

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GEYSERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

PROTECTING WINE COUNTRY FOR OVER 100 YEARS

VOLUME XIII, ISSUE I NOVEMBER 2017

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This letter replaces the November 2016 newsletter sent out previously. We apologize for the mix-up.

OCTOBER 2017 FIRE SIEGE- “HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE FOR THE NEXT TIME”

We recently experienced one of the worst natural disasters in California history. Three major fires occurred in Sonoma County, with the Pocket Fire directly affecting us. Though burning over 17,000 acres, we did not experience any fatalities or injuries. Unfortunately, one residence was destroyed along with several out buildings. The Tubbs fire burned between Calistoga and Santa Rosa, destroying over 5,600 structures, and the Nuns fire straddled the Sonoma and Napa County line burning over 1,300 structures. The Tubbs fire ranks #1 for the most destructive fire in California fire history while the Nuns ranks #6. All of the top ten ranked fires occurred in the months of September and October when we traditionally experience warm, dry, and windy conditions at the end of our summer months. (http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact_sheets/Top20_Destruction.pdf) Having these fires occur at the same time during nighttime conditions with additional fires in our neighboring counties contributed to magnitude of the disaster.

These fires are a reminder that vegetation fires will occur; it is not if, but rather when. How should we prepare for the next time? This topic will be front and center at our January 20, 2018 Community Meeting starting at 11:00 a.m. at the Geyserville fire station. We plan to present a plan of how we can move forward utilizing the volunteer spirit that is alive and well in our community. (This spirit and support kept us going during the fires!) Besides discussing fire prevention and preparedness efforts that address the vegetation fire reality, we will present community involvement and preparedness programs that will also help us be resilient during other natural disasters such as earthquakes and flooding. We plan to formulate a plan with priorities in the upcoming months from lesson learned during the siege ranging including community preparedness plans, emergency awareness training, and wildland fuel reductions efforts. The focus will be preparedness with functions and projects we can complete before “the next time.”

COMMUNITY BASED FIRE DEPARTMENT

We are dedicated to being a community based fire department. We desire to be comprised from members of our community. Our goals are that each resident knows one fire fighter by name and is comfortable calling or visiting the fire station for information, and we strive to recognize emergency locations by a name rather than an address. Help us to get to know you. We are your fire department.

OUR VISION

Past newsletters and much of our recent meetings have focused on annexation and consolidation with neighboring agencies. We have developed “Our Vision” of where we plan to head in future years. Our vision does not provide a step by step plan but rather guidance for where we see ourselves in the next 10 -15 years providing a sustainable efficient level of service. Concurrently, the GFDP is coordinating closely with the Cloverdale Fire Protection District, Dry Creek Rancheria Fire Department, Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company and the Healdsburg City Fire Department on collaborative efforts.

PLEASE CONTACT US

Our goal is that you know at least one fire fighter by name.

FACTS ABOUT US

Protects over 200 Square miles

Responds to over 500 emergencies a year

Station 1: 20975 Geyserville Avenue

Station 2: 6571 Highway 128

Station 3: 3970 Dry Creek Road

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OUR VISION (CONTINUED)

This vision does not require that all agencies will dissolve or be identical but rather have the appearance of one department. In the short term, 1 – 5 years, likely in this fiscal year 2017/2018, Geyserville plans to annex Knights Valley. Cloverdale and Geyserville will continue to align, and it is likely that Healdsburg and Dry Creek Rancheria will remain separate agencies working in close cooperation with Cloverdale and Geyserville. Geyserville intends to eventually annex all of The Geysers (including the upper portion of Pine Flat Road), Knights Valley, Sotoyome (lower Dry Creek Valley served by Healdsburg City but in the Sotoyome Fire Service Area), and other adjacent areas thus instigating a regionalized fire agency.

We continue to work with Supervisor Gore regarding the annexation of the Knights Valley Fire Service Area and The Geysers to form a larger regionalized fire department. Geyserville is currently in the process of annexing the Knights Valley area. It is anticipated that all tax revenue from Knight Valley, \$101,215, will be allocated to Geyserville. The four Knights Valley volunteer fire fighters will become Geyserville volunteer fire fighters. Geyserville intends to negotiate an agreement with Calistoga for automatic and mutual aid response to provide enhanced fire services, with an approximate annual cost of \$30,000, for Knights Valley and maintain all other automatic aid agreements, e.g., Mountain Volunteer Fire Company and the Dry Creek Rancheria. Geyserville will utilize the remainder of the Knights Valley property tax to 1) expand to two fire fighters staffing 24/7 at Geyserville Fire Station #1 (currently staffed with two fire fighters five months a year) and allocate one or two persons on a daily basis, as staffing allows, to the Knights Valley fire station for emergency responses, and facility, vehicle, and equipment maintenance, 2) provide all administrative services currently provided by Sonoma County Fire including training, workers compensation, insurance, vehicle and equipment maintenance, and administrative services.

All agencies are participating in a training committee. The first meeting was held in August 2017 and all agencies have committed to moving towards a unified training regimen. The overall outcome is to evolve standardized training, with the intent of cross staffing apparatus, independent of agency affiliation, and with the goal of having shared volunteer fire fighters. The committee will also help coordinate and host formalized classes for the training of personnel from all agencies in the Region.

As we move forward in our efforts to become a regionalized fire department, we will be serving more than “Geyserville.” Actually, since 1978 we have served the areas of Alexander Valley, The Geysers (by contract), and the upper Dry Creek Valley (the entire Dry Creek Valley prior to 1996). The Geyserville Fire Protection District Board of Directors and the Geyserville Volunteer Firefighters’ Association have been discussing an updated name that encompasses the area we serve such as the “Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District.”

1-5 YEAR VISION

- Geyserville annexes all of The Geysers, Knights Valley, Sotoyome (lower Dry Creek Valley served by Healdsburg City), and other adjacent areas thus instigating a regionalized fire agency.
- Geyserville Fire Protection District implements name change to reflect the reality of serving an area that encompasses a much larger area than the Geyserville Township.
- Geyserville maintains contract with Healdsburg City for Sotoyome and other areas adjacent to Healdsburg City. Geyserville and Healdsburg partner on shared positions.
- Cloverdale and Geyserville hire permanent staff to have two fire fighters on duty 24/7.
- Funds are collected to remodel/replace the Knights Valley fire station to allow staffing and utilization as a community center.
- Training Committee implements standardized operational procedures and coordinated Regionwide standardized trainings.
- Hiring or cost sharing of a regional training officer who may also serve as permanent chief officer responder.
- Explore additional funding options such as a benefit assessment (special tax).
- Additional (surge) staffing during predicted weather events (winds, flood, high heat, etc.) and weekends.

5 - 10 YEAR VISION

- Funds are collected to build a fire station near Highway 128 and Chalk Hill Road. Include the option of the fire station providing workspace for other government agencies such as Sheriff Deputies, California Highway Patrol, ambulance provider, etc. Current Alexander Valley fire station is maintained in its present location.
- Funds are secured to staff Chalk Hill station with two fire fighters 24/7.
- Shared volunteer fire fighters.
- Specialized volunteer program developed.
- Explore advanced life support (ALS), paramedic, staffing using other portions of Sonoma County as a model. Possible partnering with other fire based ALS providers for collaboration and efficiency. Intention is to increase level of service, transferring patient care to ambulance and not providing ALS transportation services (ambulance).
- Increased education and prevention such as the “community care concept” and risk reduction efforts including pre-fire planning, CPR classes, social media education, wildland fuel reduction, personnel to meet with residents and land owners, regular checks on people confined to their residence, etc.

10 - 15 YEAR VISION

- Consolidated Fire Chief position or Geyserville hires full time Fire Chief.
- Three permanent chief officer positions with assigned collateral duties.
- Develop funding for three fire fighters 24/7.
- Implement ALS services if feasibility performed in the 5 – 10-year vision supports viability.
- Combined administrative services.
- Combined fleet maintenance and apparatus management and replacement plan.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Geyserville, as well as most other agencies have experienced a decline in reliable volunteer fire fighters. The concept of what is a “volunteer fire fighter” needs to be better defined. All volunteer fire fighters need to be trained to the same standard. However, the “legacy volunteer fire fighter” who lives within a jurisdiction, does not need compensation, and is able to drop everything and staff an apparatus or head directly to an emergency is becoming rare, and possibly will be extinct in the next several decades. This is due to a variety of factors and trends not unique to Geyserville. According to the National Fire Protection Association in a report published last year, there has been a steady decline in volunteer firefighters since 1986 across the United States. This is due in part to increases in calls, mandated training and special events required of volunteer associations that most people do not have or want to commit that much time. Today in most families, both parents work outside the area and their limited family time is spread thin with educational and extra curriculum activities such as after school sports. Additionally, most community businesses are reluctant or unable to allow their employees to drop everything and answer emergency calls as they were in years past. **We are committed to encouraging volunteer fire fighters, as they are a vital resource to maintain community based fire and emergency services, staffing fire stations when an incident occurs, and staffing additional apparatus for significant incidents.**

Terms such as “stipend”, “internship”, “apprentice”, “seasonal”, “on-call”, and others are all attempts to attract, incentivize, and retain volunteer fire fighters who are predominately not legacy volunteer fire fighters. A new term could be used, perhaps, “Specialized volunteer fire fighter” or “auxiliary volunteer fire fighter” who are able to perform essential fire department functions ranging from emergency responses such as responding in a water tender or logistical support vehicles with no expectation of fighting fire, or who can serve in other capacities such as preparing financial documents, facility maintenance and landscaping, etc.

SoCoALERT

The SoCoAlert system is a messaging alert system to inform registered recipients regarding emergencies. Each person must sign up for the service to receive the alerts telephone, email, text or all three types. You are not automatically enrolled based upon the location of your residence.

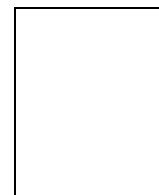
<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/FES/Emergency-Management/SoCoAlert/>



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UPCOMING EVENTS:

BLOOD DRIVE

JANUARY 12, 2018

2:00 - 7:00 P.M.

[HTTP://BLOODCENTERS.ORG/BUCKETBRIGADE/](http://bloodcenters.org/bucketbrigade/)

COMMUNITY MEETING

JANUARY 20, 2018

11:00- 1:00 P.M.

WINE COUNTRY TO THE RESCUE

JULY 21, 2018

This newsletter is a collaboration between the Geyserville Fire Protection District and the Geyserville Volunteer Firefighters' Association. It is published bi-annually in Fall and Spring. It is intended to provide information to the community about news and events as it relates to the Geyserville Fire Department. If you are receiving this newsletter then our records show one of the following: You live within the Fire District boundaries, you own property within the District boundaries, or you have donated money to the GVFA. If you think that you have received this newsletter in error or would like to be removed from our mailing list please contact us at (707) 857 - 4373 (GFPD).

