



Crystal Park Volunteer Fire Department (CPVFD)

February – May 2007

The following describes the recent successes we have had as a Department for the Crystal Park community. In the first three (3) months we have had significant accomplishments in standing up the CPVFD which we will summarize for the CP membership.

CPVFD Kick Off and Membership Training

The CPVFD stood up in February of 2007. We had our first Department business meeting in March with approximately 11 volunteers in attendance from the community and staff. Since that first meeting, where we laid out the purpose, mission, vision and 2007 objectives, we have sustained the volunteer participation. The best place to start therefore is with the volunteer training. First, with regards to our Structural Firefighters, we had two additional CPVFD members/staff complete the Basic Firefighters Course through Manitou Spring Fire Department (MSFD) on May 12 giving CPVFD three (3) fully trained structural FFs. This was not necessarily a goal this summer as our focus was on wildfire suppression so we are ahead of the plan. In addition, we had one of our most experienced firefighters complete Colorado's Firefighter 1 certification including Hazardous Material Operations training.

With regards to Wildland Firefighters, our two certified Wildland FFs successfully completed their annual Pack Test and are awaiting their annual refresher training to be scheduled in the next couple weeks through MSFD. The result is national Red Card Certification status making our FFs deployable with the County, State and Federal fire service agencies. In addition, we had an additional Wildland Firefighter complete his Red Card training through a recent training course held in Woodland Park, giving CPVFD three (3) fully trained Wildland Firefighters. Note that all this training, whether wildland or structural, has been free of charge. We've had fantastic support from MSFD and other local departments such as Woodman Valley VFD. Their support has been priceless to say the least.

So in a 3 short months, we have 6 FF equivalents trained and certified in either wildland or structural fire fighting skills. In addition, we have recently had interest from two others residents already certified as wildland FFs in joining the CPVFD. Five of our FFs have also completed several National Incident Management System (NIMS) training courses as well. Total training thus far exceeds over 250 hours of personal time. We have an additional five (5) other members desiring additional training when available and we have the support of MSFD to let us participate in the training through their Training Center. We should point out that two of CPVFD structural FFs responded and were on scene at the Manitou Springs Elementary School fire on May 5, 2007. Our support was much appreciated by MSFD. All of this training gives CPVFD an initial capability to respond to incidents in the park. This is especially critical when you understand that as of this date, the Manitou Springs Fire Department has deployed it's Brush Truck and four Firefighters to fight the wildland fires in Florida.

CPVFD Organization and Identity

The CPVFD Organization has also taken shape as an operational fire department. Our Fire Chief and Deputy Chief have been initially assigned and will in the future be voted on by the CPVFD members. We also have identified other supporting roles and responsibilities such as Communications Manager, Equipment/Supply Manager, Treasurer and Training Manager, to name a few. There are other “additional duty” positions in the Department shared by both Active and Associate members.

As with any fire department, we also needed a recognizable identity. We have established our Maltese Cross (seen above), developed and launched our initial website (www.crystalparkvfd.org), and we completed the CPVFD Constitution & Bylaws (a draft can be viewed on the website). The Bylaws are at the 99% solution and the Department’s members are simply waiting a few months to make sure we haven’t missed anything before voting to finally approve them. These Bylaws are owned by the CPVFD Active and Associate members and will provide guidance of how the CPVFD will operate. Only the CPVFD members can approve any changes to them. This is standard practice for any fire department and we are conforming to a fire service norm. With the Maltese Cross being designed and developed, again free of charge by an international strategy and consulting company graphics designer, CP residents will soon be seeing the CPVFD members wearing uniforms. As volunteers, we will purchase our own uniform shirts and control their purchase to CPVFD members only. In the event of an incident in Crystal Park, our organization and positions held are critical to quickly establishing emergency communications with all responding organizations such as El Paso County or MSFD, and for setting up incident command. Although we are not a dispatched department yet, a contracted assignment given to MSFD through the Metro District, we will respond with MSFD and likely will be first on scene to an incident with communications already established with other responders. Which leads to the next topic, CPVFD’s communications capability.

CPVFD Communications

As many know, we purchased several radios from RELM and Motorola. Communications is the most critical element we have here in CP in the event of an emergency or incident. To date, we have been fortunate that MSFD has provided pager capability but that only allowed us to respond to incident tones. We still had no communications on any encrypted talk groups used by MSFD or the County. That has all changed! Our RELM radios (3 handheld and 1 mobile) are already programmed to support wildland responses. These are critical to deploying with, for example, El Paso County or MSFD, as they will surely be coming in the event of a wildland fire in CP. The radios provide us with the necessary comms as an initial attack force while others mobilize. It should be noted that during the Waldo Canyon Fire, the initial attack squad was on scene alone for almost 6 hours before any other resources showed up; this can happen to us as well. In addition, these radios will be vital for coordinating evacuation if needed.

Our Motorola radios (2 handheld and 1 mobile) provide us day-to-day emergency communications on MSFD talk groups. Whereas in the past we only had a pager, we now have comms with MSFD. With the help of the MSFD, we have been assigned an El Paso County “system identifier” on their radio system. Our identifier is the 900 series. Why is this important you may ask? These call signs tell folks who is who in the Department here in Crystal Park. For example, if anyone calls “Crystal Park 900”, they are calling the CP Fire Chief. The value of that is simple, we are formally assigned to incidents in CP by call sign when responding, we are part of any emergency event in CP, and as we have discussed before, we are not evacuated as CP

residents. These call signs give us a viable and credible status among those that may be coming to support an incident. We owe a huge thanks to MSFD Deputy Fire Chief for agreeing to allow us to use their talk groups until such time as we complete a Pikes Peak Radio Communication Agreement which may not be until 2008. We still need to get the mobile radios installed in the Wildland Brush Truck but that should be completed in the next couple weeks. *In summary, communications was our "Achilles Heal" but is no longer.*

Evacuation Strategic Planning

We have the action to re-write the Crystal Park Evacuation Plan. We have actually taken this to a more strategic level first with the tactical details to be planned out later in the year. Our strategic planning has resulted in our meeting with Ft Carson Army helicopter units to plan for potential helo evacuation from upper CP helo pads. A site survey was conducted with US Northern Command and Ft Carson active duty officials to review the adequacy of both pads. Other than very minor comments, both were considered acceptable for evacuation by Chinook helicopters. In the coming weeks, the Army will be conducting fly-overs to photograph each pad, referred to as "Landing Zone Lake" and "Landing Zone Cone". Our current evacuation plan unfortunately calls for folks to hike out which is very dangerous and not advised. Over the next couple months, we will be drafting the new plan that calls for folks to stay in a safe zone for several reasons, not the least of which includes accounting for folks and not impeding the progression of responding emergency services up Crystal Park Road. Stay tuned for more on this one.

Equipment Readiness in 2007

We have reconstituted our equipment for 2007. We have significant resources and apparatus for a department without a budget. First, our CPVFD Brush Truck is back in service with limitations. We need to get the pump's capability to pull water from a cistern back to an operational status ASAP. We have another 500 gallon portable cistern, an ATV 100 gallon trailer, and of course we have the new 2000 gallon Tender purchased by the HOA. The Tender is vital to our ability to ferry water to a fire scene, especially when we respond with MSFD who will need water for Engine 1, which by the way is part of our contract agreement with MSFD. Our goal of course is to have both the CPVFD Brush 1 and CPVFD Tender 1 apparatus available 365 days a year. We have also been contacted by a Fire Department in Grapevine, Texas who may have access to significant surplus equipment including a Pumper. We are currently working with them regarding any associated costs. Thus far, the only thing that may cost any money is the Pumper. The new shelter-in-place facility being considered by the HOA becomes increasingly important to have these vehicles on mission ready status all year due to weather considerations. This facility, besides being one of the shelters defined in the CWPP, can serve as the CPVFD "Station" from which we will deploy, similar to Cascade or Green Mtn Falls.

Needs and Challenges

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for our structural and wildland FFs is a real need and is critical for the safety of our FFs. MSFD will only provide "bunker gear" for two of our three structural FFs. Our need in 2007 is for one new set and we will hand down the existing old gear to others to ensure all three FFs are equipped. The Fire Chief has agreed to pay for the boots (\$400) if one of the Boards of Directors (Metro or HOA) will cover the pants, coat and helmet (\$1800). This would be the first "CPVFD" set of turnout gear for the Department.

In addition, we need to get our FFs on Workman's Comp insurance. We need help from the HOA on this. In addition, we must purchase Nomex wildland shirts for our wildland FFs, protective shelters, hand tools and some additional helmets. PPE is what will minimize risk; we simply

cannot fight wildland fire without it. Our goal for large amounts of gear ultimately is through grants but then there is the challenge of the matching funds we need that was mentioned above.

After our training this month we have identified a need for fitting, reducers and nozzles that will allow for additional equipment we were given by other departments to be usable. We estimate these are minor piece parts that may cost approximately \$250. We obviously could use more but we are happy to receive anything we can get. And of course we will accept any donations to the CPVFD Volunteer's Fund from CP residents to support acquisition of equipment. (This fund is controlled by the Treasurer and includes the CPVFD member dues.

The CPVFD has accomplished a lot in the short time we have been in existence, probably exceeding expectations of many. We still will pay for personal items but some items require the support of the Directors.

Activities in Work

1. We are trying to understand what the "Grant" process is. With our Structure FFs having completed the NIMS training, we are eligible to apply for grants but there is a cost share that exists. Depending on the grant, it can be between 5% and 10% of the grant amount. We hope to discuss in the coming HOA budget process any support that may be provided as it is not clear what the Metro District is willing to do.
2. This month, we are conducting a park-wide survey of the cisterns. Identifying any damage from the winter season, and identifying locations for five new cisterns that the Metro-District has offered to emplace this year. Additionally, we are classifying existing bodies of water in the park for possible use in the event of fire.
3. We are trying to coordinate a "Static Display" of a Chinook helicopter this summer so the community can see what this aircraft looks like and what may, hopefully never, will be called in to evacuate the upper park. More to come but this would be very exciting to have one of these aircraft land at one of the landing zones for the membership to see.
4. We are still working with the Colorado Division of Fire Safety to get our Fire Department ID Number. This FDID number is needed for grants and other efforts such as training for our FFs.
5. We have started training already on the Brush Truck with the first session held May 19. We have training scheduled monthly and will include the Tender as well.
6. We have initiated support of the Forestry Committee scrub oak reduction effort. One of our Wildland FFs has met with residents and we will soon be offering Firewise Assessments to any resident that would like us to come by and assess their home for defensible space and hazards that may exist.
7. We continue to work on CPVFD Standard Operating Policies, Guidelines and Procedures. These will evolve several times over the next few months.
8. We are working with MSFD to determine how they want us to reimburse them for the annual FCC fees that we need to pay for our Motorola radios. This is in the budget allocated by the HOA budget so we just need to understand how they want us to do this.

9. We are still waiting on the scheduled Wildland Fire S130/190 class for our remaining members to attend. We are hoping this class occurs in the next month. The fire season is well under way!!

10. We will be scheduling a *CPVFD Town Hall* during the summer; will be supporting the July 4th fireworks as members of the MSFD fire suppression team, an event many residents of CP enjoy; and our Fire Chief has been invited to attend the El Paso County Chief's Forum.

11. We need to provide the court order that established the Metro District to El Paso County Sheriff's office as soon as possible. We will coordinate getting this document in the next couple weeks from them and provide it to the County as requested.

12. And finally, we will continue to seek the help of any department that is willing to provide us support if they have surplus equipment such as Grapevine TX where we may be able to receive Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs), 200-300 feet of 1.5" of booster hose, and potentially other needed gear that they may be willing to part with. Their support is greatly appreciated!!

Volunteers Serving Neighbors!!



John Hennessey
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