

# EARLY BIRD WEEKLY



NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org

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## Last Week was Stefan Myers from Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue.

Stefan, TVF&R's Newberg Public Affairs Officer, went through the Chamber's Leadership Chehalem Valley with Linda Sandberg and the two worked together to bring TVF&R into the Newberg-Dundee service area.

On the agenda last week were, "Who We Are," Operational COVID-19 Adjustments, Wildfire Responses and our local Chehalem Mtn - Bald Peak Wildfires of 2020.

TVF&R serves half a million people in 11 cities and 4 counties. Over the course of years and mini-mergers the consolidated goal has been top notch fire service at a lower cost by working together and bring down the cost to keep emergency vehicles and staff on the road each day.

Did You Know? 7 out of 10 incident response calls involve medical care.

They have a water rescue team, a technical rescue team, and a hazardous materials team. Funny thing, of all incidents responded to in 2019, actual fires were last on the list of frequency. False/Other Calls were over double actual fire calls.

COVID Adjustments. Our Fire Chief assembled a task force at the pandemic onset to look at how this would affect response.

Early concerns were availability of PPE (personal protection equipment, for those of you reading this in an archive) and minimizing exposure of our firefighters. COVID doesn't spread in a fire, but remember, actual fires are 1 for every 35 up close and personal medical responses.

The task force worked with Dispatch to gather more information on calls so responders would be empowered to make informed decisions.



"Now, when we respond, we have a little different look." The new Tyvek suits can be decontaminated after a call so we don't have to replenish as often.



With all the extra protection it can be difficult to connect with our patients and our community the way that we are used to. So it helps that you can see "a little more of us" when we are trying to help someone in a place of trauma.

The wildfires of 2020 made for a Labor Day unlike those we've seen in our lifetimes. Stefan is also on one of the state's Incident Management teams so he responded to the Beachie Creek fire.

Oregon's fire system was not built to fight five megafires all at once as well as fires within local fire districts.



Our state is set up so when a major emergency (fire, flood, etc.) taxes a fire district beyond its capacity we deploy state resources. This time, though, some districts had to decline because they themselves were overstretched. In this case the governor declared an Emergency Conflagration Act to mobilize state resources to the hardest hit wildfire areas.

Incident Management Teams are organized and sent to these large events to coordinate equipment, supplies, people, and advanced logistics for shelter, food and water.

Stefan's role is fire information. In these circumstances, people just wanna know "what is going on?"

Our job is to give them succinct, understandable information and make them feel a little better about what's happening amidst the chaos.

Specific to the Chehalem Mountain - Bald Peak Fire, this was in our backyard as some of the people in this meeting experienced firsthand along with another 150 residents in Level 3 evacuation status.

At 875 acres, this was a substantial fire in our district and called for a lot of partnership and resources.

The fire moved rapidly through a bunch of different fuels. One of the biggest challenges was protecting lives and structures.

We lost some barns and outbuildings but no residences here like we did southeast.

We had multiple firefighters working multiple shifts in a row. Just because we have a big important fire to fight doesn't mean people stop getting sick and hurt so we were still responding to those needs.

Your firefighters were also looking out for the homes and livestock left behind by evacuees [that's my niece on the left ~Jeff] as we are making strategy to fight the fire.

Many contract crews fight wildfires more directly. TVF&R is focused more on property. It's not a wall of fire they're fighting. It's embers afloat landing and taking off so they clear fuels where they can.

None of this happens with just one agency. County Sheriffs were a huge part of the solution for road and traffic control, Oregon Dept of Forestry, and private industry that pitched in with heavy equipment to "pull fuels apart," like stumps that smolder underground and reignite.

Fun Fact, it can take a thousand hours of rainfall to extinguish a large fire.

Learn More about "defensible fires." Visit [TVF&R's Wildfire page](#) for tips on Fuel Reduction, Access and Addressing (if we can't find you it takes longer to provide care), and Construction/Landscaping.

Click [here for the TVF&R Gratitude Project](#).