such as:

- Their construction
- Their placement amidst their surrounding structures
- What exposures are present on all four sides of the building?
- What security and fire protection systems do they have installed?
- What obstacles may slow your ability to force entry?
- Are people on site after regular business hours?
- Does a church also serve as a rescue mission after hours for the homeless?
- What problems have you had recently in these structures?
- What type of clientele spends time in them and could they present safety hazards to your personnel?

Pay attention to the stories the senior firefighters tell around the kitchen table regarding those buildings you may have to fight fire in. They may tell of difficulties they faced there in the past and you can learn these tough lessons without having to figure it out for yourself. Know your Fire District because your life may depend on it!

## BE PROACTIVE

Problems faced during your career can be approached in a number of directions. You can ignore them and hope they go away, you can tell someone else in the

hope they will solve the problem, or you can jump in and be part of the solution.

Dwindling budgets have created an environment where it is difficult to merely throw money at a problem to solve it. Take the time to look at a problem from all sides and be a part of the system that attempts to solve it.

Not only will this enable to you to learn more about the equipment or process that needs attention, you also learn more about the way to utilize the District 's process for problem solving.

If the District needs something that it does not have, take the time to do your homework and find an affordable or acceptable solution to existing problems. Knowing how to get what you need now will help the District get what it wants in the future.

## TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN

I can't say enough about how critical it is for a team to train together to ensure all members know their place and role on the team they are part of.

- How often do you to pull the extrication equipment just to re-establish the muscle memory required when you will really need it?
- Do you practice like they play?
- Do all members utilize current SOGs during training so that when they really have to initiate a Mayday or be part of an RIT team, they know the process inside and out?
- Is every member practiced and capable with every piece of equipment of the apparatus?
- Is every member trained to operate as a team leader in case the company officer goes down?
- Does the team depend on every member to have some level of knowledge regarding every possible call type they may have to respond to?
- Are your acting engineers, officers, etc., as capable as those who are in the positions regularly?
- Does that remote control help save lives?

## DON'T MAKE SAFETY AN AFTERTHOUGHT

There is a current rumbling going through the brotherhood that the safety pendulum has swung to the conservative end of the spectrum; that we are taking safety far too seriously and that it takes up too much time.

This is a dangerous path to tread and leaves an individual in a position of making singular decisions about what safety measures should be taken and what should be ignored.

While I agree that our job at times requires us to risk ourselves to save others, we should never approach a risky decision in a cavalier fashion. If we are forced to place ourselves at risk, we should be utilizing every piece of equipment, every safety concept and every manner available to reducing the risk as much as possible.

If you simply walk into situations thinking nothing can happen to you or your crew, you are a **FOOL** and a hazard to the team you represent. Train so you know how to be safe, train to be able to get out of hazardous situations and train to get civilians out as rapidly and safely as possible.

In addition, train so you know when a situation is a downright loser. When a room and contents fire is completely involved, you must ask the hard question: "Could an individual survive that environment without the type of gear I use?" If not, consider making a cal-

culated approach for suppression, not an aggressive rescue evolution! You have a lifetime of fighting fire to survive -- don't become complacent!

## FIT IS FINE

I can't stress enough how important it is for a firefighter to be in good shape. We see consistently high numbers of firefighters who die in the line of duty from cardiovascular events every year.

We know what the problem is most of the time, yet we fail to act. NFPA 1500 pushed the fire service forward by making fitness a necessity for our survival. Yet I still see members who do not take the opportunity to be fit and miss out on their best way to ensure they can survive to enjoy life.

Recent literature is showing that long-term aerobic activity may not be sufficient, and that high intensity training is the prescription to ensuring our brothers and sisters obtain and maintain elite levels of fitness.

I have recently seen the light and while in good shape, have moved forward to higher intensity training to get into great shape to be sure my body can continue to take what every physical insult I may receive until I can retire.

Take the time to find what process will not just help keep weight down, but that will enable you to keep doing the job well in the years to come.

# Logistics

By Kris Sherman; Division Chief Logistics



We have possession of the new tender, we will be installing the light bar and other lights, radio, and stripping it. We hope to have it in service very soon.

We are auctioning off 8946. There will be a sealed bid with a minimum bid of \$8500. Winner will be notified on April 3rd.

We had someone disable the gate at Station 1. They went through the new CERT trailer which had nothing in it and then they rifled through 8932. He took a few rope bags, rack pack, med bag, swift water bags, and misc. items. So make sure that if you park at any of the Stations to be sure to lock up the vehicle, personal or fire apparatus.





# Training and Safety

By Jeff Gavlik: Deputy Chief

Let's talk about safety for a moment. We all know that the world we are living in is rapidly changing all around us and at a fast pace too! We have those in our community that have no regard for the law much less doing what is right; they see the neighborhood as their playground and like little children often do, they make up the rules as they go along. I have actually heard some of our youth that vandalize people's property say "they deserve to have that damaged, because they were too stupid to not prevent me from doing it" or "I wanted it, so I took it." The sense of self-justification was shocking to hear, they really don't have a conscience telling them right from wrong. Now add to this the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and who knows what they may be thinking or desiring to do.

At a recent Safety, Wellness and Health roundtable meeting with fellow fire departments and agencies around the state, the discussion of firefighter safety and the use of ballistic vests came up.

Some agencies have purchased vests for all of their apparatus and personnel while others were given donated expired vests from law enforcement. Those that had vests, talked about how they choose to use them (policies) and how receptive their personnel were for their use. Interestingly enough, those that had the vests store them in the apparatus and the shift Captain would determine on a call by call basis if they were going to put on the vests. They justified the vests as just an additional piece of PPE and that nothing has changed in their department's mission or reasons for responding to calls. Meaning they were not going to be moving into a law enforcement type role. Of

course there was a lot of discussion about if you don't wear the vests all the time then the crews will not be used to thinking about using the vest and what happens when you respond to a routine call that goes south? All good questions. One agency gave an example of a situation where the vest changed an individual's mindset. They had a firefighter with previous military background and responded to a medical incident that required law enforcement to secure the scene. The scene was secured and the company responded in with their



vests on. While treating the patient, a civilian somehow made it past the police officers and approached the firefighters. The firefighter with previous military experience dropped what he was doing (patient care) and turned and grabbed hold of the civilian in a two hand hold ready to throw him to the ground when others from the crew stepped in and calmed the situation down. Now I don't know all of the specifics of that situation, but it was noticed that this individual had a moment when he reverted back to his military training and separated himself from his primary

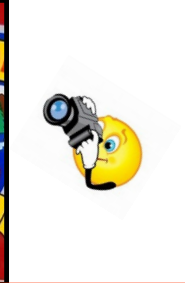
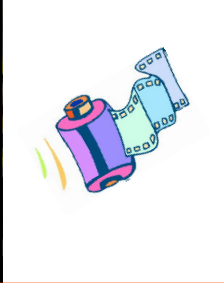
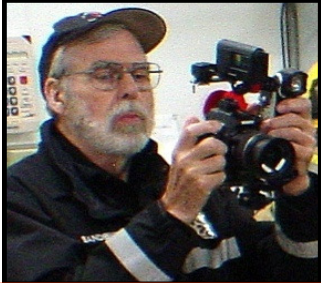
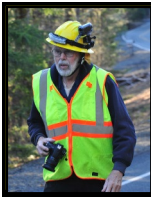
focus of patient care.

Is there a place for ballistic vests here in the Illinois Valley? We have talked about that possibility. Regardless of whether we do or not, we need to be aware of our surroundings during routine and high hazard incidents. Keep a watchful eye on what's going on around you and don't assume that a routine call can't change into something life threatening. As I said at the beginning of this article, the world around us is changing and without law enforcement nearby, we need to keep our wits about us to keep everyone safe.



# Through the Lenses

Of: Dale Sandberg, Jason Bayless, and Ned Booth—IVFD Media Department



Melissa

# Congratulations !!

Charlie





ILLINOIS VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT SMOKE SIGNALS, MARCH 2017

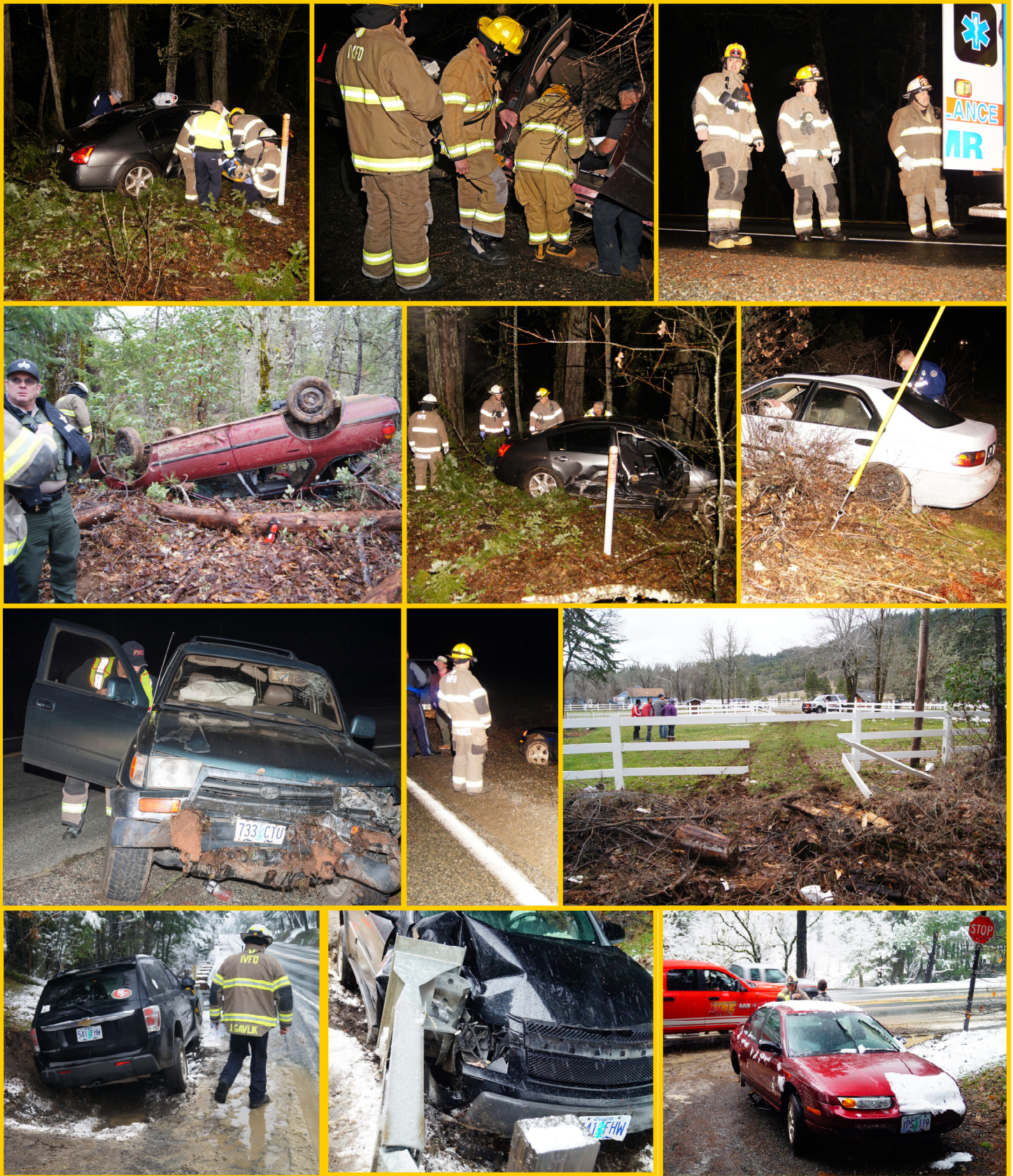




ILLINOIS VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT SMOKE SIGNALS, MARCH 2017







**SMOKE SIGNALS** is a monthly newsletter published by the Illinois Valley Fire District for volunteers, staff and friends.

To get a copy please stop by our administration office at 681 Caves Hwy.





# CERT

By: Sue Williams

## CERT - NERT - and SnERT

Our Illinois Valley CERT is unique from other CERT groups in southwestern Oregon in what we do. This is not unusual since different CERT groups take their lead from the organizations under which they operate. In the interest of expanding our vision of what we can do, here are some stories about the activities of other CERT organizations.

**CERT in Irvine, CA.** As you would imagine, this city in southern California, population 258,400, has a very large CERT unit which receives funding from and operates under the City of Irvine Police Department as well as the Orange County Fire Department. The CERT unit was founded in 2000 and was originally modeled in the traditional response paradigm. But the police commander felt that they needed more involvement with the community and in 2011 their new director centralized management and expanded CERT's role of preparing their community for emergencies, including earthquakes and wildfire. To meet their goal of having an active CERT member on each street or at each business in Irvine, the number of Basic CERT Training classes was increased from 4 a year to 8 per year. As a result, there are in excess of 1,000 residents trained in preparedness activities.

In an area where more than 35 languages are spoken, the CERT unit represents a cross section of its demographics and assists with translations when emergency responders need them. These language skills become critical when the unit is deployed to help search for a missing person. Over 100 CERT members are fluent in a second language. On one night, they experienced a critical missing person event. Law enforcement activated the CERT unit and within an hour, there were 130 members reporting to the command post to assist in the search.

**NERT in San Francisco, CA.** Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) members in this City by the Bay emphasize training their city's residents in emergency preparedness. Their NERT Program Coordinator for the San Francisco Fire Department states that they have trained over 1,000 residents each year, for an estimate of 27,000 people having received this vital information.

NERT members who want to be more involved receive Disaster Corps training, communications (radio) training, and complete a series of FEMA Independent Study Courses. Based on their level of advanced training, NERT members are categorized into one of 3 "Types: Type 3 being the basic level of skill, and Type 1 the most skilled. A Level 1 NERT member would become the lead during a deployment.

Some of what the SFFD NERT members are asked to do include working with battalion chiefs during fire operations to track information, answer phone calls and administer the disaster on a command level. Some in the Disaster Corps were recently deployed to Lake County after a major wildfire to assist with food and medical supply distribution. This unit also assisted in Tulare County in a door-to-door program when California's drought impacted several low income areas that were without sources of drinking water, providing information on resources to help them.

**SnERT in Burleigh County, ND.** Just as you would imagine, North Dakota has its share of weather emergencies. Operating under the Burleigh County Emergency Management office and the Sheriff's Department, this emergency response unit truly goes the distance to help their citizens. In 2009, a severe snowstorm high-



lighted the plight of several senior citizens who couldn't reach their pharmacies for needed medicines due to the amount of snow. (Sound familiar?) One of the County's deputies enlisted a local snowmobile club to help out during the storm, and one thing led to another and the Burleigh County Snowmobile CERT unit (SnERT) was born! Twenty-eight members of the local snowmobile club went through the Basic CERT training in addition to specific training dealing with cold weather responses. Trained also in ground searches, each unit is equipped with GPS devices and Garmin Rhinos (a two-way radio), allowing the SnERT members to talk to each other during a deployment as well as see where each is located on a real-time basis.

A typical deployment occurs during a heavy snowfall that shuts down roads across the 1,650 square mile county. They grid out the areas and search the non-snow emergency routes for stranded vehicles. Each unit carries food and fuel for a stranded motorist as well as for themselves. This year, the program is adding a rescue sled, so if someone who is injured needs to be transported, there is a sled that can be pulled behind the snowmobile to bring the victim out to medical help.

In 2016, FEMA recognized the Snowmobile CERT with the "Outstanding Citizen Corps Partner Program Award". The award was presented to the Burleigh County Sheriff, director of the program, in Washington, D.C. Future plans by the Burleigh County officials are to add all-terrain vehicles to be used by this specialized unit for summertime events and emergencies.

**After Word.** In these three CERT units, and in others around our nation, keeping the interest of the volunteers by actually using them in various situations was a major concern. "A unit that only trains and is never deployed creates lots of dissatisfaction and boredom, and results in the loss of volunteers" was a common theme from these three CERT unit coordinators. Identifying those activities needed by emergency management, law enforcement, and fire districts, training to those needs, and then consistently deploying the unit members to meet those needs is the formula that has kept these CERT units viable. Something for us to consider.





# In District

By Neil Kisiela:

## Training The Mind

Firefighters always train, train, train - but how about training the mind? In a sense, the brain is a muscle that needs exercise. "Use It Or Lose It". If you only exercise your fingers and arms to get pre-loaded definitions that some geek put on your Smart Phone, you'll wind up with skinny arms and a weak brain.

Muscle memory gets developed by many repetitions of the same tasks. For example, even at night with no visibility, if you have developed muscle memory by handling hoses many times, you will be able to tell by touch alone what size of hose you are holding in your hands. With developed muscle memory, while performing tasks almost automatically you can focus simultaneously on other things, having enhanced situational awareness.

Animals act only on impulse and instinct but humans have the ability to use the mind differently. The mind is a tool that we need to learn how to use. Just as the tools in your toolbox have to be oiled and sharpened to be of use, the mind needs similar maintenance and care.

Most people identify with the mind even though they realize that they can control it. You can dull your mind by drugs, you can sharpen your mind by practice, you can change your mind - so it's a tool that you are using, it's not you. Just like you control your arms and legs.

Have you ever said "I changed my mind" - means the mind can be changed - **WHO** changed it? Understanding the distinction between you and your mind is essential to rip full benefit of learning, training, and controlling a mind.

Judging and discriminating have come into disfavor - become "bad words" - but they are essential not only for the fire business but even existence. No fire size up, no triage, no assessments, figuring out if more units are needed or not needed, driving code or not,

etc - is possible without judging and discriminating.

Intelligence means using discrimination and judgment to direct the impulses and desires of the mind - picking and choosing which to follow and act on, and which to shove back into the closet.

Think first- this means observe what your mind is proposing and judge if **YOU** should do it (is it good or bad?) and **you** make the choice, not allowing the impulses of the mind to make it for you..

By looking at your mind as a tool, you can improve your memory, your ability to focus on the topic or task at hand and thereby your ability to understand when learning or training. To do a job well, you need good tools.

Recently, I learned that university professors after many studies, discovered that the majority of people can focus only for 25-35 minutes at a time before they space out and need a break. A few geniuses can focus for 45-50 minutes. The majority of people (especially younger generation) that are not exercising their minds (smart phones think and remember for them) can only focus for 3-5 minutes, if that. By exercising your mind, you can increase your attention span, memory and ability to focus.

What happens when there are no breaks every 20-30 min during the talk.



Here are a few methods that can help train the mind, there are many more.

1. When listening, make notes in your own words,



this helps memory and comprehension. Shortly afterwards, review your notes and add anything else you remember.

2. Use props for learning - associate what you want to remember, with something you know or are already familiar with. Hook what you want to remember onto something you already know. One example- To help remember peoples' names. If you know someone of the same name - try to see some characteristic in both of them or even make up something about that kind of person, etc. Or for instance, you meet someone named Rosie and to help you remember her name, you notice that there were roses in the yard behind so you put that together in your mind, and you won't forget her name until you die. Or you meet a man named Doug, and he had a Chihuahua in his pocket, so you remember "Doug had a dog".

3. Numbers are very important for firefighters when responding. For example, we need to remember addresses, license plates, vitals, ages, etc. For instance, a white car with a license plate SNO 225 is easier to remember by thinking SNO(W) is white, and your birth-

day is February 25 - 2/25.

Some people try to force the mind to remember by drilling the same information over and over, and this is basically recalling but it is not as effective as using association methods and understanding what you want to remember.

On the last note:

By working out regularly we supply the brain with much needed O2, by nutritious food we're feeding it, by hydrating we keep the brain watered, and we do the brain a big favor by not overloading our bodies with toxins from junk food, and therefore we enhance our abilities to use our mind to the fullest. And don't forget to exercise your mind.

Neil K

***You have power over your mind - not outside events.***

***Realize this, and you will find strength.***

***Marcus Aurelius***

***Because life is better when you are laughing...***

Knock Knock. Who's there? Irish! Irish Who? Irish you a happy St. Patrick's Day!

What do you get when you cross poison ivy with a four-leaf clover? A rash of good luck.

Why can't you borrow money from a leprechaun? Because they're always a little short.

Why don't you iron 4-Leaf clovers? Because you don't want to press your luck.

What's Irish and stays out all night? Paddy O'furniture!

How can you tell if an Irishman is having a good time? He's Dublin over with laughter!

What do you get when you cross a pillowcase with a stone? A sham rock



*Tech Tips: By David White—Systems Administrator*

**Manage contacts**

A contact in the People app can include an email address, work/home address and more. And depending on what information has been added to the contact, you can use the app to launch a Map view of the address or compose an email to the contact.



# Administration

By Robin Paulson; Division Chief Administration

## March Birthdays



Sally Beck	2
Carol Dickson	4
Kelly Wright	6
Holly Miller	12
Tom McCauley	14
Pearlene Gavlik	24



## Anniversary Dates

*Celebrating Years of Service..*

Ken Gavlik	Since 1996
Pearlene Gavlik	Since 1996
Richard Alves	Since 2015
Guenter Ambron	Since 2015
Linda Bacon	Since 2015
Ned Booth	Since 2015
Patty Booth	Since 2015
Sally Cumberworth	Since 2015
Charlie Foutch	Since 2015
Cheryl Johnson	Since 2015
Linda Naydol	Since 2015
Sue Williams	Since 2015



## Joys & Concerns

Special Congratulations to Charlie Foutch! He jumped in and became a happily married man on February 14th! We are wishing them many years of joy and adventures!

Lt Kris Ismaili is "jumping" at the opportunity to have her knee replaced. Specifically, her surgery was scheduled for February 23... prayers for complete healing and recovery.

More prayers for BJ Latva as she continues to fight health issues. BJ is committed to regaining her strength and getting back on the "rehab detail". We miss not having her around!

As of March 9th , I will be on a medical leave - more surgery. Prayers for family and quick healing are appreciated.

## TIME FOR A CHANGE

This year the District is looking at many changes... and though change is not always welcomed - it is necessary for growth and for being flexible as life is ever evolving.

Specifically, the District is going forward in asking the voters to support a levy to staff 4 firefighters/EMTs to help the staff and volunteers workload and better serve our community. Should this levy pass - it's

going to look a bit different here at the Fire District. We know there will be a bit of a learning curve for each person. I ask that you take a moment, breathe, share your thoughts and concerns with someone who can listen and carry those thoughts forward. Once the "kinks" get worked out - this District is heading forward - strong and committed.

Be an encourager...  
Be one who welcomes change...  
Be part of a new exciting era!



## More Changes...

We have added a part-time person to the Administration staff, Paula LeMasters. Stop by and introduce yourself to her.

## But wait - there's more...

The purpose of hiring Paula - is that Jamie will be leaving the "front desk" position... and moving to her new job - two doors down.

May the next few months be a period of beautiful transformation

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Specifically, after almost 12 years with the District, I will be working my way out of









# The Firehouse Cook



By Pramada Kisiela:

## Double Chocolate Killer Fudge

Just in case anyone didn't get enough chocolate on Valentine's Day, here's a fudge recipe I first got from an old Fannie Farmer cookbook but I changed it quite a bit (of course). Many people who have eaten it have said that it's the best fudge they ever had. Since I don't need any fudge, I rarely make it. When I do, I try to give it away. I think walnuts are essential; pecans or other nuts can be added; or leave them out altogether. I have added coconut shreds which is also tasty for coconut fans. Make sure you have all implements and ingredients at hand before starting - the butter, cup with cold water and a small spoon, flavor extracts and the buttered pan and a knife for marking squares.

In a heavy bottom 3 or 4 quart pot put:

- 3 cups sugar
- 1 1/4 c. milk (original recipe says top milk or thin cream - I use regular milk)
- 3 T. light corn syrup (can leave out, ensures creaminess)
- 3 oz (squares) unsweetened baking chocolate
- 3 T. good unsweetened cocoa

Stir on medium, stirring gently to make sure it doesn't stick or burn, until the chocolate melts. Then stir just enough to keep it from burning, it should be boiling. Cook to the soft ball stage, if you have a cooking thermometer cook until it reaches 234 degrees. If you don't (I don't), just drop small bits into a cup of cold water until it forms a soft mass which forms a very soft ball you can flatten in your fingertips. Take off the heat right away and add:

2 T. butter

Let cool to room temperature and add:

1 1/2 t. vanilla

1 t. almond flavoring



Beat with a wooden spoon until thick, creamy and is not shiny any more. If you are adding nuts, add them now. Immediately pour into a lightly buttered square pan about 8X14 inches; larger pan means more pieces, bigger pan means thicker pieces. Mark lightly with a knife into squares, and cut when cold. They can be wrapped individually to keep longer, unless they get eaten right away. If the fudge does not get firm enough (happened to me once), add coconut and roll into balls. Everyone will love it anyway.

## Guinness Stew

- 4 slices bacon, cut into small pieces
- 2 1/2 pounds boneless beef chuck, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 onions, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (14.9 ounce) can dark beer
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 3 carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 2 1/2 cups chicken stock, or as needed to cover
- 4 cups mashed potatoes (optional)



Cook and stir bacon in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat until bacon is browned and crisp, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn off heat and transfer bacon into a large stew pot, reserving bacon fat in the skillet.

Season beef chuck cubes generously with 1 teaspoon salt and black pepper to taste. Turn heat to

high under skillet and sear beef pieces in the hot fat on both sides until browned, about 5 minutes. Place beef in stew pot with bacon, leaving fat in skillet. Turn heat down to medium; cook and stir onions in the retained fat in the skillet until lightly browned, 5 to 8 minutes; season with a large pinch of salt.

Cook garlic with onions until soft, about 1 minute; pour beer into skillet and stir with a wooden spoon, scraping up and dissolving any browned bits of food into the liquid. Pour cooking liquid from skillet into the stew pot. Stir in tomato paste, thyme sprigs, carrots, celery, sugar, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, and enough chicken broth to cover.

Bring stew to a gentle simmer, stirring to combine; reduce heat to low and cover pot. Simmer stew until beef is fork-tender, about 2 hours. Stir stew occasionally and skim fat or foam if desired.

Remove cover and raise heat to medium-high. Bring stew to a low boil and cook until stew has slightly thickened, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove and discard thyme sprigs and adjust salt and pepper to taste.

Arrange mashed potatoes in a ring in a serving bowl; ladle stew into the center of the potatoes.