

**MINUTES OF MEETING
ALPINE FIREFIGHTERS CLUB
AUGUST 14, 2004**

Meeting held at 4:30 PM at hydrant number 2 (across from the Phillips' and Cronin's houses).

Attendees:

Joanne Landeros	Wayne Winch
Hugh Cornett	René Landeros
Wayne Krajeski	Tony Phillips
John Cronin	Ginny Fereira
Millie Winch	Jack Van Vonderan
Laurel Walters	Connie Donaldson
Bill Donaldson	Ed Jones
Lorin Soderwall	

The meeting was attended by representatives of 8 of the landowner households of Tract 2, Aspendell Subdivision, as well as representatives of 3 households outside of Tract 2. Tony Phillips chaired the meeting.

Jack Van Vonderan distributed literature he had obtained on firefighting and general-purpose pumps.

Hugh Cornett distributed maps he had prepared showing the location of propane tanks and electrical shut-offs on all homes in Tract 2.

John Cronin reported that he and Hugh Cornett had measured hydrant flow, which through two lengths of house and a nozzle ranged from 23 gallons per minute at hydrant 2 to 46 gallons per minute at hydrant 4. Flows of this magnitude from three hydrant locations will not drain the reservoir in a short time, particularly if both pumps are turned on.

Tony distributed two more compressed air horns and displayed the trial headlamp and flashing lamp that he had purchased.

Tony reviewed that the procedure in case of fire is:

- 1) Call 911 and tell them to sound the Aspendell siren
- 2) Three blasts on the air horn
- 3) Go to www.aspendell.com and push the alert button

Tony reported that only two property owners had signed up at <http://SpaceweatherPHONE.com> to get their phone number added to the alert system. You must do this if you want to be alerted in the event of a fire. At that link, sign up for “backyard astronomy alerts.” Notify Tony if you do not actually want astronomy alerts, but only fire alerts, and your credit card will not be charged.

Tony reported on his participation in the Aspendell Volunteer Fire Department training last week. He reported that it was a good session. He said that he was surprised at the length of time that it took to get the fire truck started, get to the fire, hook up to the hydrant, and pump water. On the plus side, he noted that the greater water pressure allowed the firefighters to stay farther from the fire.

Tony reported that Roger Wilhelm, who is a LA County firefighter, volunteered to mentor us.

Tony reported that Roger said if a pressure relief valve on a propane tank vents, and the released stream of propane ignites into a column of flame, that it should **not** be put out.

A demonstration was conducted of how to shut off the valve on John and Laurel's propane tank.

It was decided (since the Aspendell trainees promptly lost the only two hydrant wrenches they had) that our hydrant wrenches should be chained to each hose box. [Hugh Cornett completed this task the next day]

There is a switch inside the Aspendell fire house to the right of the door that locally activates the fire sirens at the fire house and on the hill above Tract 2.

Hugh related that he had called the Aspendell Fire Chief to ask if we could attend the training last week, and that the Chief had deferred to Lew McConnell, who had said that Tract 2 was not welcome at the training, since they already had too many volunteers.

At this point in the meeting, we were joined by Donnie Kunz of the Bishop Volunteer Fire Department.

Tony repeated his experience at the Aspendell VFD training. He said that several of the people present had told him to arrange with the Aspendell Fire Chief for training for Tract 2. Bill Donaldson suggested making those arrangements through Roger Wilhelm instead.

There was a discussion of making assignments as Captain, Firefighter, or Engineer. Donnie suggested that we did not need engineers, since we are not dealing with fire trucks. He further said that rather than waiting for assigned captains, the first person on the scene should take responsibility as on-scene coordinator. The captain is the safety officer, who sees the big picture, and oversees doing size up, turning off sources of ignition, notifying mutual aid, turning off power and propane, and evacuating the interior of the house.

Donnie said that everyone should be trained so they can take command of the scene until a formal captain arrives.

Donnie said that a water flow of 500 gallons per minute is needed to adequately cool a propane tank to prevent it from exploding.

He said that the first thing to do is to turn off the propane and electricity [note: we should see if any electrical panels are locked, which would require bolt cutters to get inside to turn the power

off]. As a rule of thumb, he said “a fully involved house has fully involved people.” Regarding those people inside the house, it becomes a personal decision whether you feel that it is safe to assist them.

Donnie said that for a community and group like ours, that fire prevention is the key. All houses should have fire extinguishers of the proper size at the proper locations, as well as smoke alarms. Donnie will attempt to arrange hands-on fire extinguisher training for us.

In response to a question whether a key to each house should be kept at a central location, he said that homeowners who were willing could allow a key to be placed in a “Knox box,” to which the firefighting group has a key. The boxes are placed on the outside wall of each participating home, at a height that requires a short ladder to reach, to reduce the chance of vandals accessing the keys.

With respect to servicing fire extinguishers, Donnie said to check on a regular schedule that the pressure gauge on a dry chemical extinguisher reads in the acceptable range. Extinguishers kept in vehicles should periodically be inverted and hit on the bottom several times with a rubber mallet to loosen the powder. For extinguishers that have lost pressure, Cochrun Fire Equipment in Bishop can recharge them.

For a chimney fire, Donnie said damp down the stove (i.e., shut off the air supply). Then get on the roof, and make sure the screen on the chimney is not plugged; if it is, take it off. Be sure there are no sparks on the roof. Then get in the attic to see if the chimney has burned through anywhere. **Do not** put water down the chimney. “Chimnex” flares do not work, according to Donnie.

Donnie said that keeping fire extinguishers in the hose boxes for first response would be a good idea (or the person serving as captain that month could carry one in their truck). Donnie recommends 20-pound ABC extinguishers. In response to concerns that the current hose boxes were not big enough for extinguishers, there was discussion that each family could keep an extinguisher by the front door that could be carried with them when they respond to a fire. There was discussion that a 10-pound extinguisher would be easier to carry any distance than a 20-pound extinguisher.

Donnie told us that Aspendell is not within the Bishop VFD rural response district. He thinks that California Division of Forestry might be our responder if we are in a state responsibility area.

He pointed out that if we call ourselves a fire department, that there are liability issues associated with that title. He said that we may wish to consider becoming a county fire protection district [this was investigated by Lorin Soderwall’s committee last year].

Donnie said that the biggest potential problem to a group like ours is not to over commit.

Donnie recommends the use of firefighting foam in a limited water situation like ours.

Donnie said that the California State Firefighters Association (CSFA) and Office of Emergency Services both collect surplus firefighting gear for distribution to small fire departments. He does not know whether we need to be a declared department to access this source of equipment. He will put Tony in touch with a representative of CSFA.

Bill Donaldson reported that on Thursday, August 19th, he will be clearing brush from the road to the reservoir as a fire break, and needs volunteers with trucks to carry away the cut brush.

In response to a question, Donnie said that the caps on the fire hydrants should be painted the appropriate color corresponding to the flow they are capable of producing. He will check on the possibility of having the flow of our hydrants checked. Mike Conklin, Assistant Director of Public Works for Inyo County, has also volunteered to loan us the required equipment.

Donnie said we should place a single blue reflector in the street at each hydrant location, on the side of centerline that the hydrant is on. These reflectors will have to be replaced after the snow plow removes them. If we can get the reflectors, he will see if he can arrange to have them glued in place.

Donnie showed us how to roll the fire hose as a single roll after folding it in half so that both the male and female ends are on the outside of the roll (the male end is held about 4 feet from the female end before the rolling starts at the folded-over approximate midpoint of the hose).

After the meeting adjourned, a fire training exercise was held, and observed by Donnie Kunz. A mock fire at Lot 21 on Manzanita was fought with hoses deployed from hydrants 3, 4, and 7. There was some confusion in at least one team, and perhaps two, with the meaning of “two hoses from each hydrant,” which resulted in lost time. The intended meaning was “two *lengths* of hose connected together to one nozzle” at each hydrant, not two separate hose lines from each hydrant. Such intentions need to be expressed clearly in the future, and all persons on a team need to indicate that they understand the plan.

The team deployed to hose box 7 wet the mock fire in 3 minutes 4 seconds.

The team deployed to hose box 3 wet the mock fire in 3 minutes 37 seconds.

The team deployed to hose box 4 was delayed by having to replace a hose that was leaking from a number of locations.

Donnie made the following observations or comments:

- If the house is fully involved, wet the area on the ground in front of the fire; putting water in the air in front of the fire does no good.
- In the case of a brush fire, work from the flanks toward the center. Be sure to watch behind you that firebrands have not started a fire behind you.
- If you are trapped by flame, **run into the black** (the area that has already burned); this is your safe spot.
- Hold the fire hose over your shoulder. That way, your arms do not need to hold up the hose, they only have to direct it.

- Donnie was concerned at our approach with firefighting teams on opposite sides of the house, since each team will be trying to push the flames toward the other team.
- Rather than having run a long 1½-inch hose down the hill from hydrant 3, Donnie would have run 3-inch hose to a gated Y, where he would have branched to two, 50-foot long, 1½-inch hose runs. The pressure lose in 1½-inch hose is much greater [more than 10 times] than in 3-inch hose.
- If we were dealing with the house being fully involved, we would need to watch out for firebrands starting fires in the meadow.
- The number one concern is personnel accountability; knowing who is where. People should not move from their assigned position or leave the scene unless the captain knows this.
- Brass nozzles with a shut-off bail would be better than our plastic nozzles, one of which broke during this training exercise.
- Hoses are supposed to be tested at twice their rated pressure every year. They should last 10 years, but 20 years (the age of the hose that was leaking) is probably beyond their useful life.
- In the event of a fire, it would be very helpful to have a person on Highway 168 to direct the trucks to the fire and the closest hydrant.
- Before the caps are replaced on the hydrants, it should be verified that the water in the hydrant has drained down like it is supposed to (to prevent freezing problems in the winter).
- Hydrants should always be opened fully and closed fully; not operated in a partially opened condition (to prevent sediment from becoming trapped in the valve and damaging it when it is closed).
- A dry hydrant (6-inch would be preferable) at the reservoir would be helpful in the event of fighting a fire from that location.
- When drafting directly from the hydrants, Bishop VFD limits the suction to maintain at least 20 psi on the suction side of the pump, to prevent collapsing water heaters in people's houses.
- Donnie will check with the Bishop VFD Chief whether he will come up for a pre-fire survey of the area.

The next meeting will be Saturday, August 28, 2004 at 2:30PM.