

# House Calls



NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 9

WINTER 2016

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WINDSTORM 2015

WITH DROUGHT,  
COMES FIRE

WHAT PROP. 1  
MEANS TO YOU

PROPERLY MAINTAIN  
YOUR CHIMNEY

Look for your  
ballot in the mail  
starting January 19th

**Thank You!**

Fire 9 Santa events  
collected almost  
**1,500 pounds**  
of donated food  
for the Mead  
Food Bank

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509-466-4602



## A Message from the Chief

**JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE THAN FIRE SEASON 2014, ALONG CAME FIRE SEASON 2015.** In what is being called a once in one-hundred-year burn, this past fire season was the worst in the history of Washington State.

Over one million acres of forestland burned this summer. We knew we were headed for a bad year when we started seeing what we call "project" fires in early June. Typically, our fire season in Washington does not begin in earnest until after Independence Day. Here at Fire 9 we certainly were not spared nature's wrath. 2015 was the worst fire season Fire 9 has seen since Firestorm '91. On average we see about 50 acres charred each year. In 2015, we saw over 450 acres burned in what turned out to be very dramatic fires that exhibited extreme fire behavior.

The Little Spokane and Rutter Canyon Fires would destroy over 320 acres of the Riverside State Park Conservation Area near the Indian Painted Rocks. This area is used frequently by hikers and sadly was closed much of the summer following the fires.



JACK CATES, FIRE CHIEF, SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #9



Can we expect Fire Seasons 2014 and 2015 to become the new normal? It is highly possible given the El Niño conditions and on-going drought we are facing. This, and the unprecedented increases in alarm volume, will continue to stretch our operations in the years to come. In 2014, we saw a 12% rise in call volume. Last year, we set another record with a 14.7% increase in call volume over 2014.

We will need your continued long-term support so that we can effectively respond to the ongoing rise in demand for service.

**STOP BY ANY OF OUR FIRE STATIONS TO GET YOUR LIMITED EDITION 2016 FIRE 9 CALENDAR.**



## We Won't Soon Forget Windstorm 2015

**ON NOVEMBER 17, 2015, SPOKANE COUNTY EXPERIENCED A SEVERE WIND EVENT THAT PRODUCED NEAR HURRICANE-FORCE WINDS, WITH SPEEDS APPROACHING 75 MPH.**

During the storm and the five days that followed, SCFD9 crews were on the frontlines across the entire service area responding to numerous reports of fallen trees and downed power lines that were creating safety hazards and causing structure fires and medical emergencies. During those same five days, SCFD9 firefighters responded to 155 emergency calls.

It is important to remember during periods of severe weather the actions and precautions you can take to minimize risk to you and your family:

- Open flames and alternate heat sources are threats for carbon monoxide poisoning and house fires, so use only safe methods (fireplaces, multiple clothing layers) to remain warm.
- Generators should never be located inside a garage, carport or home.
- Ensure that your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries and are working correctly.
- Do not use candles. Use flashlights or other non-flammable illumination options instead.



- Most camping stoves are designed for outdoor cooking only and should be utilized in compliance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Camping stoves should not be used as a heat source.
- Adhere to general safety precautions when using a fireplace or wood stove to heat your home. Never leave fires burning when your home is unoccupied.
- In very cold weather, pipes can freeze so keep a running stream of cold water and cabinet doors open to encourage heat flow.
- Treat all power and utility lines as energized and dangerous. Maintain a significant distance from all low-hanging or downed lines.

## With Drought, Comes Fire

**IN 2014, THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) INDICATED EASTERN WASHINGTON WAS IN DROUGHT CONDITION.** By early 2015, the USDA had placed all of Washington State under drought status. We saw the results of that long-term weather pattern this last summer with fire response units and personnel spending weeks fighting wildland fires across a parched state. There was even an actively burning fire in the Olympic National Park, the only rainforest in the continental U.S.

We thought 2014 would be the biggest fire season Washington had ever seen or ever would see. We were wrong. Current weather models call for a strong El Niño effect with warmer-than-average winter temperatures and lower-than-normal winter precipitation. If this prediction comes true, we can expect a fire season similar to last year.

Protection of old growth forests on the west side is a huge Forest Service concern. Farmers and ranchers would like to avoid the economic disaster of crop and range land destruction. Logging communities want timber saved. Fire damage to watersheds and fishery areas would have drastic impacts to human and animal communities. Smoke creates health hazards for those with respiratory



compromises. And no one wants their home damaged by fire. Demands to stop all fires early continue to grow and proliferate from new directions.

Some people wonder why SCFD9 spends time fighting fires elsewhere in the state, and that's a good question. Our first priority is to make sure our own turf is protected. In the meantime, any experience our personnel can get elsewhere provides experience we can bring to bear right here at home when we need it.

If you have any experience as a wildland firefighter (like many Washington State residents do) you're familiar with the tenth standard fire order, "Fight fire aggressively having provided for safety first." SCFD9 and the rest of Washington State's fire service will continue to aggressively fight wildland fires wherever we find them, with the intent of making sure everyone goes home at the end of the shift.

For downloadable information on *Creating an Effective Defensible Space* and *Your Personal Wildfire Action Plan*, visit us at [www.scf9.org](http://www.scf9.org).

## What Prop. 1, the Replacement M&O Levy Ballot Measure, Means to You

**FUNDING FOR SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 9 COMES SOLELY FROM PROPERTY TAXES.** The regular property tax levy generates about 40% of our revenue, and an annual M&O levy approved by the voters — generates the remainder. Revenue from the regular levy supports the District's basic fire services with our volunteer personnel, while the M&O levy supports 24/7 career staffing, advanced life support (paramedic) and emergency medical services. Together, these funding sources support the existing level of service district-wide.

The current M&O levy expires on December 31, 2016, and the proposed M&O levies will replace the expiring levy and provide funding for 2017 and 2018. These annual M&O levies are for specific dollar amounts so they will not increase if assessed property values increase. Instead, any further increase in assessed value will result in a reduction of your tax rate for the M&O levy.

You'll find the 2017 and 2018 M&O levy renewals on your February 9th ballot.

### SPECIAL MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS (M&O) LEVY

- Fire District revenue is generated solely from property taxes.
- Proposition 1 is for calendar years 2017 and 2018.
- Proposition 1 is a replacement for the expiring 2015 and 2016 M&O levy. This is NOT AN ADDITIONAL TAX.
  - Used for the maintenance and operations costs of our fire and emergency medical services.
  - The Special M&O levy funds approximately 60% of our total budget.
  - The Special M&O levy provides the funding to maintain existing service levels (both staffing and services).
- Proposition 1 will be on the February 9th special election ballot.
- Our current 2016 M&O levy rate is \$1.79 per \$1,000 of assessed value (AV), or \$269 on a \$150,000 home.
- The 2017 and 2018 M&O levy rates are estimated to be \$1.80 per \$1,000 of AV, or \$270 on a \$150,000 home.
- The District experienced declining property tax revenues due to declining property values for 2011, 2012 and 2013 and has finally seen minimal growth in 2014 (1.09%) and 2015 (1.84%).
- We are using reserves to help support the budget, to maintain services and to avoid raising taxes.
- The Special M&O levy requires a super-majority 60% "yes" vote to pass.
- The Special M&O levy requires at least 40% of the number of voters from the last general election.



**LOOK FOR YOUR BALLOT IN THE MAIL STARTING JANUARY 19TH. YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

## Properly Maintain Your Chimney And Hopefully We Won't Have to Visit Your House

**A CHIMNEY'S JOB IS TO MOVE SMOKE AND THE PRODUCTS OF COMBUSTION OUT OF THE HOME SAFELY.** One product of combustion is water vapor. Of course smoke and all products of combustion are hot when they're produced. As they cool, water vapor condenses on the inside of the chimney. That condensation traps other products of combustion. The water then evaporates leaving behind a built-up layer of 'creosote'. At the point where the chimney penetrates the attic insulation level, there is usually a big temperature change and much of the creosote is deposited at that level.

Wood stoves and fireplaces are designed to operate at high temperatures. Chimneys, however, are not. Burning creosote in the chimney puts high heat where it's not supposed to be and bad things can begin to happen for the homeowner. Elevated temperatures from a chimney fire cause both brick chimneys and metal stove pipes to expand or crack from the heat, leaving gaps in a once contiguous chimney. As the Chimney Safety Institute of America says, "One chimney fire may not harm a home, but the second one can burn it down."

Avoiding chimney fires requires two preventative measures: technique and cleaning. Remember, water vapor is the primary carrier in forming creosote buildups. Using dry, seasoned wood produces much less water vapor inside your chimney. Fires that burn for a long time with a low damper setting deposit more creosote than hotter, shorter-duration fires.

The second preventative measure is annual cleaning and inspection. Cleaning removes creosote so there is no fuel for a chimney fire. Inspection finds any damage to your chimney so you can get it repaired.

If you have any questions about chimney fires, call us at 466-4602 or check out the Chimney Safety Institute of America at [www.csia.org](http://www.csia.org).





# House Calls

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## COLORING CONTEST WINNERS

**TAKE A LOOK AT THE WINNING ENTRIES FROM OUR 2015 FIRE DISTRICT 9 COLORING CONTEST.** Thanks to all who entered and a special thanks to Costco for donating our Grand Prize.



AGE 3-4 WINNER, EVAN



AGE 7-8 WINNER, ALYSSA



AGE 5-6 WINNER, NICO



GRAND PRIZE WINNER, DANIEL, AGE 10



2015 coloring contest winner, Daniel, with the grand prize, a dome tent courtesy of Costco. Daniel's artwork will also appear in our 2016 calendar.