

House Calls



NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 9

FALL/WINTER 2020

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SANTA WILL BE HANDING OUT 2021 FIRE 9 CALENDARS

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509-466-4602



A Message from the Chief

WELCOME TO THE FALL/WINTER 2020 EDITION OF THE FIRE 9 NEWSLETTER.

What a year we have had thus far. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say let's bring on 2021 – and let's get there fast!

It's been quite a year at Fire 9. We continue to navigate the effects of COVID-19 – and we've dealt with the impacts of a late but devastating fire season. The effects of COVID hit us just as it did our entire community. We're proud to say that as an essential service we have been able to continue without once taking a frontline response company out of service. Our career and volunteer firefighters are doing a tremendous job staying safe and healthy so they can bring you the high standard of responsiveness and service you are accustomed to. Unfortunately, that's meant closing our facilities to public entry and use. The loss of public contact through our facility use, tours, CPR and First Aid classes, and open houses is one that hits us hardest. One bright spot has been the practice of drive-by events for birthday parties and graduations. While we've all been through a lot, let's hope we can return to normal life sooner rather than later.

The 2020 wildfire season certainly kept pace with the chaos this year has seen. Not since Firestorm '91 have we seen such destruction and death. The Labor Day Fires of September 7th were certainly historic. It is our sincere hope we can move forward in a way that allows us to restore forest health to reduce the destructive nature of these megafires in the future. Within our District we are pleased to announce a one-of-a-kind program to assist our taxpayers in reducing hazardous fuels on their property. More information on this program can be found inside.

In closing, we are indeed proud to serve you during these crazy times and to bring you a sense of security when so many questions and issues continue to face us. Please be safe as we head in to winter, and as always, it is our honor to serve you and our community.



JACK CATES, FIRE CHIEF
SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 9

SANTA'S COMING!

IT'S A COMMUNITY AND FAMILY FAVORITE – A TIME-HONORED TRADITION – AND FIRE 9 IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT SANTA WILL ONCE AGAIN BE MAKING HIS ROUNDS THROUGH THE DISTRICT with his firefighter helpers in the coming weeks. Due to COVID-19 the District will be unable to conduct any Santa open houses at our fire stations, but instead will make every effort to travel through as many neighborhoods as possible.

Along with serving as escorts for Santa Claus and handing out candy canes to the kids, Fire District 9 personnel will be collecting non-perishable food donations for the Mead Food Bank, handing out winter safety tips, as well as the 2021 edition of our very popular annual calendar. Thanks to our sponsors for continuing to support this treasured annual community project.

Maintain Your Home's Chimney And You Might Just Avoid a Visit from Us

WITH TEMPERATURES DROPPING, WOODSTOVES ARE FIRING-UP AGAIN. The question is, how many chimneys have been cleaned this heating season?

A chimney's job is to move smoke and combustion products out of your home safely. One product of combustion is water vapor (believe it or not). Of course, smoke and all other products of combustion are hot when they're produced. As they move up your chimney, they cool down, and eventually water vapor begins to condense 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 your fire produces is deposited there. The term creosote is a bit of a misnomer. Real creosote is a tar used to preserve wood. It's the black stuff on railroad ties. Chimney creosote is not quite the same thing but it looks and burns the same, so the name has stuck.

Your firebox is designed for high temperatures but your chimney is not. Burning creosote in the chimney puts high heat where it's not supposed to be and bad things 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. Now products of combustion are no longer contained within the chimney and the home may be exposed to dangerous fireplace heat and smoke. As the Chimney Safety Institute of America says, "One chimney fire may not harm a home. A second can burn it down."

Avoiding chimney fires requires two preventative measures: technique and cleaning. Using dry, seasoned wood will produce much less water vapor inside your chimney. Also burning so that smoke gets up and out of the chimney quickly will help. The more time smoke spends in your chimney, the more creosote is being deposited. Fires that burn for a long time with a low damper setting are depositing more creosote than hotter, shorter-duration fires.

All fires will produce some creosote build-up. So 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 repair it.

People who practice good burning technique and have chimneys cleaned and inspected annually don't have chimney fires. People who don't follow these simple rules wind up meeting us face-to-face with axes and hoses in their living room.

If you've got questions on chimney maintenance, call us at 466-4602. You can also check out the Chimney Safety Institute of America at www.csia.org.



OUR NEW ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF IS NO STRANGER TO FIRE 9

JIM WALKOWSKI WORKED AT FIRE DISTRICT 9 FROM 2014-2018 AS AN ASSISTANT CHIEF but returned to the west side of the state to assist his parents who were experiencing health challenges. During 2018-2020, he served as the fire chief at East Jefferson Fire Rescue in Port Townsend.



"It has been my privilege to work in the fire service my entire adult life. I am blessed to have the opportunity to continue as part of the Fire 9 team and serve our community."

Jim Walkowski
Assistant Fire Chief,
Spokane County Fire District 9

Walkowski grew up on Bainbridge Island, in Kitsap County, Washington. He began his fire service career in 1985 with the Bainbridge Island Fire Department. His career progressed through the ranks of Firefighter, Lieutenant and Chief Fire Officer. As an Assistant Chief at Fire 9, he supervises the District's Emergency Medical Services, Career Development, and Training Divisions.

Walkowski has also held positions on several boards, committees, and teams, including serving as the president of the Washington Fire Chiefs Association and as a member of the Washington State Labor and Industries Firefighter Safety Technical Committee. He currently serves on the NE Washington Interagency Incident Management Team.

Protect Your Home and Property from Wildland Fire

WILDLAND FIRE SAFETY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY, HOME, AND PROPERTY IS ONE OF OUR TOP PRIORITIES AT FIRE DISTRICT 9. Our analysis has shown that there are many areas in the District where wildland fire risk is high because of the abundance of forest fuels (dense trees, dead branches, pine needles, etc.). Some places are at higher risk than others. So when it comes to protecting your property against wildfires, work needs to be prioritized in the areas where the danger is greatest. Our goal is to assist you in creating defensible space around your homes, improve escape routes in case of a wildland fire, and lower the potential for severe fire on your property.

Land and homeowners have a few options to choose from when it comes to developing a vegetation reduction plan to protect their homes and property. All of the options include a **free** Firewise wildland fire risk assessment of their property to reduce fire behavior. The assessment will help land and homeowners decide what is best for their individual circumstances and locations.

Fire District personnel provide the land/home owner with a Firewise wildland risk assessment and a list of suggested improvements so they can remove their own vegetation to protect their property. If a land/home owner needs assistance to remove vegetation, Spokane County Fire District 9 can help – depending on the size of the property, amount of material to be removed, and any potential commercial value of that material. These projects can be paid for either by Spokane County Fire District 9, or through grants available from Washington Department of Natural Resources, or the commercial timber industry.

CALL SCFD 9 AT 466-4602 TO SCHEDULE A FREE CONSULTATION AND FIREWISE WILDLAND FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

NEED TO REMOVE POTENTIAL FUELS FROM YOUR PROPERTY? CALL US. WE CAN HELP.

- **SMALL PARCELS FEWER THAN 5 ACRES**
Spokane County Fire District 9 firefighters will remove brush and small diameter vegetation with chainsaws, then chip the material to be scattered on-site to protect homes, outbuildings, and other structures of value located on the property.
- **MID-SIZE PARCELS OF 5 TO 20 ACRES**
A small, mechanized skid steer type machine with a rotary masticating head can be utilized to chip and shred brush and small diameter vegetation on site.
- **LARGER PARCELS GREATER THAN 20 ACRES**
Parcels that have commercial timber value can be evaluated by Fire District personnel in cooperation with Washington Department of Natural Resources to develop a more comprehensive plan to determine the best approach that will benefit the landowner in protecting the property from wildland fire.

Land and homeowners can request a free consultation and Firewise wildland fire risk assessment by scheduling an appointment for a meeting on their property with Fire District 9. Vegetation reduction projects on private land will begin in the spring of 2021.

Contact Bobby Shindelar, Division Chief of Wildland Fire, (509) 466-4602 or bshindelar@scfd9.org, for more information about how we can help you make your home and property Firewise. To learn more about Firewise USA, go to www.firewise.org.



Meet our New Division Chief of Wildland Fire Operations and Fuels

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE AND WELCOME BOBBY SHINDELAR, DIVISION CHIEF OF WILDLAND FIRE OPERATIONS AND FUELS TO SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 9. This new position will develop, maintain, and oversee wildland fire suppression operations and fuels management programs for the District.

Bobby recently retired from the United States Forest Service where he served the past eleven years as Forest Fire Chief for the Boise National Forest in Idaho. He brings over 30 years of wildland fire, fuels, and aviation management experience to our program. He currently serves as a Type 2 Incident Commander for Northwest Incident Management Team 12 and is qualified as a Type 1 Operations Section Chief, Type 1 Safety Officer, Type 1 Burn Boss, and Fire Behavior Analyst.

He and his wife Robin have four adult children. The prince of their roost is a Yorkshire Terrier named Jack. When not at work, you can find Bobby and Robin on the hard water during the winter months, ice fishing. Bobby and Robin founded the Western Ice Fishing Association four years ago. The Association currently has over 2,500 members and they enjoy promoting and introducing the sport to young people. During the warmer months, they can be found on their boat exploring new lakes and rivers. They both enjoy hunting, camping and being outdoors.



BOBBY SHINDELAR, DIVISION CHIEF OF WILDLAND FIRE OPERATIONS AND FUELS, SCFD 9



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HOUSE CALLS is a publication of
Spokane County Fire District 9

Jack Cates, Fire Chief
Michael R. Atwood, Commissioner
James E. Bennett, Commissioner
Thomas R. McGarry, Commissioner



OUR COLORING CONTEST WINNERS

TAKE A LOOK AT THE WINNING ENTRIES FROM OUR 2019 FIRE DISTRICT 9
COLORING CONTEST. Thanks to all who entered.



SIERRA, Age 3-4 Winner, and
Grand Prize Winner



EMILY, Age 7-8 Winner



BECKET, Age 5-6 Winner



KAYLEE, Age 9-10 Winner



SIERRA, 2019 coloring contest winner,
with the grand prize. Congratulations to
Sierra and thanks to Costco for donating
the prize for the winner.