



# FOUR MILE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT newsletter

## Interview with 4 Mile Fire Board Chair Doug Ray

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Chairman of the Board  
Doug Ray

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*by Annette Dula, Newsletter editor*

### **How did you become a member of the Board of Directors for the Four Mile Fire Protection District?**

Rob Beebe, another Board member, asked if I'd do it. It was a way to serve the community without having to fight fires.

### **What is the role of the Board of Directors?**

The Board controls how money is spent; a major duty is to make sure that we don't spend too much. We keep the fire department in good equipment—the best that we can afford— and we make sure it works. We never forget that the safety of fire department volunteers and the Chief comes first.

### **What are your duties as a Board member?**

I started out as treasurer 15 years ago. I have been Chairman of the Board for 6 or 7 years. As Chair, I run the meetings; I keep them short and to the point. I keep the monthly meeting running smoothly, keeping out extraneous verbiage. I make sure we strictly follow the agenda. I keep chit-chat to a minimum. I make sure we get work done and that our meetings aren't too long.

I volunteer a lot. Being treasurer took a lot of time. When I became Chair, it released me so that I could do other things that needed to be done. When Rob Beebe was away for an extended time, I volunteered to do a lot of the legal work like organizing elections for Four Mile District, doing research at the court house, getting stuff filed at the Assessor's Office. I don't mind doing this; compared to

the Chief and fire fighters, the Directors don't have much to do. Besides, it doesn't take much time. I work downtown near the court house, so it's easy for me to do some things. I'm the odd-job guy. Because I'm Chairman of the Board, I'm also a member of the Boulder Fire Council.

### **What is the "Boulder Fire Council?"**

Some things affect all volunteer fire departments in Boulder County. So the Chiefs and Chairs for each fire department get together once a quarter to talk about our common issues and concerns. For example, we talk to each other about what's going on in the sheriff's department; or what's going on at the Communication Center. We keep an eye on legislation. Some policies may not be compatible with the needs of the fire departments, so we want to know what's going on and how certain policies might affect our fire departments. If we know what's going on, we have more credibility and clout with the County Commissioners.

### **What is the relation between the Board of Directors and the Chief?**

The Board supports the Chief. The Chief says what is needed and we say whether we can afford it. When the Chief goes to the County Commissioners, *continued, p.5*



**Doug Ray, Chairman of the Board, Four Mile Fire Protection District.**

## Dave's Corner

by Dave Hustvedt, Chief Medical Officer

### Why are those guys just standing around?

The first Saturday of most months the Four Mile Protection District has a practical training exercise that might involve controlled fires, simulated accidents, or fire engine operation. These exercises are an important part of the department's continuous training. They give volunteer firefighters the opportunity to experience the smoke, flames, and stress of real emergency situations under more or less controlled conditions.

In June of this year the department held a mock car disaster at the Logan Mill Station. The simulated disaster consisted of three phases: a simulated medical emergency with two "victims" inside the car; a real car fire during which the car was set on fire and then extinguished two or three times; and finally a small wildland fire started by the car. As with most Saturday training episodes, the affair in June involved about 15 firefighters dressed in the heavy bunker gear used for structure fires or the yellow shirt and brown pants used for forest fire operations. These firefighters

worked hard at the grubby business of hauling hoses, digging a fire line, or moving "injured" patients up a steep slope. Look at the pictures: smoke, flames, and tense sweaty faces make these trainings very realistic.

At the June training there were also two or three apparent slackers wandering around with their hands in their pockets or leaning up against fire engines as they chat and point at the fire fighters actually doing something. These characters can be seen at all the Saturday drills. Who are they? How do they get away with this?

Actually these spectators, who are experienced officers, play crucial roles in the training. The first role—and probably most important—is that of safety officer. The job of the safety officer is to monitor all activities during the drill and stop the drill if something unsafe is happening. By being uninvolved in the actual operations, the safety officer can keep track of the overall scene. Safety officers are also used in real fire emergencies and fulfill the same role.

The other spectators are indispensable to effective training. They critically watch the exercise to make sure that things are done correctly. During the exercise they may intervene to get the drill back on the right track. After the training, during the debriefing that follows every exercise, they can offer an assessment of what went right or wrong. These stand-around slackers make it possible for firefighters to learn from their mistakes in a safe environment.

They also have another role—recruitment of new volunteers. Residents of Four Mile canyon are welcome to stop and watch the Saturday trainings. Many Four Mile volunteers were recruited in just this way. They stopped to watch

a training in their neighborhood and struck up a conversation with some harmless looking character leaning against a truck. One thing led to another and soon they found themselves wearing funny clothes and sweating in the sun. Smoke, flames—what fun!



**Dave Hustvedt, Chief Medical Officer for the Four Mile Fire Department writes on issues pertinent to Four Mile residents.**

**Photos from the June training - above, firefighters practice rescuing victims from a car wreck; below, extinguishing a car fire.**



# Why Do They Do It?

The temperature was in the mid-80s. It was Saturday morning in early June. Around twenty volunteers from the Four Mile Fire Department were gathered at the Logan Mill Fire Station. Fifteen of them were dressed in heavy and hot firefighting gear. The Morningstars were preparing the food and setting up the grill for the annual picnic that would occur after the practice session, as they have done for many years. Steven Stone was taking pictures of every aspect of the training, some of which appear in this Newsletter. Board member Anita Jones and Quartermaster Lou Ann Shirley were out too, and Brenda Gibson was there to observe the training that her husband, Chief Bret Gibson, and others were directing. All these various fire department volunteers had given up a significant portion of the day to attend the training.

Why do they do it? This is what some of them said when asked that question.

**Marjorie Morningstar:** Preparing food is the only thing we can do to help. The firefighters put their lives on the line for us. And this is how we get to work with them. The least we can do is feed them.

**Jeff Holland:** I live up here; so that's why I do it. You get to know your neighbors. It's important to be able to help our neighbors. I was one of the "victims" in the rescue.

**Brenda Gibson:** There's nothing noble about my being out here. It's just nice to have the opportunity to watch the men and women of our community working.

**Ed Cole:** Why not? I've been involved with volunteer fire departments at various levels for around 30 years.

**Tisha Conoly:** I do it to be a good member of the community.

**Clark Woodward:** I'm giving up my Saturday because I like the thrill. Helps keep me from boredom.

**Anita Jones:** I'm a Board Member and it's great to see how the community prepares for disaster.

**George Fairer:** It's fun. Fighting fires is something I know how to do.

**Rod Moraga:** I've been a professional firefighter for 15 years. I'm here because it's important to have well-trained firefighters. Who's going to do it if we don't? Besides, that's my house over there.

**Suzanne Thomas:** It's my turn to contribute. It's a great opportunity for education. I've learned stuff I never imagined I would.



**Volunteer firefighters debrief after the June training.**

. and by the way...

As you clear defensible space around your house this summer, put off cutting live trees until later this fall. Do cut brush, and trim grasses and other light fuels near your house. But the sweet sappy smell of freshly cut trees attracts the Mountain Pine Beetle, which flies around August 1st looking for new trees to infest. The beetle carries Blue Stain, which soon kills the tree. You can see the devastation these pests cause in parts of the Four Mile district—whole trunks of dead trees.



## Four Mile training!

Left - Firefighters foam a tree to protect it from an encroaching fire during training.

Center - A live burn makes training for wildland fires more realistic.

Bottom - Salina Station (#2) was packed for the flood training session in March. Flood? Yes, flooding is a serious potential hazard in Four Mile Canyon. Watch for information in a future Newsletter.



*interview with Doug Ray, cont'd from p.1.*

he knows the Board is behind him. We may write letters to show our support.

**How does one get to serve on the Board of Directors?**

Usually, through someone who's already on the Board. Or if a person is interested, he or she might call me. We have five Board members. People get tired and there are term limits, so vacancies do come up.

**Are the Board meetings open to firefighters and to the community?**

Yes, our meetings are open to the public. We meet the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM at fire station # 2 in Salina.

**How is the Four Mile Volunteer Fire Department funded?**

The department is funded through the mill levy. We also apply for, and get, grants from the state and county. Individuals also make donations to us. When we fight fires on property belonging to the city or to the BLM (Bureau of Land Management ) we get reimbursed.

**What do you like best about being on the Board of Directors?**

Mountain folks are solitary, so being on the Board is a way to meet other people in the community. And it makes me feel good. Besides, if you are not a volunteer, you still get to hear all the gossip about fire calls and accidents. It's always interesting.

**What is on your wish list for the Four Mile Fire Department?**

I just wish we had more money so we could get better trucks. We're now in the process of getting a new one. (We always design our own trucks because we have specific needs that we can't buy off the shelf.) We do need more trucks.

**What changes have you noticed in the Fire Department or in the operation of the Board in your tenure?**

Previously, there were never enough fire fighters. But now there's always somebody to fight a fire, though we can always use more volunteers. And of course we now have a heck of a lot more houses to protect. We've created an emergency medicine services (EMS) unit, which we didn't have in the beginning. There's now more money to protect

the District. And we have better equipment. Relations between the Board and the fire department are far less cantankerous than in the old days, many years ago. We have a great department and it just keeps getting better.

**What do you get out of being a member of the Board?**

I get personal satisfaction from doing something nice for people. As I said before, I can keep a group of people on course and that's satisfying too. I've learned a lot about trucks; I've learned a lot about the politics of fire fighting; and I've learned medical things that are helpful to me and my family. For a long time after I got on the Board, I didn't say anything in the meetings. Now I find it easier to speak in front of people.

**What powers does the Board have?**

We can determine the appropriate use of money. We can hold elections. For example, the Tabor amendment limited the amount of money we could spend each year. We organized a local election to following the guidelines of the Tabor amendment to raise money to keep the department running smoothly to ensure that the firefighters could do their job safely.

**How do you make a living?**

I'm an independent stockbroker. I work for myself. I used to work at Liquor Mart. Then a friend opened an office and offered to train me, and to give me a job. I've had no formal training as a stockbroker. Like most things, you learn as you do it.

**What do you do for enjoyment?**

I bike. I ski as much as I can. I work out. I rollerblade. Kudos for a Boulder that allows so many diverse sports activities.

**Do you have any advice for our readers?**

We have a really competent fire department, made up of volunteers all who care greatly about what happens in Four Mile Canyon. This means keeping it green, not black. Please pay attention to and act on fire mitigation principles. It could save your house.

**I volunteer a lot...I don't mind doing this; compared to Chief and fire fighters, the Directors don't have much to do....I'm th odd-job guy.**

**-- Four Mile Fire Protection District Board Chair Doug Ray**

## from the Chief: It's Time To Join The Volunteer Fire Dept!

At almost every fire we respond to, a local resident will come out and offer to help us fight the fire. While we applaud and appreciate this willingness, we cannot use this person at this time for two reasons: first, we cannot use anyone who has not been properly trained, and second, all fire fighters must be attired in fire fighting safety gear. So, alas, we have to decline the well-meaning offer, and a much needed person is sent away or possibly given a safe task somewhere out of harm's way. Both problems are easily fixed: join the fire department and come to trainings; we'll outfit you with two beautiful sets of firefighting gear—one for fighting structure fires and one for wildland fires.

On any given rescue or fire we need between six and fifty firefighters, depending on the seriousness of the event. We currently have 30 firefighters, but not all 30 go to every call. As mothers, teachers, workers, and generally busy people, every person cannot be expected to make every call. We protect over 2200 residents in the Four Mile District with only 30 firefighters. That means that fewer than 2% of people in the District are prepared to help in time of need.

Yes, I know you might not be able to fight fires, but other jobs need to be done: you can cook, direct traffic during a medical or fire call, sweep one of our four stations, sharpen tools. We even need a person just to make phone calls twice a month. Please call us. We are really great people and you already know us! We are your neighbors, babysitters, pastors, professors, friends. Volunteer firefighters are simply the best people you will ever meet. I mean really... who else gets out of bed at three in the morning to help a stranger?

At fires, it's unfortunate when we have to send these walk-up "volunteers" away because we really do need them. But we need them trained. The time to join is now. The time to get trained is now.

Call: Chief Bret Gibson 444-0882; Medical Officer Dave Hustvedt 442-2814; or Quartermaster Lou Ann Shirley 442-4271.

**Summerville neighbors got together to install a cistern to aid in firefighting. Above, digging a big hole; below, moving the cistern into place. A neighborhood cistern is an excellent way to mitigate the risks of fire.**



**Four Mile Fire Chief Bret Gibson**

## Protect Your Community: Install A Fire Cistern

Summerville, a small townsite with classic mining era homes, now has a new modern addition: a fire cistern. It stores 10,000 gallons of fire-fighting water. This small community has long feared the threat of fire and its devastating consequences. The new cistern reduces the threat of a fire leveling the whole community.

How, you ask, did this small community get such a fine addition? The community members got together and financed it themselves. The community of Summerville has 12 homes; the cost of the cistern was around \$5,000. That's less than \$420 per home. Annual homeowner insurance costs about the same but it cannot protect your home, as a cistern can. Certainly, homeowners' insurance will, in most cases, pay to replace or repair a home damaged in a fire. But what about the non-monetary losses: wedding photos, your mom's what-nots, your child's hand-print in plaster? Or the time—away from your own home—you are living at the Boulder Mountain Lodge (a nice place, but for 6 to 8 months?) while the home is being rebuilt? For the folks of Summerville, the choice was simple: a \$420 one-time cost to help protect their homes in case of a fire. That's cheap insurance!

So please consider getting your neighbors together to invest in keeping your community safe. Call us. We can help.



# Surviving a Forest Fire

by Margaret Hansen

**In a forest fire, your and your family's survival must be your first concern.** We firefighters will do our best to help, but in a large fire there are more families than there is fire apparatus available to protect you. Your house surviving a forest fire is second priority after your safety. You can increase both your and your house's safety by things you do ahead.

## Your Survival:

Most deaths in a forest fire are caused by the air people breathe. A large fire superheats the air around it. This hot air moves ahead of the fire, which is usually uphill in our area. This air is so hot that it burns your lungs. You literally cook from the inside out. The smoke from a forest fire includes a large amount of carbon monoxide — a poison that suffocates you. Get out of the area before the fire is near!

## Plan ahead:

*1. Egress routes.* Plan on more than one route so that you have options depending upon which way the fire is approaching.

- If the route is one you will travel on foot it should not go uphill. You cannot outrun a forest fire. If you get early warning, you can beat it uphill in your car.
- The route should not go into a gulch near the fire. Gulches act as fire chimneys.
- If you live near the top of the hill, going downhill on the side away from the fire is a good choice.
- The route should go to a safe haven. This could be a shortcut to a wide road or a large rock outcropping which does not have a lot of trees around it.
- If you are near one of the few good-sized ponds, enjoy the swim even when the water is cold.

## *2. Clothing.*

- Wear cotton. Synthetics melt and will burn you. When wool burns it gives off cyanide, a poison.
- Wear all-leather boots. Sneakers do not give you protection from hot embers. Synthetic inserts in leather boots melt.

- Have a bandanna or other protection to tie over your nose to act as an air filter.

- Take your full water bottle.

*3. Finding your family.* How will you know that all of you are safe? Decide on a meeting place or choose someone to telephone who lives on the plains or in another canyon.

## Your House's Survival: Prepare NOW!

In a large forest fire, it is unlikely that there will be enough fire apparatus available to protect each house. The work you do ahead will make your house better able to survive a forest fire without Fire Department help.

*1. Defensible space* around your house is the first step. Call Chief Bret Gibson for advice on how to achieve defensible space.

*2. Your roof can be the most vulnerable part of your house.* Hot embers fly long distances from a fire. If they land on a combustible roof, they can ignite the house.

- Wood shingles or shakes should be replaced. Soon.
- Asphalt shingles or roll roofing is marginally better.
- The roof surface should be incombustible: fiberglass (Class A) shingles, metal, or tile.

*3. Around the house.*

- Store firewood uphill from the house and at least 15 feet away from it.
- Enclose the space between a porch or deck and the ground so that hot embers cannot blow under them. Do not store combustible materials under them. Clean out pine needles and other combustibles before enclosing.

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This article, by former 4 Mile Chief Margaret Hansen, first appeared in the Winter 1997 issue of the Newsletter.

**MITIGATE, MITIGATE, MITIGATE!**  
It's the season for cleaning up and sprucing up around the old homestead. What a great time to think "Fire Wise". Prune that brush and limb those trees from around and under your house. The less fuel you leave between your home and the surrounding forest, the better. For a complete lesson on how to mitigate the fire risk outside your home, please call Chief Gibson for the Fire Wise handout.

We publish two Newsletters a year. We'd like your suggestions about future topics or comments. Call Annette Dula, editor, 303-440-7056.

Thanks to these Newsletter contributors:

Bret Gibson, Dave Hustvedt, Margaret Hansen; Photos - Steven Stone, Tom Trask, Marjorie Morningstar; Mark Gross (layout), & Don Witte (production).



**BIG!** is the cistern being installed in Summerville. This 10,000 gallon water storage tank will supply firefighters in the event of a fire in this community. See story, p. 6.

## District Service Record

### Calls this year to date

Medical calls:	56
	(10 life-threatening)
Fire calls:	33
	(including 5 wildland fires and 6 mutual aid calls to other districts)

## Training Schedule

Training sessions are held at 7:00 p.m. at Station Two, in Salina.

- **Emergency Medical Services** training sessions are held the second Thursday of each month.

- **Fire Fighting** training sessions are held the third Thursday of each month.

- **To volunteer** for any of the crews, or to find out more about how to join the fire department, please call one of the coordinators below:

Fire Chief Bret Gibson  
303-444-0882

Lou Ann Shirley (Auxiliary)  
303-442-4271

Dave Hustvedt (Medical)  
303-442-2814

## FOUR MILE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Boulder, Colorado 80302

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