

Wildland Fire Forum February 27, 2013

Clear Creek Sheriff's Department – Under-Sheriff Stu Nay www.clearcreeksheriff.us

In Clear Creek County you can register for CodeRed to receive reverse 911 notifications on your home or cell phone. You can do that on the website. This will notify you of evacuations, tactical calls, or special bulletins. Clear Creek also uses this for example to notify downstream water users if a truck has turned over on Loveland Pass and polluted the stream. The important thing to remember with a notification system like CodeRed is you will never get 100% notification, there are no guarantees. The system can be blocked by answering machines or similar. Clear Creek being small wants to use a numeric system for notification. Clear Creek has 3 levels of notification similar to Jefferson County.

Level 1 – Be ready to go. Evaluate for where you live. If you live in a one way in/out area and its making you nervous go ahead and take your GO pack and leave.

Level 2 – Leave soon.

Level 3 – Leave Immediately.

The levels are intended to give you a heads up but you need to be aware and take responsibility. With the narrow roads if everyone waits until Level 3 the roads get clogged, accidents begin to happen, so don't take that chance. Be prepared to go and leave as soon as you are ready.

Fire restrictions and bans have two stages. Those decisions are made after talking with the fire departments, the state and federal forest service, talking with other counties. We try to remain consistent. When we issue them it's because we need to. Last year someone threatened to recall the sheriff because the Fire Ban ruined his summer. Fire bans are always for the purpose of safety.

On evacuations we will do everything we can to get you out, let us know if you need assistance. Listen the first time. If you decide to make a stand and then realize it's a bad idea, know that we will do what we can but we will not endanger law enforcement or fire fighters to come get you out because you made a poor decision. We won't kill five to rescue one. It doesn't work that way.

When we are in Stage 2 fire restrictions that means no fires. If you can turn it off you can probably have that. EFR will do a presentation about that. When we issue a Fire ban or restriction we mean it. The county commissioners ratify that and it's on our website. Exceptions are made for things like CDOT replacing a guard rail to make a road safer for the motoring public for a limited time frame and with precautions. The twin tunnels project was halted by a blasting ban issued by the governor during extreme fire conditions. The School of Mines testing site blasting pit got shut down at the same time. Slash piles and chipper program information can be obtained from the Clear Creek Office of Emergency Management.

Jefferson County - Sheriff Ted Mink tmink@jeffco.state.us

Be as proactive as we can to keep everyone safe during fires. A year ago the Lower North Fork fire the Sheriff's office learned a lot from that situation and we have tried to improve. We'll share some information tonight to show you what we're doing in a proactive manner to keep you all safe and to have orderly, peaceful, and safe evacuations. To show you what we are doing on our end to predict these things the best we can. I will tell you that during the Lower North Fork fire in the middle of trying to manage this fire while it was going on the politicians started showing up at the command post including Governor Hickenlooper and he wanted us to brief him. The incident commander gave him and his staff a comprehensive briefing about the fire, the conditions, and what they were doing to fight the fire, and after the briefing his chief of staff came to me and requested a tour of the fire scene. The firefighters are still on scene, the fire is still going on, putting out hot spots, felling trees and everything else and I respectfully said no, that it's a hazard area and we will not be allowing anyone who is unauthorized to go up there. She goes back to the governor and pretty soon comes back to me and tells me the Governor respects your decision and there are 62 sheriffs in Colorado and he considers you the second best. She starts to walk away and I stopped her and said I'm curious if I'm the second best who does he consider to be the best. And she says the other 61. So I want you to rest assured that the Sheriff's office and the fire districts all along the Front Range are doing the best we can to make you

prepared and keep you as safe as possible. We just recently went to the CodeRed system and if you didn't get a test phone call then we need to know that information. Thank you for coming tonight, I hope this is a good session for you. I am one of your neighbors since 1979. Thank you Evergreen Fire for putting this together.

Evergreen Fire Rescue – Chief Mike Weege www.evergreenfirerescue.com

Some of you may be wondering why we are having this so early since it doesn't seem like wildfire season yet but 2 weeks ago we had our first fire over on Stagecoach. Elk Creek had a 2.5 acre fire that burned right up to someone's house 2 days before that. This little bit of snow this week is great to have but it's a drop in the bucket. We are praying for a really wet March. If we don't get the moisture and the green up everything is brown and burns very quickly. The state of the district is that things are looking very bad. Last year was one of the driest, hottest, and worst in the nation's history. This year is not looking any better and with 60 degree temperatures this weekend this snow tonight will disappear and be absorbed quickly.

As of February the reservoirs were only 55% of capacity and 63% of average snow pack. No moisture means the fuels on the ground, the trees, the bushes are really dry and anything can set them off. So a lot of the conversation tonight is about what you can do to help us and how you can help yourselves, not so much about what the fire department or sheriff's department can do but what you can do to help us and the community survive a summer like this

Some of the main causes of fires, most of them are human caused. Someone doing an illegal slash burn that is not attended correctly, the wind picks up and it gets out of control. Somebody dragging a chain down the highway and the sparks start the grass on fire along the highway. We get a lot of that. Weather starts a bunch of them. Lightning strikes are a major one. We chase lightning strikes all the time. We need you to call. If you see smoke or think you see smoke, it looks kind of like a cloud and might not be smoke, please call. The best way we can get at these things is get to them early and get people on them fast. Don't hesitate to pick up the phone that's what we are here for. Call it in.

Back in 2007 the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP available on our website) was put together for the Evergreen Fire Protection District. There were a lot of agencies involved with this and the community of Evergreen provided feedback. What this was put together for was for you to use and read to give you something to help you look at and better your neighborhood and see what you can do to protect it from wildfire. John Chapman is a facilitator who works with community groups and HOAs to expand and implement specific neighborhood/area plans. He has worked with the Floyd Hill Property Owners Association and is now working with a group on Upper Bear and has been contacted by Echo Hills. These implementation plans are done under the umbrella of the Evergreen plan to say with the recommendations and priorities and then how to expand on those to become that neighborhoods plan.

The CWPP points out the neighborhoods that need to have work done to improve their risk. Evergreen has 5 extreme hazard areas in our district, quite a few of high hazard areas and a few moderate areas. Ingress and egress are essential. Most of us live in neighborhoods where there is one road in and out and a lot of dirt roads that branch off of it and that's a problem during an evacuation when the roads get clogged. We will talk about evacuations further later on.

Some of the things the fire department has done to help the community as part of the CWPP was to upgrade the mapping systems and documented water sources that are kept in books in the trucks for the drivers. These are updated at regular intervals. The water source books indicate every cistern and pond that we can use because as you know the fire hydrant area is pretty small. Rarely do we get a fire that is close to a hydrant. Recruitment is something we do all the time. We have 90 firefighters at this time and that is pretty good. On the Hwy 103 fire a couple of years ago we had 50 firefighters on that. That played a huge roll in stopping that fire from advancing up over the ridge.

We work with our neighboring districts to have mutual aid agreements so that if we call Indian Hills or Clear Creek or any of the others to come and help us or for us to help them we can add additional man power and water transport to a fire. During the Lower North Fork Fire a lot of different agencies were deployed to that quickly. Unfortunately there was another fire happening at the same

time over in the Foothills district so some of us were already on that fire. It gets spread pretty thin but we can all reach out to our neighbors to get a lot of bodies and apparatus on scene pretty quickly. We have also started working on auto-aid agreements which are a little different than mutual aid. Mutual aid is when we call for assistance, and auto-aid is for a confirmed fire with dispatch automatically calling our partners to get them to come so that the incident commander doesn't have to do it. We are having monthly meetings with the area fire chiefs setting up something like that for wildfires where as soon as one is confirmed dispatch will automatically call all of our neighbors and get them coming. It's a lot easier to turn around and go home than to wait too long to ask for help and get them there. So we are going to start them early and often.

Evergreen Fire invested a lot over the last ten years into additional fire stations around the district and vehicles. All of our firefighters responding from home this helps them get to a station to grab a truck and get on scene quickly. We also bought a lot of fire trucks to put into those stations and that is helping our response times.

We started working on evacuation routes two years ago based on the CWPP and that list of subdivisions starting with the five worst. We started mapping out evacuation routes and those will be available on our website. (Under Safety & Education – Evacuation Routes) The first five and we will continue to develop them and add them. Also on that document are the evacuation notices (Level 1, 2, 3) and contact information for different agencies relative to wildfire and mitigation resources. We want to give you all the tools you need. The key to this is to know your evacuation route before something happens. We will show a primary route and a secondary route. We're going to show you if there are any gates to worry about. Please stay on the primary routes unless instructed by a jurisdictional authority to go another way. Don't try to find a back door way of getting out of your neighborhood because you think no one else will go that way. That is a surefire way of driving into a hazard area and no one will know you are there creating another rescue situation. Stay on the main roads. If we can't get you out the main roads somebody will direct you another way. Please don't venture off on your own.

Register for CodeRed so we contact you if we need to evacuate your area. The link to CodeRed and other partners is available on our website. This can be located on the 3rd screen of the homepage and under the tab "About".

Evacuation Levels as was stated Level 1 is a voluntary evacuation. This is for you if you have animals to evacuate or for those who need additional time to go such as with pets, children, the elderly or large groups of people. My advice to you is if you get a Level 1 notice get your things together and leave. Don't wait for the next phone call. The worst that could happen is you get a call telling you it's ok to go home. If you wait for the level 2 or 3 to start gathering your things you are waiting too long. A Level 2 is more of a mandatory evacuation. We are going to be coming to your door so you need to get your stuff and start getting out. At Level 3 you have waited too long. If you get a level 3 call after a 1 or 2 you are in imminent danger. You need to drop everything, get in the car and get out as soon as possible. Those kind of came about as a result of some incidents last year. Jefferson County put them together and I think it's a great idea that's going to help people prepare a little better than just a single call telling you there's a fire in your area and you should pack up.

Evergreen Fire Rescue –Doug Saba - Fire and Life Safety Educator

We provide fire safety education for Evergreen and Elk Creek. All of the information about Ready Set Go Program and fire mitigation is available on our website. The main emphasis here tonight is focusing on the Go part of the program. Pack a small bag and keep it ready to go with important papers or documents, prescriptions, or objects that need to be evacuated with you. Wildland fire season starts January 1st and ends December 31st. Set up an individual action plan that states what you are going to do during an evacuation. I've talked to a lot of homeowners associations over the last couple of months about evacuating and where you can evacuate to. The sheriff will tell you where that evacuation area is to go to when it happens. It's really important to share your individual action plan with family members. I had the honor of working down at the fire in Colorado Springs and the information that we got at the joint information center were a lot of calls from family members in other states that had no idea where

their loved ones were. People that moved in to Colorado Springs next to I-25 never thought they would have to be evacuated for a fire but they did 36,000 people in 4 hours of notifications. It can happen any time anywhere. We live here because we love the trees next to our home but that doesn't mean we can't clean up our property a little bit. Clean up some of those pine needles close to the house. The trees right up next to the house or with the deck built around it, the defensible space comes right after that. Make that tree part of the house defensible space. Thirty feet out look at the ground fuels, the ladder fuels, all of that information is available on our website.

On the stage are a lot of different kinds of chimeneas and the sheriffs have talked about burn bans and restrictions. These chimeneas have spark arresters on them and you can utilize these for burning wood not trash. If we get a call on a smoke check and it's an approved day to burn then we are ok with you burning logs and wood in there but trash we will have you put it out. Trash burns are illegal unless approved and we are not going to approve trash burns. Slash piles while snow is on the ground is a great time to burn and they are permitted through the fire district. The other types here can be run by propane or attached to natural gas. These have shutoffs on them and can be used during burn bans. Different levels of restrictions and bans, Stage 1 and 2 burning. Last year our district was under a more strict restriction of no open flames while the other side of C470 was allowed to have charcoal fires. Up here we are very concerned about open flames.

Some fire facts about active fires in Colorado there were 14 as of August 15th and today there are still 2 burning. Fern Gulch and down near Waldo with snow on top but embers burning underneath. We burned over 540,000 acres in Colorado in 2012. The Clear Creek and Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management have all of this information from tonight.

The last thing is mark your path. If you do have to go out by a route that is not primary or secondary then mark the path you took so we know where to search for you. For example if you are stuck at your house and need assistance call 911 and tell us so that we can make you a priority rescue.

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office – Mark Gutke

Fire bans are based on a set of criteria. Every year we enter into an operating plan with federal and state officials, the state forest service, and the fire districts. Part of that has to do with the criteria that have to come about before we enter restrictions or bans. These have to do with 1000 hour fuels, the energy release components, the fire danger ratings, the impact on suppression resources, the areas that receive a high incidence of human caused fires, adverse fire weather, and a local fire preparedness level of 3 or above. Anytime you get three of those components we will go into Stage 1 fire restrictions. If we go into 4 or more of those components then we go into an elevated Stage 2 fire ban. With the geography of Jefferson County what you have seen in the last few years are restrictions that split the county in half. With everything that happened last year we were in a ban county wide. There are different things that are allowed during these times such as propane grills that can be used because they can be shutoff is usually ok to use. Charcoal, open burn, that kind of stuff we don't allow. I am in the final stages of putting together our fire restrictions and ban form that the sheriff signs and they will be on our web page as well as a picture document that shows the chimeneas, tiki torches and things that are not allowed during a ban. Last year a group wanted to let off sky lanterns with fuel in them on Table Mountain during the fire ban. A real short meeting and they went out and bought the LED flashlight lanterns that generate enough heat and they flew about 20 feet. That is now in this picture document as well and we are waiting for the fire marshals to provide direction with what is appropriate or not appropriate during a fire ban. We are trying to get a little more specific about the fire bans. Usually it goes out by the media the day the sheriff signs it and in effect an hour later. The document will be on the web page so people can look at it and understand what's going to happen when we go into this, what it allows or doesn't and give people more of a heads up. So that will be coming in the next couple weeks. Just keep checking out the website for it to be posted.

Jefferson County Fire Management Officer – Travis Griffin

To touch on a couple of topics and we can discuss them further in the lobby after we finish here. I would like to discuss funding sources which are assistance plans and grant funds available to do mitigation work. The end of this year 2013 is the last year for the mitigation tax incentive and that is upwards to \$2,500 that you used toward fire mitigation that you can deduct from your taxes. There is legislation that may increase through 2025 at the recommendations from North Fork. Information can be found at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pages/funding.html> and on the Jefferson County website along with a wealth of information about mitigation, defensible spaces, fire construction design and materials. If you have questions talk to myself or to Scott Halladay.

Smart 911 - Diane Culverhouse - Jeffco Sheriff's Office Dispatch Manager

We've been talking about Smart911 and what is commonly referred to as reverse 911. I want to talk to you about the differences between them. Smart 911 is a website that you as a citizen can input information about you, your family, home or pets and that information is delivered to the dispatcher when you dial 911. Reverse 911 is information that the Sheriff's office is trying to send to you. You have to sign up for both separately. Smart911.com for one and CodeRed which is the reverse 911 system you can sign up at the Sheriff's website. With CodeRed I encourage everyone to enter as many phone numbers as you have, text messages, email addresses, put as much information in there as possible so that we have every possible way of getting in touch with you. CodeRed also has an app and if you are in a geographical area and your phone has a gps on it CodeRed will send you that alert notification. You can hear notifications throughout the United States.

A couple of things to know about the CodeRed system is that the caller ID is going to be an 866-419-5000 number so when you see that if your phone number is not blocked you can always call the number back and it will replay the last message. Always say hello. CodeRed is waiting to see if it's an answering machine or a person. CodeRed always records so there is a record of if you received the message or not and if not why.

Emails and text messages are sent differently than phone calls. Phone calls have to go through a phone line and Century Link or Comcast only provide so many phone lines for each area and community based on the population of that area. So we can only send out so many calls. If we are trying to send out 1000 calls and only 200 phone lines are available for use it will take longer to get those out. Emails and text messages go right away. Just a reminder register as many phone numbers and ways for us to contact you as possible. When you are registering CodeRed will provide a map. One of the things it does is it puts your address point on the street instead of where it might be on your land. That is important for us dispatchers because when we are using that to contact you to draw an area we are going to go by the street. So when you see that map in CodeRed you will see that your house is mapped where it would be if it were on the street. Last is register, register, register. Register for Smart911, register for CodeRed, and when in doubt get out.

Evergreen Volunteer Fire Department – Deputy Chief of Operations Chris Johnson

Tonight I want to talk to you about what happens after the fire strikes, how the fire department is oriented, give you a picture of what we do for structural triage and talk a little bit about the fire department. For starters our fire department is 100% oriented to have zero dollars of wildland fire loss. We are orienting our trucks, our people, our resources, our training, our notification, everything we can to zero dollars of loss. The problem though is that someday it's not going to be up to us. There's going to be situations and weather that is out of our control and we're going to do everything we can to save lives and property but sadly where we live and the weather conditions we face sometimes there will just be nothing we can do about it.

To give you a bit of a picture last year in June we had High Park burning, Waldo burning, multiple fires in Boulder, and fires to the west of us. EVFD responded to and contained 6 working wildland fires inside of our district. What made us successful with those fires was keeping them small, our people were in the right spot, it happened at the right time of the day, there wasn't enough wind to get it going and most importantly we had great notification. We got a lot of phone calls last summer

from concerned citizens. The faster we get notification the faster we can get people on the road so keep up those phone calls. We love running those calls. Early notification is critical but the most important thing for EVFD is aggressive fast attack. That's all we're built for. So what are our firefighters going to do in the event of a wild fire? This is a big question and I wish I could answer it in 5 minutes. If I boil it down to one sentence it's that we are going to think and act decisively to contain those wildfire threats as quickly as we possibly can. That's all we are going to try to do. There are so many factors that go into addressing a wildfire. The time of day, the location, how are we going to respond, the people we have on the road, how close is it to water source, what's the weather going to be like later in the afternoon. Ultimately it's about thinking and acting decisively. But more importantly it's doing that by first considering life safety and I think that's important for everybody to understand. We're going to do everything we can to protect your property but we aren't going to put any firefighters at risk or your lives at risk to do that. So we are always thinking of life safety first. Sometimes that can be hard to understand when we are in the face of a large wild fire and there is property at risk but we are going to make decisions that will protect your property after first considering the safety of you and our firefighters.

So what can you do? Call us early and call often. We want to run those calls. We live here, we have a bunch of skin in the game and we need to know when those fires are starting so we can get on them quickly and aggressively.

What else can you do? Don't block the roads. When there is an evacuation taking place it's going to be scary and stressful. There will be a lot of traffic and you want to be moving quickly but remember we are going in the way that you are coming out. So keep those roads clear for us as much as you can. Mitigate your property. It seems obvious but when you've done proper mitigation it makes our jobs so much easier. Finally most fires are human caused. So do what you can to not be the source of the fire that burns the rest of the District down. That goes for each of us personally and that means complying with the burn bans, paying attention to what's happening with the weather and using common sense. Please it seems like every fire I go on its fire place ashes. Please treat those appropriately.

Structure triage briefly, when there is a big fire we just can't save every house. So we have to decide which house to make a stand at, which we can protect and it's a pretty simple but complex process. Everything home falls into three buckets. One: is this a property that can stand by itself, it's not threatened, either it's A not in the threatened area or its B in the middle of a giant parking lot with sprinklers running. Two: those that are being threatened and have the potential of being saved. IN my mind that's where we are going to work. We're going to throw down and do some heavy lifting and work really hard to save some homes. The final bucket is a group of structures that just can't be saved or it's too dangerous to try save. You might have a well mitigated home but if its five miles through dense forest to get to it, it might be too dangerous for us to make a stand there so location has a lot to do with it. Factors we look at when we look at structure triage are location, numbers on the house, type of construction, where it's at in terms of water and roads. We look at all of this when deciding how and when we are going to make a stand at a home but basically it all boils down to is can my crew safely protect this house from the incoming fire front. And if we can do that we are going to make a stand and we're going to work. If we can't do that we're going to have to move on.

Finally, I want to give you an idea of the investment that the fire district has put into wildland fire protection. This photo is of the wildland fleet. There are 3 structure protection engines and the others are initial response brush trucks. There are two that have been replaces with ones that give us better off road capability. You'll notice all the water trucks here. Since there aren't hydrants in most of the district we have to bring our water everywhere we go. This represents the local wildfire resources that the firefighters have the capability to use but to me the most important resource is the 90 brave men and women that are going to be driving up that road that you are bailing out of, doing their best and everything we possibly can to save the lives and property of everybody here in Evergreen.