

# Wenatchee Valley Fire Department

## Winter 2023 Newsletter



Personnel following the Warehouse Fire November 22, 2023

### A Word from Fire Chief Brian Brett

Greetings, residents of the Wenatchee Valley Fire Department. Your fire departments have been combined for just over one year now. We continue to enjoy the successful trajectory our previous Fire Commissioners, Fire Chiefs, and staff alumni have placed your fire department on. Now we cover an area of 172 square miles ranging from the Trinidad trestle, Colockum, Malaga, Rock Island, Stemilt Basin, East Wenatchee, Wenatchee Heights, Baker Flats, Burch Mountain, and Wenatchee. We serve over 80,000 residents plus an influx of people working in the valley. An urban level of service is expected.

The department responds to over 6,000 calls annually including car accidents, building fires, wildfires, water and technical rescues. We are dispatched to a building fire every 39 hours on average and have had 18 cardiac arrest saves in the last 12 months.

As always, summer brings a tremendous threat to our community with tinder dry fuels, high temperatures, low humidity and wind. This summer was no exception. There were four major wildfires in our jurisdiction with hundreds of structures threatened and needing protection. We are grateful for the support from neighboring fire departments, USFS and DNR to close out another successful fire season. The teamwork among fire service entities is amazing. We are also grateful for the outpouring of community support during the complex wildfire incidents.

The department completed the staffing of a new fire station in Rock Island We have obtained two additional parcels for future fire stations on Wenatchee Heights and in the Stemilt Basin. The department is working with the Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority and Washington National Guard on a fire station and aviation facility at the airport. We are also working on a plan to re-staff the Malaga fire station with the addition of Microsoft to the community.

Combining our critical volunteer programs has increased the department's ability to provide life-safety-staffed fire engines as opposed to property-conservation-staffed fire engines; please let me elaborate on the difference. The National Fire Protection Association considers a fire engine to be fully staffed with 4 firefighters. The rules of engagement for initiating a rescue at a house fire requires having 4 firefighters on scene, 2 firefighters outside supporting the 2 firefighters inside. The department cannot afford such a staffing model. However, the State of Washington allows an exemption to the law, we can initiate a rescue if we have 3 firefighters on a fire engine. Currently, the 3rd firefighter is from our volunteer pool, but the 3rd position is often vacant. As amazing and professional as our volunteer firefighters are, they have full-time jobs and families too. Hence, there are often 2 firefighters on our fire engines. A cardiac arrest also requires 3 people to initiate care for the chance of survival to be the greatest. A person in cardiac arrest needs someone to breathe for them, someone to provide compressions and someone to run the defibrillator. Our department aspires to guarantee 3 firefighters on our fire engines.

When it comes to being a part of your fire service, "we **get** to do this!" We love serving our community.

Thank you for supporting your Fire Department.

Brian Brett, Fire Chief

# Operations Division

We at WVFD have been asked by numerous people, "What are the benefits of having one fire department in the region?" This is a wonderful question. The commercial fire at 821 S Columbia Street on November 22 illustrated several ways having one department benefits our community.



This fire presented in a warehouse (approximately 100 years old) that has been remodeled and repurposed many times. The community has many of these buildings and many of them have caught fire in the past. Fires in buildings like this can be extremely difficult to fight. Many have burned badly, some all the way to the ground. This fire went markedly better than similar past fires. The fire was rapidly extinguished with limited damage to the structure. Contributing factors to this success included:

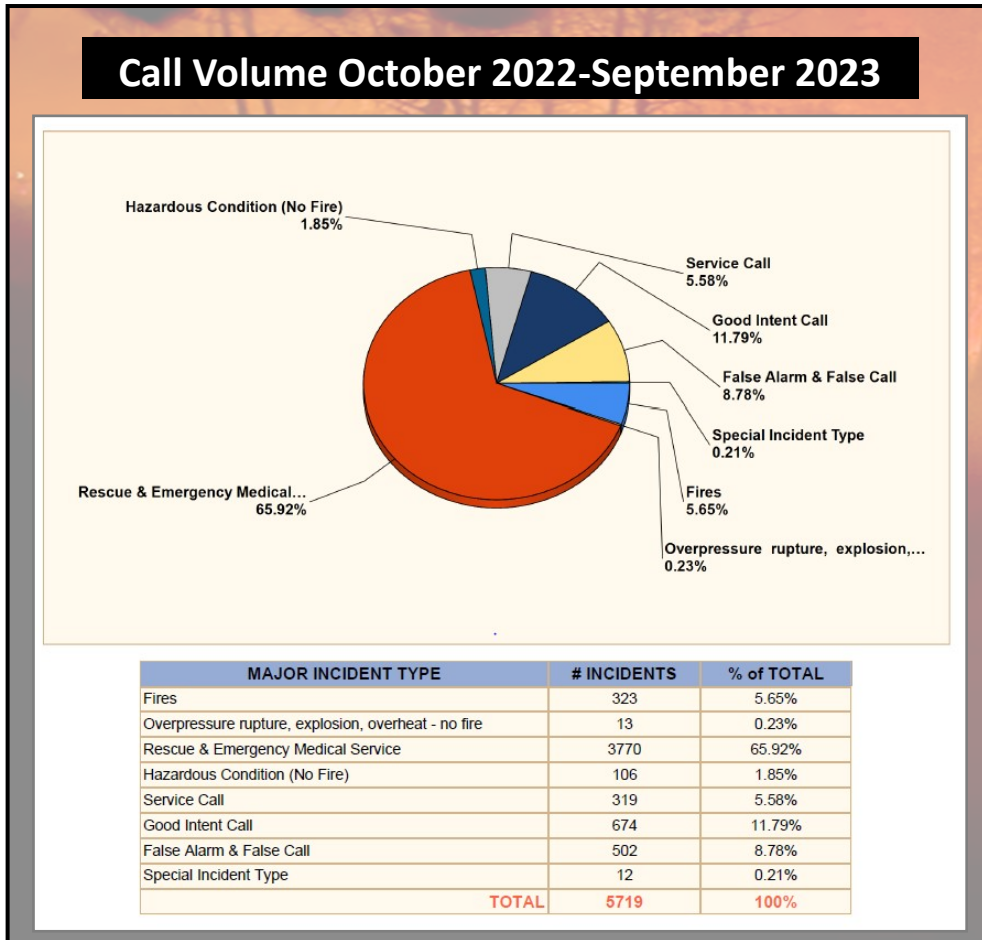
**All personnel were working under one set of procedures.** In the past, two or three departments existed where one does now, and those organizations had different philosophies and procedures to handle certain situations. As such, there could be limited cohesion on large incidents. In this situation team cohesion allowed for a rapid, smooth fire attack that was overwhelmingly successful.

**All personnel were trained to the same standard.** As WVFD has grown, we have made training a huge priority and have worked to bring neighboring fire districts into as much of that training as possible. That is paying dividends now. Here, personnel from multiple agencies worked together to accomplish highly technical fireground work in a rapid and efficient manner. Many of those people were trained at WVFD's Malaga training facility.

**Command officers (leaders) integrated seamlessly together** to create a command structure equal to the task and make coordinated strategic and tactical plans. These plans were rapidly and skillfully executed by crews.

**Fires like this take tremendous work in the form of manual labor.** WVFD has more personnel now than the three agencies had in the past. This increase in manpower, along with the mutual aid response, facilitated success.

We at WVFD are happy to report good news and we will continue to look for ways to improve in all measures as we move into the future.



### FACTS

- ! More than **one-third** of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- ! More than **two of every five** decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

### FACTS

- ! The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- ! Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove.

### FACTS

- ! **December** is the peak month for home candle fires.
- ! More than **one-third** of home candle fires started in the bedroom.
- ! **Three of every five** candle fires start when things that can burn are too close to the candle.

## Wildland Season Recap

Our area experienced an average wildland season this summer, hosting four large wildfire incidents within the Wenatchee Valley Fire Department's 172 square mile jurisdiction. Fortunately, crews were able to protect all the structures threatened during these volatile incidents. Successful response to wildfires comes from the ability to deploy air resources, fire apparatus and crew, and hand-crews that can aggressively contain and extinguish fires. The absence or abundance of wind is the critical factor Mother Nature controls. Our valley has high temperatures, low humidities, receptive fuels and often "hair dryer" like winds. The only component missing is the ignition source. As such, your fire department is nearing completion of another helicopter to accomplish our mission of preventing deaths, injuries and property loss from wildfires. Your new helicopter has a tail number of 1PR "One Papa Romeo." 1PR will be in service for the 2024 wildfire season with your current helicopter 1MR.



## wenatcheevalleyfire.org

We spent the year building a new web page for you, our customer! [Wenatcheevalleyfire.org](http://Wenatcheevalleyfire.org) is your new online resource for any and all Fire Department information. Our blog offers an insightful read on many wildfire mitigation related projects in the area, a host of fire safety information and "links, likes and shares" we think you'll find useful. We've included a page to help you navigate the complexities of outdoor burning as well as an FAQ column for all your *burning questions*. As new content becomes available, we hope this resource will keep you informed and most importantly, safe.

## Help us help you



Even with today's technology, first responders still rely on address numbers posted in a location visible from the roadway. They are especially helpful at night, or if you live up a long driveway. The Volunteer Association offers reflective address signs that cost \$11 - \$16. Stop by the station at 731 N. Wenatchee Avenue or visit [wenatcheevalleyfire.org](http://wenatcheevalleyfire.org) for more information. Proceeds support the Volunteer Association and their mission to ensure the highest quality emergency response to our community.

## Community Wildfire Liaison

This has been a busy year for the Community Wildfire Program. There were many projects on both sides of the valley.

In Douglas County, the department is working with local partners to secure grant funding to update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This plan is a guiding document to help communities become more resilient to wildfire and create a valuable list of actions to accomplish that goal.

Another project you may have heard about is the Wenatchee Slopes Restoration Project: Potential Control Line Enhancement. It's a long project name, for an innovative project. The idea is to identify some key project sites in and around the foothills of Wenatchee that have been impacted by wildfires. They will be treated to hinder the establishment of invasive species such as cheat grass before the sites are seeded with native shrubs and forbs. The goal is to change the vegetation so it's more resilient to wildfire, and to remove the fuel loads that burn hot and fast across our landscape and potentially into our community. This is a multi-partner, grant funded effort managed by the Cascadia Conservation District and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Post Fire Program. The Methow Fire (June 2023) burn scar was treated this fall and more project sites are being identified for possible work this coming spring.

The department continued work on other grant-funded projects including the FEMA-funded Wood Shake Roof Replacement project. Staff recognize the need to expand this valuable work and plan to work with FEMA over the winter to increase the areas included in the project.

Staff also look forward to getting back out in the field this Spring, helping owners to make their homes more resilient to wildfire with a Home Assessment. Homeowners can sign up on our website to schedule an assessment.





# Join the Emergency Response Team Protecting your Community!

Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is a combination department with career and volunteer members. The department is recruiting volunteer members to join our team of first responders. The department provides all-hazard response including structure and wildland fire protection, emergency medical services, rope and water rescue. If you have an interest in any, or all, of these response areas, contact us to join our team.



Volunteer Coordinator  
Deputy Chief Rick McBride  
509-662-4734  
rmcbride@wvfire.org

**CONTACT US TODAY!**

**We're Recruiting Volunteers!**

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POSTAL CUSTOMER  
LOCAL

PRSR1 STD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
WENATCHEE, WA  
PERMIT NO. 7

P.O. Box 2106  
Wenatchee, WA 98807



A Newsletter from Your Fire Department