

On behalf of your Whispering Pines Fire Protection District Board of Directors, I would like to invite you to a few things we have going on over the next few weeks and give you an update on our building remodel.

October 22nd we will be holding a joint presentation at Aspen Ridge with the RCFD on Firewise and fire resistive landscaping. Stop by and say hello and meet some of your firefighters.

October 31st Annual Halloween - Candy and tours at the station 5pm-9pm.

Over the last several years in my announcements inviting to you attend our annual meeting in February, I have tried to keep you aware the status of current issues facing the department. Those include the falling numbers of volunteers at our department, the other Pennington County VFDs and the volunteer fire service in general; our plans for maintaining emergency services for the district; the financial health of the district; and the status of proposed station modifications.

The financial condition of the department at this time I would categorize as healthy. We are currently being funded mostly by Fire District tax revenues from a general fund and an opt out put in place in 2016. We have been successful with those funds in providing you and your volunteers with modern trucks and good firefighting equipment. This is possible because we have been able to rely until recently on a department staffed entirely by volunteers. As with everything else at this point, the cost of firefighting equipment and labor is increasing and will stress our current funding levels.

The people who are volunteers are incredibly dedicated and generous with their time, but the numbers in this area and across the nation in general continue to fall. The system here is still

working I think in part because the VFDs in the county, the Rapid City Fire Department, county, state, and federal fire organizations in this area work well together to address whatever emergencies present themselves, small and large. The main reason this all works however, in my opinion, is the dedication and skill of the firefighters and the moral and financial support from the residents in the fire districts.

To address the falling numbers of volunteers and the increasing amount of time necessary to run and operate our VFD, the Board hired two of the VFD's volunteers to work full time starting last February. Those positions are the Fire Chief and an Administrative Assistant / Firefighter. This is happening in multiple departments to varying degrees. It has made a positive difference in planning, training, administration efficiency and response times. If the number of volunteers falls further however, one of the options is to hire more full-time firefighters which is expensive. Another action aimed at addressing falling volunteer numbers is modifying our approximately 70 year-old fire station. There are several reasons we feel updates are necessary.

Recent health studies of firefighters across the nation have revealed a significantly higher rate of health problems, especially cancer, when compared to non-firefighters. The difference has been attributed to the carcinogens in the fire smoke and soot that firefighters work in and bring back to the station on the trucks and their gear and vehicle exhaust gases in the truck bays. Building and procedure changes have been designed to drastically reduce their exposure to these carcinogens and to allow them to return home. Some of these changes are air filtering, clean spaces, gear cleaning facilities, showers, and a sprinkler system. These new features are standard in all new firefighting stations and are increasingly being implemented in older stations.

Another part of the modification is to add accommodations for firefighters. These spaces can be used to attract student firefighters by offering room and board and stipends in exchange for emergency response efforts. This program is also being implemented successfully in some stations locally and across the nation as a more inexpensive way to gain responders and increase recruitment and retention. In the long term, as the population density of this area grows, these spaces could be used, if necessary, to house full time firefighters. The drawings for the modifications are available at the fire hall to view.

Your volunteer board of directors and volunteer firefighters have been analyzing the issues that are challenging the fire community for some time, including monitoring how departments across the nation are dealing with the same issues. We feel that given the current and future impacts of population growth, lower volunteerism, increasing costs, and a warming climate these changes are necessary if we are to be able to provide protection and aid to the members of this community. The modification design has been completed at long last and we are moving forward. The cost of making these changes and modernizing our facility are however significant. We project a cost about one and a quarter million dollars that will be financed locally. It would be amortized over 20 years to keep the yearly payments at a manageable level.

Alan Anderson, President
Whispering Pines VFD
Rural Fire Protection District

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WE NEED YOU TO HELP ANSWER THE CALL!

When calls for **HELP** come in, we respond to all of them: House Fires, Forest Fires, Wildland Urban Interface Fires, Medical Emergencies, and Vehicle Accident/Fires.

Our volunteers are diverse and come from all walks of life. No previous training or experience is necessary. There's a job for everyone: Firefighter, Driver/Operator, EMT, and Administrative Support to name a few.

We will provide:

- First Class Training with Modern Equipment
- Professional Development, Team Building, and Comradery.
- Exciting and Rewarding Experience Helping Others.

*Fires don't wait, neither should you, **volunteer today!***

Website: www.whisperingpinesvfd.com/apply-today

Someone is available **Thursdays from 6:30 - 7:00 pm** for questions at 7980 Clarkson Road.



Online
Application

Department Events

October 22nd – Whispering Pines, Aspen Ridge, and RCFD presentation 10am - 12pm on Firewise and fire resistive landscaping.

October 31st – Annual Halloween event. Candy and tours at the station 5pm-9pm.

November 8th – Please stop by and vote but please remember we are a working station and there is no parking in front of the bay doors or along the red curb posted no parking. We need to be able to get our trucks out during emergency calls and need all that room to do so.



Whispering Pines

Volunteer Fire Department

7980 Clarkson Road
Rapid City, SD 57702



NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
RAPID CITY, SD
PERMIT NO. 618



@wvpvfd



WhisperingPinesVFD



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