

2009

## The Rural Firefighter, Issue 01-09--February 2009

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# THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

Issue 01-09—February 2009



Nebraska Forest Service

[www.nfs.unl.edu](http://www.nfs.unl.edu)

## Training Doesn't Cost...It Pays!!

I was getting pruned up at my local barber shop the other day when I noticed a framed certificate from the State of Nebraska on the wall. Being curious, I asked about it and was amazed to learn the procedures Bob, Gary and every other barber in the state have to follow to operate their business. I later discovered an extensive section of Nebraska law dealing with barbers. Did you know that to become a licensed barber in the State of Nebraska requires the completion of 2,100 hours of training? That figure floored me, but it made me think; why is the process of becoming a barber so extensive compared to the process of becoming a volunteer firefighter? Shouldn't firefighters be well-trained too?

Now, before you hit the roof, read on. By no means am I bad-mouthing barbers or volunteer firefighters. If their jobs were easy, everyone would do it. The point is that when you go for a trim, it usually isn't a life threatening situation (if it is, you might consider shopping around a bit). A hair cut is a scheduled event done in controlled conditions, and most of us expect a barber to be qualified and licensed.

Contrast that with a volunteer firefighter. We go to work on a moment's notice, at the worst time of day, in the worst weather. We're faced with heat, smoke, hazardous materials, structural collapse and temperature extremes of all kinds; and we do it all with no expectation of anything in return. Even though our "customers" don't schedule a visit,

you can bet they're glad to see the big red trucks arrive.

Unfortunately, the pool of volunteers is becoming so limited in some areas that the only question asked before issuing turnout gear might be, "Are you currently breathing?" Some departments just can't afford to turn people away. Because of that, it's up to all of us, the public and the fire service, to make qualified firefighters a goal for every Nebraska community and rural area. We have to support firefighter training.



Members of the community, if well-trained firefighters are important, let your elected officials know that, and support the fire department in their efforts to improve their level of training. Firefighters, make the most of training opportunities and work to improve the quality of service offered to your community. It will

pay dividends in the end, some of which can literally be taken to the bank. Consider the potential: reduced fire losses, potentially lower insurance rates, well-qualified personnel and fewer line-of-duty injuries and deaths. Well-trained firefighters are easy to spot because they have an air of confidence about them when they're in action. That's good for the fire department in recruiting and morale.

There are a number of training opportunities in Nebraska. First and foremost, the State Fire Marshal Training Division. A look at their website ([www.nebraskasfmd.org/](http://www.nebraskasfmd.org/)) shows that they currently have 80 classes scheduled in

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*The Nebraska Forest Service: Improving peoples' lives by protecting, enhancing and utilizing Nebraska's tree and forest Resources*

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every corner of the state. Opportunities also exist at Nebraska Fire School, the Les Lukert Winter Conference (coming up this month, by the way) and the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, not to mention training seminars sponsored by the Nebraska Fire Chiefs Association and numerous mutual aid mini-schools. Of course, the Nebraska Forest Service offers wildland fire training ranging from basic refreshers to full red card certification, and all you have to do is ask. And these are just the opportunities available within the state boundaries.

Whether we admit it or not, liability is an issue in the fire service today. Well trained firefighters can reduce that liability. The main qualification of volunteer firefighters cannot be "currently breathing." The price of not training is just too high.



### **Tips From Tex**

It appears that winter has finally arrived here in Nebraska. Now is a good time to start preparing for the next wildfire season. That's just what the Nebraska Forest Service is doing.

The "Emergency Assistance for Wildfire Control" (Yellow Book) manual is updated and is part of this mailing. There are very few changes from last year but check it out anyway. Make sure you fill out the quick reference page so you have the phone numbers you need when you need them.

Now is a good time to contact the aerial applicator(s) nearest you and get acquainted if you haven't already. Find out about their aircraft and what precautions need to be taken when refilling. Find out if they are willing to use Class A foam. Should you like additional training, contact the SFM Training Division. They have an excellent class available for working with aerial applicators and planning for their use.

Now is also a good time to sit down with

last year's fire records and determine your fire history. How many actual fires did you respond to? What were the causes? What part of your fire district did they occur in? What time of day? Is there a pattern? Is there a good fire prevention target developing from this information? Do you need help with a fire prevention program? If so, feel free to contact Bob Vogltance or his Partners in Prevention team. They will be happy to meet with you and assist you in any way they can.



One final thought about fire reports Did all of your wildfires get reported to the Nebraska Forest Service? If not, it isn't too late to catch up. Get those reports submitted so they can be included in the "official" count for 2008. Also, call Sandy with an e-mail address for you or the fire department. To help you remember to submit reports, we will begin sending an automatic e-mail to you on a regular basis.

Now that it is getting too cold for outside training and drills, maybe it is a good time to review and update your preplans for your potential fire problems. When was the last time you preplanned or conducted a walk-through of a building in your community? Has the occupancy changed? Are there hazardous materials stored there now that weren't there when you did the initial preplan? How about reviewing and updating your SOP/SOG? Any new members? Are they familiar with your preplans, SOP/SOG's?

An area we can work together on is the

Mutual Aid Association officer names/ addresses and your meeting schedule for the coming year. Give me a call or e-mail and let me know who you are and when/where the meetings will be for 2009. I'd like to come visit.

It's not too early to start thinking about your budget for next year. Take a look at your equipment. Does it comply with NFPA 1901 and the present ISO needs? How about your PPE/SCBA? Is it still safe and in compliance to use?

If you have questions concerning the administration of your fire department, give me a call and perhaps between the two of us, we can figure it out.

Finally, with the state budget cutting taking place, my office and the University of Nebraska is no different. So I'm asking for your input with regards to the "Yellow Book." I'm interested in knowing how many of you would

rather receive it online versus a hard copy. This could save money in both printing and postage. Call me or send an e-mail and let me know what you think.

Until next time, stay safe.  
George Teixeira, (402) 472-5870  
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### **Les Lukert Conference**

One more reminder before it's too late! The Nebraska Society of Fire Service Instructors will host the Les Lukert Winter Conference February 20-22, 2009 in Grand Island. Nine 12-hour classes will be offered.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear nationally known speaker and Editor-in-Chief of FireRescue Magazine, Tim Sendelbach. Keith "Doc" Patterson will also present his very popular Honor Guard/Color Guard Boot Camp.

Visit [www.nsfsci.com](http://www.nsfsci.com) for additional information and to register for a class.



## Fire Prevention & Mathematics

From a strictly mathematical viewpoint, what equals 100%? What does it mean to give MORE than 100%? We all have been in situations where someone wants us to give more than 100%. What equals 100% in life? Here's a little mathematical formula that might help answer those questions.

If:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Is represented as:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

Then:

H-A-R-D W-O-R-K

$$8+1+18+4 + 23+15+18+11 = 98\%$$

And:

K-N-O-W-L-E-D-G-E

$$11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96\%$$

And:

A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E

$$1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100\%$$

will help

P-R-E-V-E-N-T F-I-R-E-S

$$16+18+5+22+14+20 + 6+9+18+5+19 = 157\%$$

Therefore, one concludes, with mathematical certainty, that while hard work or knowledge will get you close, attitude will get you there. But you must PRACTICE FIRE PREVENTION, if you are to save lives and property.

**P-R-A-C-T-I-C-E F-I-R-E P-R-E-V-E-N-T-I-O-N**

$$(16+18+1+3+20+9+3+5) + (6+9+18+5) + (16+18+5+22+5+14+20+9+15+14) = 210\%$$

Robert E. Vogltance, Fire Resource Manager, Prevention-Public Fire Education

### 50/50 Grants



Although not firm yet, every indicator is that Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) will be funded in

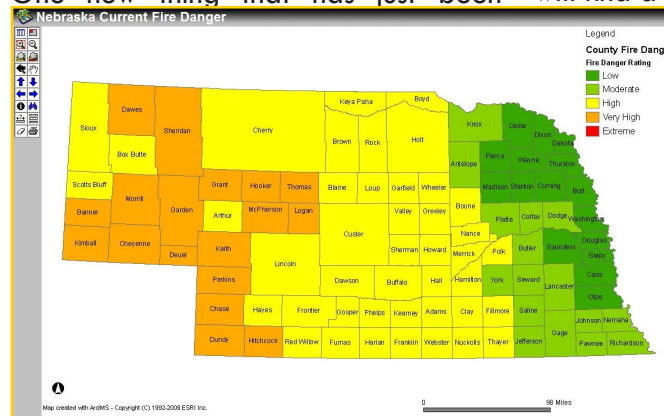
2009. As in the past, these are federal dollars that can be used to purchase fire and communications equipment, SCBA, protective clothing, etc. Keep a few things in mind as you consider your application. First, the fire department's half of the grant cannot be funded by another federal grant program. Second, your fire department must comply with the requirements of the National Incident Management System to be eligible for the program. Be sure to answer that question on the project application.

An application is included with the fire chief's copy of this newsletter. Applications must be returned by April 17, 2009 for full consideration. If you have questions, give us a call.



### Fire Danger Rating Map Now on NFS Website

Keep tuned in to our website for all kinds of new and useful information. One new thing that has just been



added is something we know you will find useful. Our website now includes a map showing the rangeland fire danger for every county. When you get on our website ([www.nfs.unl.edu](http://www.nfs.unl.edu)) look in the panel on the left for "Fire Danger," press this link and you will see the map of Nebraska and will be able to check out fire danger in your area. The fire danger is calculated

every single day of the year and the map is updated before 6:00 AM and then again at about noon. Let us know what you think of this feature. In the left hand panel of the map page you will find a series of icons. If you toggle

the one in the upper left hand corner you will be able to turn on or off the map legend which shows you what the various colors of fire danger represent. The icon in the upper right hand corner toggles the map inset in the top left portion of the map itself. Go ahead and play with

it, you can't hurt it!



### Nugget of the Day

The hardest thing a fire department has to do is maintain/raise current standards of operation. It's easy to lower them.



### **Sandy's Corner**

Happy New Year everyone!

We're beginning a new year and everyone gets a fresh start with wildfire reporting. With the end of 2008, we have completed two years of online reporting. Most of the bugs have been worked out, and from what I hear, those who have gone the route of online reporting versus the yellow card seem to be pleased. Each month during



the past year, we managed to add new departments to our list of reporting online. As

new departments come on board, we continue to save on printing and postage. Postage is increasing again this year, so if you or someone in your department has computer access, please consider reporting online.

As mentioned last issue, reminders will be e-mailed to departments. My original thought was once a month, but I have decided that once every three months should be sufficient. Reminders are of little use, however, if the e-mail address is incorrect. I currently have 17 departments whose e-mail was returned

with an incorrect address. As time allows, I am calling each department for the correct address. It is important to let me know if your e-mail addresses change. If you have not sent me your e-mail address yet, please do ASAP.

Just a few suggestions for 2009:

- Please report only wildland fires. Structure fires do not need to be reported to us. If you have no wildland fires during a month, then consider it a "no response" when reporting.
- For those still reporting with the yellow cards—remember one piece of tape is sufficient and if you must use a staple please use only one.
- If you are still reporting on the yellow card and do not know the latitude or longitude of your fire, please do not let that stop you from reporting. Simply leave those columns blank, and I will fill in this information. Better yet, report online and it happens automatically!
- Regarding mutual aid: If you have a wildland fire and call for mutual aid, please report the fire. I'm currently trying to match up more than 150 Mutual Aid responses where the home department has not reported the fire. My advice to those departments that responded—if you see online that your Mutual Aid response is on hold by me, contact the home department

personally and see if you can find the problem. Several of these have been solved in this manner. Good luck!

The Agreement for Rural Fire Prevention and Control and the Memorandum of Understanding (for those having equipment) were mailed in late 2008. These have to be renewed every five years and if you received one in the mail, then your department's contract(s) is up for renewal. Should you want to apply for cost-share and/or need excess property, these contracts must be current. Thanks to those who have already returned their signed agreements. They are currently being processed, and presidents of rural boards should receive their copy soon.

Don't forget—if you have questions or problems with your reporting, please don't hesitate to call me (402.472.6623). I'm here to help.



### **Calendar of Events**

Feb 20-22	Les Lukert Winter Conference, NSFSI
Mar 21-29	2nd Annual Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, Crawford
May 15-17	Nebraska State Fire School, Grand Island

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