

FIRE DISTRICT**FROM PAGE 1**

28 emergency vehicles, 53 volunteers, and seven staff (based at Headquarters/HQ in Ruch).

In addition to donations, grants and reimbursable fees, AVFD#9 is funded by constituents in two ways. First, by a "tax district rate" that was initiated in 1980 for basic services. In 1997 state measures 47 and 50 reduced that tax rate by 21 percent and then froze it. Because that tax rate couldn't be raised, we voters approved a five-year "local levy option" in 1998 to allow for 24/7 coverage at HQ as well as the growth needed to maintain the emergency services that AVFD#9 provides.

The first AVFD#9 local levy (1999-2004) was approved at \$1 per \$1000, with the district pledging to reduce that rate in future years by developing and following a five-year plan of work. So what was accomplished in those five years? Three engines were replaced, another refurbished and two "midis" were designed/built to serve our local Applegate needs (*see photo*). A "jaws of life," 16 breathing apparatus, eight radios and 40 full sets of protective uniforms were all purchased; two small construction projects were completed; and three shift officers were hired to provide the 24/7 coverage.

In 2003 the district made good on its pledge, proposing that the second five-year levy be at the reduced rate of \$0.85 per \$1000. We passed this, and the following was accomplished (2004-2009): a third midi was constructed; a new water tender purchased, six portable and eight mobile radios and a second set of rescue tools (for Station 1) all purchased. Also, a breathing air compressor was installed at HQ, allowing air tanks to be filled there (saving time/money). An operations chief was hired, a well/septic system installed at Station 6, the parking lot of HQ paved, and Station 7 built on Griffin Lane.

In 2009 the same \$0.85 per \$1000 was again passed, with the following accomplishments since then: all cardiac monitors were upgraded, a water tender at Station 5 was added, and a utility van, a pumper at HQ and the tender at Station 4 were all replaced. A vehicle exhaust-removal system was installed at HQ (where the on-duty crew sleeps), and a vehicle lift also installed at HQ's maintenance shop. Water tanks were installed at Station 4 and on Forest Creek, as well as a water-supply pump to create a draft site in Applegate.

Parking lots at Stations 1 and 4 were paved.

That levy option expires at the end of next June. The fire chief and the board of directors have been studying what will be needed to meet our current levels of service for the next five years, and they are proposing an increase of seven cents per thousand. We'll vote on this levy in November, and it will read: "Shall District impose \$0.92 per \$1000 of assessed value for five years for operations and minor improvements beginning in FY 2014/15?"

The purposes cited by AVFD#9 will be to continue to recruit/retain active volunteer firefighters and medical personnel, continue staffing HQ 24/7, replace vehicles and equipment consistent with the five-year planning goals, and, to enhance the delivery of their training for firefighters and emergency medical personnel.

We have two choices of how to vote: we can vote *yes* to paying seven cents more per \$1000 of assessed value each year (\$0.92/\$1000), so that we would *continue* to receive the same level of services from AVFD#9 for the next five years. Or, we can vote *no* on the levy, and the fire district will *lose about 33 percent* of its annual revenue. *We do not have the option of staying with the old rate of \$0.85.*

If we do not approve the levy, significant operational changes would need to be made to our fire district. The Board would evaluate expense categories such as maintaining safe/sound vehicles and up-to-date equipment, staffing HQ 24/7, and capital projects.

To me, staffing HQ 24/7 is essential. Originally when there was an emergency, our volunteers were paged, responded to their assigned station, geared up and drove to the incident. We now have three "shift" officers, each working 24-hour shifts along with interns and/or volunteers, which allows HQ to be staffed with a minimum of two personnel at all times. Their average response is to be in the vehicle, moving out within two minutes! The volunteers still respond from all seven stations and sometimes they can beat the HQ folks to a call depending upon the location of the incident. But in general, having shift officers greatly reduces response time to the majority of AVFD#9's constituents.

But how do you ignore past investments in vehicles and equipment,

See **FIRE DISTRICT**, page 13



Ruch School Cougars enjoyed a visit from Applegate Fire District personnel and engine 8515, a "midi" fire engine that was designed and built by district staff.

What is a 'midi'?

Most fire engines are designed for one main task: a structure fire, a medical problem, a car accident, a rescue, wildfire, or to just carry water.

Because AVFD#9 responds to all of these types of emergencies, the staff decided to design a single engine that could also respond to all of those situations. They purchased a chassis short enough to be able to turn around on our narrow Applegate driveways, and then they constructed the compartments to hold the various plumbing and equipment. They worked on this "midi" in their spare time at HQ. It's equipped to be the first responder to any emergency out here in the Applegate.

The district's maintenance officer figures about half of the cost of each "midi" was saved by doing the design and labor in-house, not to mention the savings of insuring just one vehicle instead of three or four!

AVFD#9 now has three "midis" and engine 8515, above, is one of them. Way to go, team!!!



April 2013 "Burn to Learn" training: Staff and volunteer firefighters take a break during a weekend of live fire training. Volunteer firefighters helped construct this temporary 750-square-foot training structure, comprised of panels that can be reassembled and reused many times.

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