

# FIRE WATCH



## NOT EVERY HERO WEARS A CAPE. PLAN AND PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE!™

### FIRE PREVENTION WEEK 2019

We are teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA) again this year for Fire Prevention Week, October 6 – 12. NFPA has been the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 90 years. The theme of this year's campaign is "Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape!" This campaign is meant to educate everyone about the small important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe.

NFPA statistics show that in 2017, U.S. fire departments responded to 357,000 home structure fires. These fires caused 2,630 fire deaths and 10,600 fire injuries. These numbers show that home fires continue to pose a threat. In a typical home fire you may have as little as one to two minutes to escape safely from the time the smoke alarm sounds. Having a home escape plan and practicing that plan can help make the most of the time you have if a fire occurs in your home.

Here are a few steps you can take to make sure your family has the best possible chance to safely escape:

#### SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms are an integral part of fire escape plans. They provide an early warning of a fire, giving people additional escape time.

- » Make sure you have working smoke alarms. At a minimum install an alarm inside every room where people sleep, outside each separate sleeping area, and on each level of your home.
- » Place smoke alarms high on a wall or on the ceiling. To reduce false alarms, keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen. Keep smoke



- alarms at least 10 feet away from the stove.
- » Change the batteries in your smoke alarms twice a year, in the fall and in the spring coinciding with the start and end of Daylight Savings Time. Be sure to test all smoke alarms at least once a month. Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

#### HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

- » Make an escape plan. Draw a map of your home showing all doors and windows. Discuss the plan with everyone in your home.
- » Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows leading outside open easily.
- » Have an outside meeting place, such as a tree or light pole, a safe distance from the home where everyone will meet.
- » Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street.

- » Practice your home fire drill at night and during the day.
- » Practice using different ways out.
- » Teach children how to escape on their own in case you can't help them.
- » Close doors behind you as you leave.

#### IF THE ALARM SOUNDS

- » If the smoke alarm sounds, **GET OUT AND STAY OUT**. Never go back inside for people or pets.
- » If you have to escape through smoke, **GET LOW AND GO** under the smoke to your way out.
- » **CALL 9-1-1** from outside your home.

For more information on smoke alarms and home escape planning visit our website at [www.vrfa.org](http://www.vrfa.org).



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**ALGONA • AUBURN • PACIFIC**

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# THREE RETIRE

Over the past several months, the Valley Regional Fire Authority has experienced a transition of new leadership, knowledge and history due to retirements. Deputy Chief Kevin Olson, Assistant Fire Marshal Larry Upton, and Battalion Chief Parry Boogard announced their retirements in 2019. Collectively, they served 103 years of dedicated service to the community.

## DEPUTY CHIEF KEVIN OLSON



Deputy Chief Kevin Olson was hired as a probationary firefighter with the legacy Auburn Fire Department in April 1991. In May of 1999, Olson was promoted to Captain and worked in both operations and training

where he completed several strategic objectives to improve training, records management and reporting processes.

In September of 2006, he was promoted to Battalion Chief (BC). He spent the first two years as a BC leading the Training and Safety Division. In 2008 he returned to shift where he managed six fire stations and 25 personnel. He made his way back to training in 2015 and was appointed the first VRFA Training Chief at the South King County Fire Training Consortium. At the consortium he managed suppression training and compliance for 800 firefighters and officers.

Olson's final promotion came in early 2017 when he was promoted to Deputy Chief of the Technical Services Division. In Technical Services he managed Fire Prevention, Planning and Logistics, Training, EMS, Emergency Management and Public Information. Olson completed his career with the VRFA as the Deputy Chief of Operations when he retired at the end of June 2019.

"I've never known anyone who displayed more integrity, insight and enthusiasm for the fire service and our community. Kevin embodies everything great about the VRFA. I'll profoundly miss his leadership and advice," said Fire Chief Brent Swearingen.

The people are what Chief Olson says he will miss the most about the VRFA. "I have had some amazing opportunities to work with some of the best people in the region and have learned so much from them. I have a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for the work they do which makes this difficult to walk away from," says Olson.

## ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL LARRY UPTON



"I couldn't have imagined a better career for myself," reflected Assistant Fire Marshal Larry Upton with 31 years at the Auburn Fire Department and VRFA, plus six prior years with Bonney Lake Fire Department

and King County Fire District 10. Upton retired June 30, 2019 after serving in the positions of Firefighter, Public Information and Education Specialist, Fire Investigation Specialist, Deputy Fire Marshal and finally Assistant Fire Marshal.

Upton began his working career in 1979 at the Boeing complex in Auburn. While working for Boeing, Upton volunteered for the Bonney Lake Fire Department and was hired as their first paid firefighter in 1983. Two years later he transferred to King County Fire District 10. In May of 1988 Larry was hired by the Auburn Fire Department, which became the Valley Regional Fire Authority in 2007.

After 25 years as a firefighter, Upton decided to focus full time on fire prevention and joined the Fire Marshal's Office as a Deputy Fire Marshal in 2008. He advanced to Assistant Fire Marshal in 2017. He also served as the President for the King County Fire Prevention Officers group from 2015-2017.

Fire Marshal Karen Stewart said, "For all of the years I have known and worked with Larry, he has taken excellent care of the citizens and his fellow firefighters. We all thank him for his service. He will be missed."



## BATTALION CHIEF PARRY BOOGARD



Battalion Chief Parry Boogard began his fire service career in 1974 serving as a Volunteer Firefighter/ EMT with King County Fire Protection District #30 (Star Lake Station). Two years later, Boogard joined the United States

Air Force and served four years as a firefighter. His tenure with the legacy Auburn Fire Department started in 1981. Throughout his career, Boogard served on many different technical committees and technical rescue positions.

In 1993, Boogard was promoted to the rank of Captain. A position he fulfilled until a promotion to Battalion Chief in 2004. Throughout his career, BC Boogard served as a team member of the Washington State Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team. He had numerous deployments to provide assistance to local and national jurisdictions during disasters. Notable deployments included Hurricane Katrina and the Oso landslide. In 2014, he was appointed as a Washington State Task Force Leader for USAR.

Parry's fire service career ended with the VRFA on October 1, 2019. Parry's emergency service career will continue with his recent appointment as an Emergency Management Specialist with the Department of Homeland Security. He will be working as a Response Directorate in the Urban Search and Rescue Branch at FEMA Headquarters in Washington DC.

Battalion Chief Rick Olson said, "Parry has played an active part in the development of my career. I will miss the valuable tactical input on just about every type of call imaginable; he was such an important resource to call upon when you needed any advice at all." Battalion Chief Gary Barker added, "His position will be replaced, but his boots can never be filled."

The Valley Regional Fire Authority would like to express their gratitude and sincerest thanks to these gentlemen for their dedicated service to the communities of Algona, Auburn and Pacific. We wish them the best as they move on and have long fun-filled days with family and loved ones.

# COLD WEATHER SAFETY

We may not get the frigid temperatures and snowfall like other areas of the country, but we still need to be prepared when bad weather strikes and causes freezing temperatures and poor road conditions.

**Cold weather driving can be hazardous.** One simple way to keep yourself and everyone on the road safe is to slow down. Remember, "Ice and snow, take it slow."

**Update Your Fall / Winter Car Survival Kit,** make sure your kit has the following items:

- » **Jumper cables:** flares or reflective triangle are great extras
- » **Flashlights:** Replace the batteries before the winter season starts and pack extra batteries

Article continues on page 4 >>

**Getting Traction**  
Tips for Traveling in Winter Weather

- Check the NWS forecast
- Check road conditions
- Stay mobile
- Winterize your vehicle
- Pack an emergency supply kit

weather.gov/winter

## FIRE CHIEF'S MESSAGE



**BRENT D. SWEARINGEN**

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Fire Watch! The theme of this quarter's newsletter is Fire Prevention Week. Fire Prevention Week is recognized in October in memory of the Great Chicago Fire, which burned from October 8-10, 1871. That fire, often maliciously attributed to Mrs. O'Leary's clumsy cow, burned a good portion of central Chicago and buildings on the north side of the Chicago River. The fire is estimated to have killed over 300 people and left more than 100,000 homeless. The rapid spread of the fire and the inability of the fire department to stop its forward progress was blamed on a combination of shoddy building practices and a warm southerly wind. One result of that fire was a new interest in establishing and enforcing more rigid building codes that called for the use of building separations, better water supplies, and the use of non-combustible materials in commercial buildings. As a result of these and later improvements in fire resistive construction, improved fire response systems, and built-in suppression systems, urban conflagrations are now rare. Fire prevention works.

What is not as widely known is that on the same night that the Great Chicago Fire started, a wildfire in Wisconsin (yes, Wisconsin) began burning. The Peshtigo Fire killed 1,152 people and burned over 1.2 million acres. This is still the deadliest wildfire in U.S. history. The fire prevention efforts in this case were not as comprehensive or far reaching, as evidenced by the continuing devastation across the nation due to wildfires. Just last year, the Camp Fire completely destroyed the town of Paradise CA, and killed 86 people. Even though this summer in King County has been unusually wet and cool, the VRFA has still responded to 98

leaders and an independent facilitator to examine our service delivery. This is to be a set of structured questionnaires that examine how familiar the residents of our service communities are with the services we provide. The group will also assess our adopted response standards for mission suitability. We will keep you posted on the outcomes of these meetings.

Lastly, I would like to thank our communities for the daily support you show to the fire department and the women and men who serve here. It is a rare occurrence that I go out in the public in uniform, to get a coffee or pick up some

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wildland/brush fires as of this writing. While we continue to enhance our response capabilities to wildfires, we have just begun to address fire prevention methods that can make living in the wildland/urban interface (WUI) safer and more pleasurable. Expect to see more on this subject in the coming year.

The VRFA accreditation process continues. A large panel of citizen representatives solicited from the realms of business, public services, education, social services, and interested unaffiliated citizens are to meet with VRFA

lunch, that I am not stopped by a stranger who wants me to pass on thanks to our firefighters. Every one of these citizens has a story of how they or a loved one was saved or helped in some special way by our crews. Not only are these citizens grateful for the help they received, but amazed at the professional and kind way that service was delivered. I thank each of them for their kind words, and I thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve and for supporting us so well.

Enjoy pumpkin spice season!

## THE VRFA WELCOMES FIVE NEW MEMBERS TO THE TEAM



The Valley Regional Fire Authority is pleased to announce the addition of five new employees. Earlier this year we filled four firefighter vacancies and added an Information Technology Specialist.

The four new firefighters were hired on February 1, 2019. They spent 15 weeks in the Fire Academy learning the basics of fire suppression, hazardous materials mitigation, and technical rescue. In addition, they completed an intensive five week Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program. Both the Fire Academy and EMT program were held at the South King County Fire Training Consortium. All four started on shift on July 1st.

**PATRICK CHANTHARANGSY** was born in Atlanta and was raised in Columbus, Ohio. Patrick graduated from Ohio University with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. After college Patrick served in the United States Army where he was an Army Ranger, serving in Afghanistan in 2017.

**COREY LAUFASA** was born in American Samoa but spent the majority of his life living in the Seattle area. Corey played football at Washington State University where he received a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology. Before accepting a position with the VRFA, Corey worked in the public utility field and as a personal trainer.

**RACHAEL LABENDER** was born and raised in Bonney Lake. Rachel attended Arizona State University and received a Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Wellness and Nutrition. Prior to becoming a member of the VRFA Rachel worked as a personal trainer and competed in fitness competitions.

**SHAWN BOWEN** lives in Graham. Shawn received his Bachelor's Degree from Pacific Lutheran University in Exercise Science. He volunteered at Mountain View Fire & Rescue and worked full time as an EMT for a private ambulance company prior to accepting a position with the VRFA.



**THOMAS DOWNS** is our newest Information Technology Systems Specialist. Thomas received his degree in Psychology from the University of Hawaii and has been working in the information technology field for the past 10 years.



## COLD WEATHER SAFETY CONTINUED

- » **First Aid Kit:** Also check your purse or bag for essential medications
- » **Baby, special needs gear:** If you have a baby or family member with special needs, pack diapers and any special formula or food
- » **Food:** Stock non-perishable food such as canned food and a can opener, dry cereal and protein rich foods like nuts and energy bars
- » **Water:** Have at least one gallon of water per person a day for at least three days
- » **Basic toolkit:** Pliers, wrench, screwdriver
- » **Pet supplies:** Food and water
- » **Radio:** Battery or hand cranked
- » **Cat litter or sand:** For better tire traction
- » **Shovel:** To dig out of snow
- » **Ice scraper:** Even if you usually park in a garage, have one in the car
- » **Clothes:** Make sure you dress for the weather in warm clothes, gloves, hat, sturdy boots, jacket and an extra change of clothes for the cold
- » **Warmers:** Pack extra for body, hands, feet

- » **Blankets or sleeping bags:** If you get stranded in traffic on a lonely road, you'll be glad to have it
- » **Charged Cell Phone:** Keep a spare charger in your car as well

If you must venture outdoors during extreme cold, dress in layers. Cover exposed skin to reduce the risk of frostbite or hypothermia. Try to seek shelter from the wind as much as possible while outside. Once inside, change into dry clothing immediately if you are wet, and understand / watch for frostbite and hypothermia.

**Don't forget about your pets in the cold weather!** Make sure they have a warm, dry place to rest with plenty of food and water.

Learn more about cold weather preparedness at: [www.weather.gov/winter](http://www.weather.gov/winter)

Do you know the difference between a Storm Watch, Storm Warning and a Weather Advisory?

When a **warning** is issued: **TAKE ACTION!**

When a **watch** is issued: **Get Prepared!**

When an **advisory** is issued: **Take Precautions!**

## THE VRFA GIVES BACK

### FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

In early June, members from the Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) participated in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. This year the event was held at French Field in Kent. VRFA firefighters raised over \$6,000 to help with treatment and research in the fight against cancer.



### SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

In August, off-duty VRFA firefighters staffed a hot dog booth at the City of Auburn's annual AuburnFest. This year they raised \$600 which went into the Valley Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 1352's benevolent fund. The benevolent fund is used to support the community through local organizations such as Nexus Youth and Family Services, Terry Home, and Communities in Schools of Auburn.

### HIGHWAY CLEANUP

If you drive State Route 18 you may see off-duty firefighters cleaning up trash on the side of the road. VRFA firefighters adopted a stretch of the highway 20 years ago. Firefighters pick up garbage four times a year working to keep the highway trash-free.

### PANCAKE BREAKFAST

On December 14, the VRFA along with IAFF Local 1352 will be hosting a pancake breakfast. All proceeds from this event will go into the benevolent fund to allow for continued support of local non-profit organizations. Look for more details regarding this event on our website and social media in the coming weeks.

## SAVE THE DATE



### SCOUT NIGHT AT THE FIRE STATION: NOVEMBER 13

This annual event is open to all scouting/adventure groups and will take place Wednesday, November 13 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at VRFA Station 33 in Lakeland Hills, 500 182nd Ave. E. Auburn, WA 98092. Several learning stations aimed at helping complete badge requirements will be offered including: Home Safety, Basic First Aid, Emergency Preparedness, Cooking Safety, Basic Knot Tying, Home Fire Escape Planning and more.

For more information contact us at [public.info@vrfa.org](mailto:public.info@vrfa.org) or call 253-288-5881.



## VRFA Services

The VRFA provides CPR and First Aid classes, complimentary blood pressure checks, fire station tours, custom-fit bicycle helmets, custom-fit life jackets, smoke alarms, child car seat inspections and more.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

call **253-288-5800** or go to **www.vrfa.org**

## VRFA Administration

### Brent Swearingen

Fire Chief/Administrator

### Brad Thompson

Deputy Chief of Operations

### Dave Larberg

Deputy Chief of Technical Services

### Mark Horaski

Chief Financial Officer

## Board of Governance

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### Dave Hill

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### Troy Linnell

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### Lynda Osborn

Algona City Council

### Bill Pelozo

Auburn City Council

### David Storaasli

Pacific City Council



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