



CERT Emergency Preparedness News

August 1999

Newsletter for Clark County CERT

Vol. 2, Number

Wildfire!



Many believe that the damp Pacific Northwest, particularly west of the Cascades, should be the least likely geographic location prone to wildfires. But in the peak wildfire months, July through September, even our rather wet climate leaves us vulnerable to the threat of fire.

Although there are steps individuals and government agencies can take to mitigate the wildfire hazard, the single most likely cause of wildfire is completely outside of our control; 80% of all wildland fires are caused by lightning.

Wildfires spread quickly and often begin unnoticed, giving them time to cause massive destruction to many homes and acres of valuable timber. Home builders may not be aware of the very real danger of building in or near forests and wildland areas where the potential for wildfire devastation is increasing.

The vast majority of Clark County, being comprised of forested areas, heavy brush, or grassland, is susceptible to wildfire. Be alert to the possibility of a wildfire in your area if there is a strong smell or visible presence of smoke in the air. If you see even a small fire unattended or out of control, or an illegal burn in progress, report it immediately. Fires get a dangerous head start if reporting is delayed.

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Smoke Inhalation

Fire is a complicating hazard associated with many disasters. The accompanying risk of smoke inhalation presents a very real threat to CERT members and disaster victims alike. Smoke inhalation risks are three-fold:

1. Irritation of the respiratory passages by smoke particles, particularly in patients or rescuers with pre-existing respiratory illnesses, may cause difficulty in breathing or airway obstruction from bronchial spasms.
2. Poisonous by-products of combustion, including carbon monoxide and toxins released by burning plastics and other synthetic materials, can cause respiratory or cardiac arrest. At the very least, they are a chemical irritant to the eyes and skin.
3. Inhalation of super-hot gases, such as those found with fires in confined spaces, can cause airway burns. The damaged tissues swell, resulting in airway constriction or even complete blockage. Deep inhalation of hot gases may destroy lung tissue and result in death.

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Smoke irritation to the eyes or skin may be treated by flooding the area with water. But if the victim is showing signs of respiratory distress (remember, this is one of the "killers" in basic CERT training!) the airway could be damaged or obstructed by swelling. Smoke inhalation-related injuries may not manifest for up to 24 hours, yet still can be life-threatening.

Assume that **any** confined-space fire has caused damage to the airway. If the signs of respiratory distress are already obvious, or there is soot around the nostrils, assume that smoke inhalation has occurred. This patient has great potential to go rapidly downhill and should be checked carefully for the first 24 hours after the incident. When oxygen is available, assist professional rescuers in getting it to the patient.

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DID YOU KNOW... ???

- The head of a raging fire can travel at speeds of 60 mph.
- Fire generates its own weather. The resulting winds can top 120 mph. Such wind-driven flames leap from treetop to treetop; this is called crowning and is one of the most dangerous stages of fire.
- Flames can leap to 300 feet in height and smoke columns can reach 40,000 feet.

**FROM THE
EDITOR:**

Your suggestions,
articles, and
photos for the
newsletter are
welcomed.

Please send them
before 9/30/99 to:

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clark.wa.us

**QUESTIONS?
Call someone!**

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John Wheeler
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Battle Ground/
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342-5160
Mel Hall (FD#3)
892-2331

Camas/Washougal/
East County:
Gary Horst
834-2262
Krista Stevenson
834-5307

Hazel Dell/Felida/
Salmon Creek/
Fire District #6
Chris Orman
576-1195

North Country
EMS/Yacolt Fire
Dept.
Jim Langborg
686-3271

Vancouver Fire
Department
Rick Sanders
696-8166

NOW RECRUITING!

September 7 - October 26 Tues. 7:00 - 9:30 pm. Final Drill 9 am, October 23. Vancouver Fire Dept./Clark Regional Communications Agency. Call Deborah Needham, 737-1911, Ext. 3962.

September 8 - October 27 Wed. 7:00 - 9:30 pm. Final Drill 9 am, October 30. FD#6. Call Chris Orman 576-1195

September 13- October 18 Mon. 7:00 - 9:30 pm. Final Drill 9 am, October 23. FD#11/#3. Call Dean Lange, 342-5160.

September 23- November 4 Thurs. 6:30 - 9:00 pm Final Drill November 6, TBA. Camas FD/Parks & Recreation. Call Krista Stevenson, 834-5307

TBA North Country EMS/Yacolt Fire Department.

NOTE: All courses require attendance at all sessions. If you miss a class in your scheduled course, you need to make up the training.

Clark County CERT

IMPORTANT: CERTs must attend a total of three 2-hour trainings each year, one of which must be a hands-on drill. Please contact your local CERT coordinator to make sure your training meets requirements. Current certifications have presently been extended automatically for another year while we update our database. New Emergency Worker Cards will be issued automatically for this year.

Refresher Training

8/28 Disaster Drill, 9 am, Location TBA
10/28 ATC 20/Search and Rescue, 7 pm, 505 SW 1st Street, Battle Ground (Station 11-3)
12/18 Disaster Drill TBA

Call Dean Lange, 342-5160 to pre-register for these trainings. **NOTE: As with all trainings, class dates and times are subject to change on occasion. Confirm in advance if you plan to attend.**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

Thu., Nov. 4: FEMA Region 10 Y2K Exercise. Stay tuned to see how CERT may play along!
AND Sat., Apr. 29, 2000: The NW ERT Rodeo is back! More details to come!

Dear Preparedness Pete:

Dear Pete: There's so much conflicting information out there about Y2K preparedness. What should I realistically be prepared for as a CERT member? ~Y2K Confused

Dear Confused:

The next issue of the newsletter (November) will focus on Y2K. But here's the short answer.

Although no one can say for sure, it is *possible* we may see some effects from Y2K. Since basic supplies and necessities like electricity have the potential to be affected, the current recommendation is to prepare for Y2K just as you would for *any* disaster.

You should have at LEAST:

- ⇒ 3 day supply of water (one gallon/person/day)
- ⇒ 3 day supply of food
- ⇒ advance stockpile of critical medications
- ⇒ enough cash for a long holiday weekend
- ⇒ alternate power/heat sources for 3 days
- ⇒ basic first-aid and other CERT equipment
- ⇒ and keep your gas tank as full as possible



Remember, the 3 day minimums of recommended basic supplies are just that....a MINIMUM. If you can store more, that would be even better. Although we don't anticipate major disruptions from Y2K, it never hurts to be prepared! However, don't fall for the Y2K alarmist messages that recommend months' or even a couple of years' worth of food and supplies. The really important thing to know about Y2K is that it is important NOT to wait until the last minute to stock up on needed supplies. If there ARE problems from Y2K they are most likely to be in the form of runs on banks and stores in the last few weeks of the year. So plan ahead! ▼



Cathodic protection measurement performed at right-of-way crossing

Pipeline Safety

The recent pipeline explosion in Bellingham thrust pipeline safety to the forefront of the public consciousness. Pipe location, safety guidelines, and monitoring/emergency procedures in Clark County make this type of situation extremely unlikely here. In fact, other than a hurricane, this is probably the least likely disaster emergency to affect us.

Still, you may have questions related to safety, or be approached by other citizens who want to know what to do if there should ever be a pipeline emergency. In the Emergency Preparedness Office we have contingency plans even for these sorts of unlikely events. So your CERT team should also have a response plan taking into account the existence of the two pipelines in Clark County. The Olympic pipeline transports petroleum, and the Williams pipeline transports natural gas. A map of their locations is enclosed for your reference.

Emergency Preparedness

Some new changes in the Emergency Preparedness Department: Deborah Needham has been added full time to the Department, and will be continuing her role in CERT. Deborah has been participating in regional CERT leadership discussions, both in the broader Washington/Oregon meetings, as well as meeting regularly with the CERT Coordinators here in Clark County.

John Wheeler is the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for Clark County. He coordinates work on the disaster plans for the county and the cities. He tracks Search and Rescue activities, oversees the ARES/RACES (ham radio) programs as they relate to emergency preparedness, and is the hazardous materials contact within the the Department of Emergenc Services.

Volunteer staff members have been contributing to some very important projects. Emergency Management Intern Donnarae Querry is putting together the Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan. Keith Seaton is continuing his work within the department and has produced the Y2K Readiness Report for the county.

Thank you, Donnarae and Keith, for all your hard work. We appreciate your service to our community! ▼

Here are the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and the FACTS:

- ◇ **WHAT CAN CAUSE A PIPELINE LEAK?** Shifting earth (such as a landslide), vandalism, or irresponsible digging or excavation can breach a pipe.
- ◇ **HOW CAN I TELL IF THERE IS A LEAK?** With liquid petroleum you would smell the fuel and should vacate immediately. The fumes themselves are toxic. You might also be able to see pooling of the liquid. Natural gas has no smell until it receives its odorant, but the fumes are not toxic. The fumes are only dangerous if they displace air in an enclosed space. A leak might result in a hissing or blowing noise with debris, soil, or water being thrown into the air or bubbles coming from underneath a body of water. Fire emanating from the ground or above ground might be a clue to a leak. Plant life would turn brown around any type of sustained leak. Both types of leaks would pose an explosion risk if exposed to an ignition source.

WHAT SHOULD I DO OR NOT DO? Don't try to "sniff out" the source of the problem. Don't try to stop the leak or extinguish any fires. Have a plan ahead of time, including knowing where the pipeline is, and evacuate to at least 1500 feet (1/3 mile) from it. Report a suspected leak immediately to 9-1-1. Don't return to the area until you have been given the all-clear by public safety officials. ▼

CERT Steering Committee

In June, after considering levels of participation, the Clark County CERT Steering Committee voted to dissolve the existing structure. The Steering Committee is currently operating in the form of a work group, having met on July 20 and meeting again on August 17 to design a better representation format.

If you are interested in serving on the CERT Steering Committee, please plan to attend the September 21 meeting. Each CERT jurisdiction within Clark County will appoint one voting representative to the committee, and there will be an additional six open voting positions. The September committee meeting will consider applications for voting membership at that time.

Even if you are not able to commit to attend Steering Committee meetings on a regular basis, your input is valued. You can still be a participating member without the time commitment required of the voting members.

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at CRCA, at 710 W. 13th Street, from 7:00-8:30 pm. The Committee meets next on **September 21, 1999**. ▼



Volunteers are needed for various CERT and Emergency Preparedness projects. Contact Deborah Needham or John Wheeler to apply.

Wildfire! (continued from page 1)

HOW CERTs MAY HELP:

1. First, protect yourself and your home from wildfire hazards. Keep brush cleared far away from structures, and remove "fire ladders" from the base of trees. These brush accumulations carry fire rapidly into the crowns of trees.
2. Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, handsaw, axe, bucket and shovel. Garden hoses can be used to thoroughly soak threatened structures **before** evacuation is ordered.
3. Report fire hazards or possible fires to your local fire department.
4. Plan escape routes from your community. Park vehicles in the direction of escape if wildfire threatens; disconnect electric garage door openers; keep keys in the ignition.
5. Assist public safety officials in notifying other citizens of evacuation orders. Help evacuate those who cannot leave the area on their own.
6. Be alert for and prepared to treat fire-related injuries such as asthma or other respiratory problems triggered by smoke inhalation.



Smoke Inhalation (continued from page 1)

SIGNS OF RESPIRATORY DISTRESS

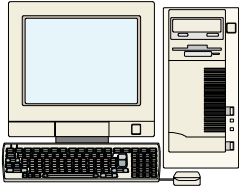
- Respiratory rate of 30 or more per minute
- Nostrils flare during breathing efforts
- Ribs retracting or neck muscles straining during breathing
- Wheezing, gurgling, or other noises with respirations
- Little or no air movement during breathing attempts

And DON'T forget the basics... Ensure scene safety! Don't enter a confined space where there is heavy smoke. Wear your safety equipment, and remember that your dust mask will not protect YOU from smoke inhalation hazards. Rescuers can easily be overcome by smoke. If it is safe to do so, move the patient to a safe area, away from the smoky environment. Remember, you can use your voice to direct them. "If you can hear me, come to the sound of my voice!"

Perform a primary assessment, noting the rate and quality of respirations. Watch for other life threatening injuries. Treat for shock, but remember that most conscious patients are able to breathe more easily when kept in semi-seated position. Monitor continuously....remember that a patient's status may change at any time! ▼

Link up for more information!

Wildfire safety information
<http://www.firewise.org>
 Federal Emergency Management Association
<http://www.fema.gov>
 Washington State Emergency Management
<http://www.wsem.gov>
 Clark Regional Communications Agency
<http://www.co.clark.wa.us/emergency/index.htm>



Special thanks to high school senior Sheryl Kludt for the research and drafts on the articles "Wildfire!" and "Smoke Inhalation".

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