

FIRE FLASH



A community newsletter brought to you by Lewis County Fire District Six

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FIRE OFFICIALS CONCERNED BY FATAL HOUSE FIRES, DIVULGE BEST SAFETY PRACTICES

By Cody Neuenschwander for The Chronicle

Lewis County has in the last few years experienced what one fire official called an unusually high number of fire-related deaths.

Eleven people died in Lewis County house fires between 2015, 2016 and 2017, and among them there were three triple-fatality fires, bucking a trend that says most fatal fires result in one death.

“It says somewhere or other we’re not reaching our audience with the messages that we have,” said Rick Mack, Assistant Fire Chief with Riverside Fire Authority.

Mack, who met with the Chronicle alongside other local fire experts and first responders to talk about safety practices, said such sobering statistics are a motivator to put fire-related information immediately into the public’s hands.

“Fire fatalities in Lewis County experienced in the last several years has been eye-opening. It has caused me to want to get out and engage and talk about what causes fires, what we can do to protect our families and our homes where we’re supposed to feel safest,” he said, noting that the common denominator in fatal fires in the past three years has been non-functional smoke detectors and a lack of a home escape plan.

Mack said smoke detectors should be in all bedrooms and outside sleeping areas with at least one per floor. Lewis County Fire District 5 Chief Laura Hanson said they should be replaced if they’re 10 years old. When kids are off from school during the Christmas season and the family’s all together, this represents a good time to practice a fire escape plan, she said, ensuring that there are two planned escape routes and a meeting place to go after getting out of the house.

Kevin Reynolds, with the Chehalis Fire Department, said ongoing research by fire safety experts has only strengthened the adage: “close before you doze.” Meaning, close your bedroom door before you fall asleep.

“Closed doors save lives, period. There is no argument that I have ever heard in my life that’s ... an argument against closed doors save lives,” he said.

Doing so buys a few precious minutes of time to escape, Reynolds said, as a closed door slows oxygen from getting to the fire and spreading into the room, as well as drops temperatures and carbon monoxide levels.

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Lunch Buddies

The Fire District continued its Lunch Buddies program for its 6th year going into the 2018-2019 school year. Lunch Buddies is a unique time for Fire District firefighters to meet and engage with students at Adna Elementary School each month developing relationships and mentoring and encouraging students to reach for the stars. Call volume dependent, crews go to the elementary once a month to have lunch with students and play at their lunch recess with them. We're so thankful for the relationships this program has developed, and for the partnership it molds with Adna Elementary, School District teachers, and staff.



Halloween Safe Candy Stop

This fall, we continued the tradition of hosting two safe candy stop locations. Stations 61 (Headquarters) and Station 62 (Adna) both held events on Halloween, providing a place for families to visit, check out the station, play carnival-style games, and of course receive Halloween treats! Both locations saw a great turn out, and had the opportunity to reach out to both children and adults with safety messages and best fire safety practices. We're already looking forward to this Halloween!

Toys for Tots

In November and December, the Fire District participated in the Toys for Tots toy drive. Toys for Tots is sponsored by the US Marine Corps Reserve and provides new toys to children in need during the Christmas season. We want to take a moment to say THANK YOU to those who brought toys in for the drive, we know they were greatly appreciated by the children and families who received them this year!

Lewis County Chaplaincy

Fire District 6 has long been supported by the Lewis County Chaplaincy Services, a team of professionals who provide compassionate caring in crisis. They support not only the responders, but victims of tragic incidents as well. Their service does not go unnoticed, as they are always answering the call when there is a need.

HOUSE FIRES (CONTINUED)

Arguments to the contrary don't stack up, he said. That being said, Underwriters Laboratory — an entity that has put large amounts of time and research into fire safety — has determined that less than 50 percent of adults think it's safer to sleep with a door open, said Reynolds.

He added that this is simply not the case. Fires very rarely start in bedrooms, and a closed door keeps dangerous elements at bay longer than an open doorway. Smoke detector placement should allow for people asleep in a house to wake up with their door closed.

If you leave the room to escape the fire, close the door behind you, he said. That cuts off more oxygen to feed the fire, and will help responding fire fighters to put out the blaze when they arrive.

While the No. 1 cause of house fires is cooking, the months of December, January and February see a large influx in fires caused by heating sources, said Lieutenant Patrick Jacobson with Lewis County Fire District 15. A national average shows that one in six fires during the winter months is caused by heating, and local fires have done nothing to challenge that statistic.

Keep items that could catch fire three feet away from heating sources, he said. Some local fires have started from heat lamps — like when someone is raising baby chickens inside a house. Make sure to keep heat lamps out of the house, and ensure they're secure.

Only use one space heater per outlet, and don't plug them into surge protectors.

“Having a well-prepared, practiced plan can mean the difference in life and death,” said Mack.

The Fire District appreciates the work of The Chronicle in the reporting of this crucial discussion! Thank you!

2018 IN REVIEW

Last year brought a slight increase in calls for service to the Fire District. We saw 817 calls for service, a slight increase from 2017 with 787 calls for service. With that came a spike in emergency medical service (ambulance) transports of patients to the hospital. Historically, the Fire District has relied on contract with American Medical Response for those transports, however, they have also seen a large increase in calls, meaning they have been less available. We have met that challenge, however, and have continued an uninterrupted service to citizens, providing continued life-saving services.

In 2018, the Board of Fire Commissioners decided to sell Station 65, near the intersections of North Fork Road and Centralia Apha Road. With this decision, they also surpluses Station 65's fire engine and water tender. The fire engine going to Pacific County Fire District 3, servicing the communities of Willapa, Menlo, Lebam, and Francis, and the water tender going to a private party, both through public surplus bids. The sale of Station 65 and its property closed in December, allowing funds generated from the sale to go towards necessary improvements around the remaining Fire District facilities and apparatus, eliminating a need for tax and levy increases. The sale also allows the Fire District to save money on facility and apparatus maintenance and upkeep. Due to a decline in volunteerism, the Fire District decided to combine the North Fork and Logan Hill response areas to both being served by Station 63 on Logan Hill Road.



As always, we genuinely thank and appreciate the support of our citizens. As we go in to 2019, we wish our citizens a bright year, and ask for your continued support as we continue moving forward to serve you.

911, WHAT IS YOUR EMERGENCY?

In February of 1968, the first 911 call was made in Haleyville, Alabama. Since then, the 911 system quickly expanded across the country becoming a vital link between the citizen and emergency responders. Commonly referred to as the "first of the first responders," 911 dispatchers take our emergency calls 24/7/365, and have adapted to major technological upgrades along the way.

In December, you may remember the massive 911 outage that not only affected Lewis County, but many areas throughout the country. This was a stark reminder to have backup phone numbers in the event of an emergency and dispatchers can't be reached by 911.

The most important number you can save in your phone or add to the fridge is Lewis County 911's non-emergency phone number: (360) 740-1105. During routine operations, this number can be used to report non-emergency or not-in-progress crimes. When 911 lines are down, often this number still works, and can be used to report emergencies as well.

It's also important to have your local police and fire departments saved. For those living within the Fire District 6 response area, you can call (360) 748-6019. You'll reach the headquarters station which is staffed 24/7/365. To see if you live within the Fire District 6 response area, see the map of our response area online at: http://maps.lewiscountywa.gov/maps/EmergServices/FireDistMaps/firedist_06.pdf

For law enforcement, the Lewis County Sheriff's Office serves the citizens of our fire district. They can be reached at (360) 748-9286.

Remember that Lewis County PUD has their own dispatch for outages and outage status. Unless there is a fire or traffic problem, fire or law enforcement crews deal little with outages or PUD-related problems. Lewis County PUD can be reached at (360) 748-9261. You can also view current reported outages on their website at: <https://www.lcpud.org/outages-safety/power-outages/>.

Remember that 911 is for in progress and life threatening emergencies only. There are only so many 911 lines in Lewis County and tying up one for a non-emergency, could cause someone with an emergency to get a busy signal. Whenever you're in doubt if a situation is an emergency, call 911. It's also important to call 911 immediately at the first sign of an emergency. Crews can always be asked to cancel, but they can't make up valuable missed time from waiting to call 911.



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Vision Statement

Our vision for the future growth and development of the organization is through adherence to our values. This will allow us to live out our Mission and be viewed as leaders in the service and protection of our patrons.

Mission Statement

Dedicated to the protection of life, property, and the environment through professional service to the patrons of our community.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Fire District 6 is a combination fire district, meaning it employs career firefighters as well as volunteer firefighters. With four stations spread across 145 square miles, nearly 8,000 citizens, and over 800 calls for service annually, the Fire District is actively seeking volunteers. Our stations include:

- **Station 61:** Jackson Highway—Staffed with a minimum of two career firefighters 24/7
- **Station 62:** Dieckman Road—Volunteer station with the ability for volunteers to be placed on shifts or respond from home
- **Station 63:** Logan Hill Road—Volunteer station with the ability for volunteers to work shifts during the day or respond from home
- **Station 64:** Galaxie Road—Volunteer station where volunteers respond from home

Volunteers obtain training and experience in the fire service that can be applied to career employment opportunities in the future, while also having the ability to serve their communities. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer firefighter, volunteer firefighter/EMT, or auxiliary volunteer, apply today. The Fire District has many opportunities for anyone wishing to volunteer and contribute service to their community! Applications are available online at www.lcf6.org or at Fire District 6 headquarters on Jackson Highway. Applicants must be 18 years old to apply.

Lewis County Fire District Six is an equal-opportunity employer and complies with all federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, color, national origin, sexual orientation/gender identity, or disability.