

West Lake Limestone VFD And Emergency Services District #2

e-NEWSLETTER – 3rd QTR. SEPTEMBER 2020

IMPROVEMENTS AT STATION-2 AND STATION-3.

We have continued our efforts to enhance our emergency services capabilities throughout the summer.

While traveling along FM 3317 you may have noticed changes at station-3. Because we have now located a fire engine there, increasing the Insurance Services Office's rating in that that part of our district east of the bridge from ISO-PPC-10 to ISO-PPC-8, we needed an additional structure for a brush truck. Thus, we had the ground work completed and moved a vehicle shed from station-1 to station-3. We now have two buildings there holding a fire engine and a brush truck, the complement of firefighting vehicles we feel that is necessary to "cover" the northeast third of ESD#2's service area.



For those of you who live in the LCR 750 area you, perhaps, saw some construction on the front of station-2. That station was built in 1996 and was the original firehouse. The firefighting vehicles we had back then were brush trucks constructed on pickup frames, hence the roll-up doors were not designed for a fire engine. Since we



acquired a fire engine for station-2's service area, we have had to fold in its side mirrors and use a guide so the driver could squeeze engine 2508 back into its space.

The fit was so tight that it often required several attempts and that task often tried one's patience, especially after a long fire call! With ESD funding, we had a door company renovate the building's front wall and install a wider, 12-foot roll up door and push the back wall out 3-feet.

A RECENT BRUSH FIRE EXPERIENCE IN ESD#2

We all know it has been very hot that we've had only a little rain this summer. As the Lone Star State Incident

Management Team - Texas A&M Forest Service recently reported: "Even after periods of short duration rainfall, underlying drought and temperatures over 100 degrees allow vegetation to lose moisture at a high rate and return to being critically dry. In just one recent week, state and local firefighters responded to over 100 fires that burned 8,000 acres".

A few days ago in our district, we were dispatched to multiple grass fires along FM 937 from LCR 793 to LCR 792 A. It is thought that maybe a truck dragging a chain caused the fire. It was mid-day, 100 degrees, with the wind blowing steadily from the east. At least four different fires were burning in the ditch between the fence and the road. We just knew this had the potential to go wild on us!

A brush truck had responded from station-1 with three firefighters and another brush truck responded from station-2 with its two firefighters. Groesbeck VFD also sent a brush truck to help with two more firefighters. The first brush truck started the fire fight on the south end, working north, using a "pump and roll" tactic, that is moving the truck along the ditch while spraying water on the fire. In this way, the driver deploys water from spray nozzles on the truck's front bumper while firefighters stationed on the truck's back deck direct large amounts of water from hand lines. Groesbeck's brush truck, on the fire's north end, started firefighting in a similar mode.

An incident command system was established, so that the fire fight was managed from a hilltop along FM 937. Support personnel set up a Rehab Center for hydration and recovery; that is other members were there to help the firefighters when they needed a rest and our medical first responders were there to check firefighters for signs of heat exhaustion.

Our second brush truck arrived just as our first truck ran out of water. They took over and continued to fight the aggressive fire towards the north. According to trained protocol, the driver on the first brush truck drove toward station-1 to refill with water from its 16,000-gallon water plant. Department personnel were already there and had the water supply hoses and high capacity pump set up to rapidly refill the truck's 500-gallon tank. Our refilled brush truck quickly returned to the scene and passed the Groesbeck brush truck that was in route to station-1 in order to be refilled with needed firefighting water.

When our first pass along the front of the fire was complete, we were directed by the incident commander to start a second pass. Several firefighters were assigned to

hand-tools used to work along the black line created by the burnt grass while others on the trucks applied water to hot spots. During this whole evolution, each brush truck alternated between fighting the fire and refilling at the water plant until the fire was controlled and a satisfactory wet line was laid.

Overall, it was a well-practiced response that maximized effect and minimized damage. West Lake VFD had twelve members on this emergency, working in unison to control a fire that could have spread into a dangerous wildfire.

It's a point of pride for us that all our hard work in training and preparation pays dividends for the people in our district.

EVERYONE CAN HELP STOP WILDFIRES

Everyone is encouraged to be cautious with activities that may cause a spark and ignite a grassfire that can easily become a dangerous wildfire. As dry conditions persist, residents of Limestone County ESD#2 are also urged to make their homes as wildfire-resistant as possible.

Successfully preparing for a wildfire requires everyone to take personal responsibility for protecting themselves, their family and their property. Suggestions include:

- Creating defensible space around your home allowing for low intensity, slow-burning conditions in the event of a wildfire.
- Using non-flammable landscaping materials within the first 5 feet of your home.
- Watering plants and trees within the first 30 feet of your home, and mulching regularly.
- Making sure plants are carefully spaced, and using low growing ones that are free of resins, oils and waxes, not ones that burn easily.
- Removing dead vegetation from within 10 feet of the house and under flammable decks.
- Pruning trees 10 feet or more above the ground.

A healthy, well-maintained landscape is important to the survival of homes. "It is up to residents to take the first steps in protecting their families, homes and property, long before a fire even starts," said Kari Hines, Texas A&M Forest Service Firewise coordinator. "Local firefighters rely on us all to be prepared for wildfires and create safe environments for them to operate in by creating defensible space around our homes."

If a brush fire, grass fire or wildfire is spotted, immediately call 911. Quick response will save lives and property.

NEW ESD COMMISSIONER

Deborah Gerrard recently joined ESD#2 as Secretary and has also recently joined the WLLVFD. She plans to train as a Firefighter and to assist in other areas when possible. She is looking forward to working with an incredible team of people who volunteer their time and serve their community.

Debbie is originally from the Isle of Man, British Isles. She was born in England then moved to the Isle of Man when



incredibly young. Warmer weather along with seeking the American dream inspired a move to Houston 10 years ago. Debbie has a son who resides on the Isle of Man currently and she tries to travel back to visit with him and her parents yearly.

For the past 3-years she has lived on Lake Limestone. Debbie thoroughly enjoys lake life with her boyfriend, Sean, and their 7 dogs. Limestone County has become home.

Debbie has over 30 years' experience in the financial and insurance industry and has worked in both the private sector and local government. She was also Secretary and Treasurer of a non-profit organization whilst living in the Isle of Man.

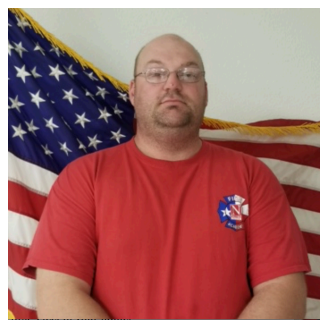
SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING: OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



Austin Proctor

As you may recall from our last newsletter, in the second quarter of this year we engaged in a recruiting drive for both the ESD and the department. We are pleased to announce that we have four new volunteers in our fire department.

In addition to Debbie Gerrard (above) who has joined as a Firefighter, Austin Proctor and James Coleman will serve as Firefighters - Medical First Responders. Another Firefighter - First Responder, Sean Brown is not pictured.



James Coleman

All are currently participating in our new member training program under the supervision of Chief McWhirter in addition to the monthly and on-line training.

ESD#2 BUDGET FOR 2020-2021

The ESD#2 Board of Commissioners approved its budget for the 2020-2021 year. The budget is set at \$122,000. These funds are dedicated to supporting the WLLVFD and the citizens in our first response area. The detailed 2020-2021 budget is posted on our website <https://www.wllvdesd2.org>. The commissioners are committed to the protection and preservation of property and life within our community. We are confident the dedicated men and women that serve as first responders in the WLLVFD will continue to have what they need to fulfill their critical mission.

ESDs are political subdivisions of the state similar to school or hospital districts whose statutory purpose is to provide fire protection and emergency medical response. ESDs strive to be on the cutting edge of fire and emergency medical response in rural areas and they provide these emergency services while spending one third to one half of what municipalities spend when providing services of similar scope. Funding for ESDs is constitutionally limited to property taxes (up to 10 cents per \$100 valuation) and local sales tax revenues (up to 2%). In turn, this money is invested locally in fire service vehicles, necessary equipment, regular training expenses, indirect support like insurance, and fire stations.

Our ESD#2 is a member of the Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts (SAFE-D) and supports their mission. "We are working to keep our first responders and the communities they serve safe," Cliff Avery, executive director for SAFE-D, said. "ESDs offer incredible value to taxpayers and deliver high quality emergency services across Texas. COVID-19 and its impact has emphasized the importance of health and safety and this new budget will help us keep our promise to our communities." SAFE-D is the association that supports Texas ESDs and their first responders. SAFE-D member districts serve an estimated 8-million Texans across 251 districts. To learn more visit: <https://www.safe-d.org/>


WLLVFD FALL FUND RAISER

As we all know it has been quite difficult to meet face-to-face during this time of social distancing and especially back in March when we began shelter-in-place. Because of that our Fall Fund Raiser is the ONLY ONE we will have this year. That means that the WLLVFD budget is severely underfunded.

We are holding the essentially same raffle as we did last year with the grand prize being a guided, exotic game hunt. It's market value is close to \$10,000! There are two more prizes, a rifle and a pistol as 2nd and 3rd places.

Exotic Animal Hunt

Weekend Hunt at the Radney Ranch in Groesbeck Texas. Hunt for an African Oryx: Guides, Food, Lodging included. One hunter will have the opportunity to harvest an animal and bring one observer. Hunter will provide comfortable clothing, rifle, and a Texas Hunting license. The hunt will take place subject to the availability of both parties. The buyer will have exclusive use of the ranch for the time they are there. This is a first class hunt valued at \$12,000. One non-hunting guest may come to observe. Excellent opportunity to introduce a youth to exotic hunting.



270 Rifle

Savage Axis Bolt Action Rifle .270 Winchester 22" Barrel 4 Rounds Matte Black Synthetic Stock Matte Black Barrel with 3-9x40 scope. Soft-sided case included.



9mm Pistol

Jennings Model 9 -- 10 or 12 round mag, loaded chamber indicator, red front sight, and more.



You can obtain a \$20.00 raffle ticket or group of tickets by mailing a check to the WLLVFD at 6614 FM 937, Thornton, Tx 76687. You can also contact one of the members that you know or you can just come by the

station to get your tickets. Again the tickets are only \$20.00 or five-for-a-hundred (a little funny!) We even take cash!

Seriously, please consider helping us out by making a "donation."

FISH FRY FUND RAISER

On October 10th we are holding our annual fish fry event. Because of COVID this year's will be a "drive through". So on Saturday, come on by station-1 at 6614 FM 937.

Your "to-go box," containing fried fish, fries, hush puppies, coleslaw and dessert, is only \$10.00!

Saturday, October 10th 2020
4:00pm - 7:00pm
\$10.00 Per Plate



**You Pull Up!
 We Load You Up!
 You Pull Away!**



Remember that we were unable to have our spring Bar-B-Q Fund Raiser so this will be this year's only in-station event. Please come by to get your family's dinner and offer your support to your fire department.

And, if you would like, you can stay around for the raffle drawing which will be held at 7:05

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Since the last newsletter was out last June, the number of cases of COVID-19 in Limestone has increased significantly from 23 cases during the first week of June to 455 cases this first week in September. During this time our medical first responders have not missed a single 911 call. During June, July and August the WLLVFD made 19 medical calls, as well as 22 calls for other reasons (fire emergencies, automobile crashes, public service burn monitoring, etc.) On each of the medical calls our first responders "masked up", put on gloves, and, sometimes, additional personal protective gear. All of these were properly disposed of after the event so we have been going through our PPE supplies. Fortunately, the Chief has been aggressive in insuring that our district has sufficient PPE so we can continue making EVERY call!

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