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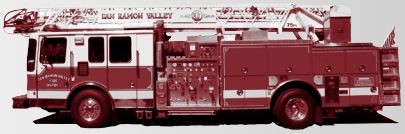
Alamo, Blackhawk, Danville, Diablo, San Ramon, Southern Morgan Territory and Tassajara Valley

Fire Line



News from Your Emergency Service Provider

In the spirit of our tradition, we strive for excellence, respectfully serving all with pride, honor and compassion.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Grasslands Present Fire Danger

Springtime in our valley is beautiful, the hills are green, flowers bloom and it seems as though everything comes to life. Spring is always a time of visual change and growth. With most of the rainy season behind us, we look forward to sunny days.

As spring turns to summer and the green hills change to California's "golden brown," a new environment surrounds us. It becomes hotter and dryer and while it is wonderful for outdoor activities, our environment also represents fuel for fire!

Following the massive wildland fires in San Diego a couple of seasons ago, their fire chief stated: "In the summer, California homes are like little wooden boats floating in a sea of gasoline." Sounds dramatic and it is.

Every year I am asked if it will be a "bad" wildfire season. Every year my answer is, "Yes." I say yes, because whether we are in drought conditions or we are following a wet winter, California is always at great risk in terms of potential wildland fires. In this area, it is not so much how the winter went, but how the summer and fall go that create our fire dangers.

To understand what causes wildland fires in our area to be such a danger every summer, and to know how to protect our communities from runaway wildfires, consider the following; it takes fuel, oxygen, and heat working together to create a fire — and our area typically has all three.

Fuel is any type of combustible such as grass, shrubs, trees, slash (piles of cuttings) and structures. "Light fuels," such as grasses with less than 1/2" diameter stocks burn very rapidly and ignite easily. Fuel continuity, which is the manner in which fuels are spread either horizontally or vertically over an area, significantly assists in spreading a fire. Fuel continuity means wildland fires can spread without stopping. Along with continuity, light fuels are configured in such a manner that fire behavior can be very aggressive. There is plenty of surface area on each piece of grass and those surface areas are surrounded by air, which has plenty of oxygen. Add to that some wind, and now the air surrounding each piece of grass rushes by, and with it, so can a fire. Add a hot summer day, with low relative humidity to the mix, then inject a spark or flame to already heated grasses that the sun has baked, and a wildland fire is off and running.

Putting all of this together; plenty of

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photos this article: Lucas Hirst

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light-grassy fuels spread all over our hills with good continuity both horizontally and vertically, hot dry air with a bit of wind, low relative humidity in the twenties or teens and it is no wonder in summer and fall, fire is an imminent threat. Add to this a phenomenon called the "Foehn-winds" (the Santa Ana's in southern California and the Mono or North Winds in northern California), which occur every fall as very dry downward pressing winds of forty to sixty miles per hour that roar in from inland valleys, and you have a potential for disaster every season.

So, how can we protect ourselves? We cannot affect the heat, relative humidity or wind, but there are actually several things both the Fire District and property owners should do. Working together, we can strive to prevent fires and stop fire spread by breaking up fuel continuity, we can prepare for the worst, and respond with force.

In terms of prevention, we can continue gaining education. In addition, the District and property owners can work together to enforce a very straightforward weed abatement program designed to separate the grasses. The goal of the program is to break up the fuel continuity to slow down or stop the forward progress of a wildland fire. Property owners with weeds and wildland grass areas are required to disc or mow the grass to create spaces known as "firebreaks." These firebreaks allow firefighters a fighting chance of catching runaway wildland fires. **For property owners**, this is the single most important contribution that can be made in protecting their own property and our communities as a whole. Experience shows that firebreaks and weed abatement make a huge difference in stopping runaway wildland fires.

We can all be prepared. The Fire District trains and equips firefighters to the highest of standards. The District also plans, in conjunction with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), Mt. Diablo State Park, East Bay Regional Parks, adjacent fire agencies, and the Office of Emergency Services so that an organized, well communicated approach to fire prevention, preplanning and response is up-to-date and understood. Property owners can also plan by keeping their property clean and clear of excess fuels, knowing escape routes, understanding and exhibiting fire preventative behaviors, and by ensuring their properties do not add in any other manner to the problem.

If, or more likely when, a fire does occur, the firefighters will respond in force. Every firefighter in the District realizes the risks a runaway wildland fire poses. When fires do occur, we aggressively react and respond with strategies, tactics, equipment and personnel to stop a fire in its tracks. This Fire District empowers every employee, through an incident command system, to call for more assistance to any fire by bringing in local emergency response units as well as emergency response units from surrounding agencies. There is a very sophisticated "Mutual-Aid System" in California that provides everything from fire engines, bulldozers, hand-crews to airplanes, and this Fire District will employ them in an aggressive fashion to put out a fire.

So remember, California in the summer is a state full of fuel and our communities are at risk. Our ability to work as a team, to prevent, preplan and separate the continuity of the fuel, as well as maintain resources available to aggressively extinguish any fire that ignites are the methods available to reduce the opportunity for fire to destroy our valley.

Craig Bowen
Fire Chief

Story of the Maltese Cross

The badge of a firefighter is the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross is a symbol of protection and a badge of honor, and ts story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders, known as the Knights of St. John, fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Land, they encountered a new weapon previously unknown to European warriors. It was a simple, but a horrible device of war, it wrought excruciating pain and agonizing death upon the brave fighters for the cross. The Saracen's weapon was fire.

As the crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were struck by glass bombs containing naphtha. When they became saturated with the highly flammable liquid, the Saracens hurled a flaming torch into their midst. Hundreds of the knights were burned alive, others risked their lives to save their brothers-in-arms from painful, fiery deaths. Thus, these men became our first firefighters and the first of a long list of courageous firefighters. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded them a badge of honor — a cross similar to the one firefighters wear today. Since the Knights of St. John lived for almost four centuries on a little island in the Mediterranean Sea named Malta, the cross came to be known as the Maltese Cross.

The Maltese Cross is your symbol of protection. It means that the firefighter who wears this cross is willing to lay down his or her life for you, just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago. The Maltese Cross is a firefighter's badge of honor, signifying that he works in courage, a ladder rung away from death.

New Equipment & Training Keep SRVFPD Rescue Team Prepared

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District's Rescue Team is a proactive organization with a main purpose of providing high quality technical rescue resources immediately available for response, with skilled and dedicated personnel, along with providing District-wide rescue related training. The Rescue Team consists of approximately 30 members, who are firefighters that staff engines and ambulances, in addition to their Rescue Team duties. Station 34 on Alcosta Blvd. in San Ramon has become the home of the Rescue Team, primarily because of its central location and easy access to the freeway.

A new Urban Search and Rescue Vehicle increases our response capabilities in a variety of difficult rescue situations.

The District's Rescue Team personnel and the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) vehicle are certified to an Office of Emergency Services (OES) Medium level, meaning that the District has demonstrated to the State that we have the training and the equipment to operate safely and effectively at structural collapse incidents involving the collapse or failure of reinforced and unreinforced masonry, concrete tilt-up and heavy timber construction. This OES qualification enables the State to activate our Rescue Team in the event of a major disaster.

In addition to these capabilities, every engine meets an OES Basic level and all trucks in the Fire District meet an OES Light Rescue level and are equipped with ropes to augment rescue operations, cribbing, air bags, and cutting and prying tools. Also, a group of Rescue Team members are active with Alameda County's USAR Task Force-4. The Task Force is one of several in California, and is operated under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security. This is a federal team, which responds to disasters on a national level.

The District's Rescue Team recently took delivery of a Spartan/SVI Rescue vehicle. The vehicle is equipped to handle a variety of incidents ranging from confined space rescue, technically difficult auto extrication, swift water rescue, trench collapse rescue, structure collapse, and high and low angle rope rescue. The Rescue unit along with personnel will also respond to all fires within the District and act as the Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC), which maintains vigilant readiness at fires to rescue any firefighter who becomes trapped and/or injured. With such a large variety of potential incidents, training is a major portion of the Rescue Team activities. With changing technology, and an ever-changing world, training is a constant demand. The core training of the team involves the incidents listed above, as well as Hazardous Materials Operational Level, including Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training. Rescue Team members train regularly to maintain their skills. The Rescue Team is also responsible for maintaining the skills of firefighters in the District, primarily in the disciplines of rope rescue, auto extrication, confined space awareness, as well as rapid intervention crew (RIC) tactics.

The Rescue Team takes great pride in the service it provides, and aggressively pursues a high level of training and experience opportunities in order to provide effective and efficient service.

Thanks to the Following Raffle Prize Sponsors at Our 2004 Employee Recognition Dinner

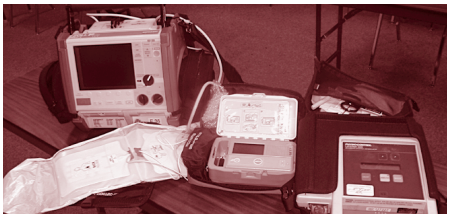
Basil Leaf
Bodylines Day Spa
Bridges Restaurant
Chateau de Sable
Cloud 9
Luna Loca
Nationwide Deferred Compensation
O'Kanes
Piatti
Popcorn Factory
Pot Belly Burger & Grill
Royal Vista Golf Course
See's Candy
Starbucks
The Blackhawk Museum
The Body Adventure
The Brass Door
The Crown

Old Buildings Needed For Firefighter's Training

Do you have a structure that you no longer want? Are you planning to demolish a building in order to build something new?

Consider contributing the structure to the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District (a qualified charitable organization) for use in training employees in fire suppression methods and tactics. For more information call 925-838-6620.

Gifts from the Heart . . . . for the Heart



Each year, more then 250,000 Americans die from sudden cardiac arrest. The national survival rate is less then 5%. The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District is committed to improving the survival rate in our community and we have recently received several generous donations that will help us in this effort:

The General Foundation Dublin/San Ramon Women's Club purchased and donated an AutoPulse Resuscitation device for the Fire District; the first to be placed in Contra Costa County. The AutoPulse is a non-invasive CPR device that performs automated and consistent chest compressions to improve blood flow to the brain and heart during cardiac arrest. The device is an improvement over manual chest compressions. An added benefit is that a firefighter is not at risk of injury while performing manual chest compressions during ambulance transport. The Fire District is in the process of placing an AutoPulse on all 5 of our ambulances.

San Ramon Regional Medical Center was opened on Valentine's Day 15 years ago. To celebrate their anniversary the hospital donated $15,000 to the American Heart Association to purchase Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) for our communities. AED's were developed to expand the number of rescuers beyond medical professionals, to include public safety providers and lay citizens. The donation was in support of the San Ramon Valley Public Access Defibrillation (PAD) Community Partnership. The goal of the PAD Partnership is to help businesses, recreation facilities and public buildings set up AEDs programs.

The San Ramon and Danville/Sycamore Rotary Clubs in our Community, through their grant process and with donations from club members have also raised money to purchase AEDs for the high schools in our District. The San Ramon Valley Unified School District was the first to launch the American Heart Association CPR in Schools Program. We anticipate that 700 students will be trained in CPR and the use of an AED each year.

The Soroptimist International of Alamo-Danville has also provided a $500 donation for the purchase of an AED for the Community.

On behalf of the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, thanks for your donations and support. By working together we can save more lives in our Community.

Firefighter of the Year

Mike Mohun
Firefighter/Paramedic
With SRVFPD since 1996

Mike was selected for:
- His dedication to the employees and the District as demonstrated by his willingness to devote countless hours to participate in various programs and projects.
- The leadership he has provided as both a union president and a fellow firefighter, consistently supporting the District's strategic plan and providing leadership to other employees while on duty and off.
- His exemplary behavior, work ethics and personal integrity.
- His gregariousness and positive attitude.

Employee of the Year

Danielle Bell
Fire Prevention Specialist
Joined SRVFPD February 2002

Danielle was selected for:
- Her passion for the District and her embodiment of the District's core values through her attitude and actions.
- Her ability to inspire others to respect each other and help each other.
- Her excellent representation of the District through public relations programs.

Special Events for Seniors in May

Three events are planned for Saturday May 21 to celebrate Older American's Month: The Annual Senior Pancake Breakfast, A Senior Resource Fair, and a Walk to benefit the Arthritis Foundation. All of these events will be at the San Ramon Senior Center. This is the 11th year our Fire District Employees have hosted the Pancake Breakfast. The Resource Fair will include health, housing, travel and financial information for seniors. The Breakfast and Fair are free. Anyone over 18 is eligible to participate in the walk — sign-up at the Senior Center.

Senior Pancake Breakfast
Saturday, May 21, 8:30 am to 11:00 am
San Ramon Senior Center
9300 Alcosta Blvd
(corner of Stagecoach & Alcosta)

Crib Safety

Every child deserves a safe crib. Unfortunately, over 14,000 children are injured in accidents that involve cribs each year. Here are a few safety tips to follow to ensure that your crib is safe BEFORE you put your child in it:

- Corner posts should be the same height as the end panels, and not extend above the end panels. Unscrew or saw off these posts if they extend too high.
- Make sure all hardware used in crib construction is tight in order to prevent crib collapse.
- Do not use a crib if parts are missing or broken, and do not substitute parts.
- Pillows are not recommended for use in a crib. They can cause suffocation for infants. And toddlers can use pillows to climb out.
- Do not let infants fall asleep on plush products such as comforters, pillows or sheepskins. These may cause infants to suffocate.
- Cribs should be placed in safe locations. Do not place a crib near any lamps, windows, fans or heaters.
- Mobiles and crib gyms must be removed when a baby is able to push up on his or her hands and knees.
- If the crib you are planning to use is more than two years old, make sure you evaluate it carefully before using.
- Last, but not least, supervision of your child is of utmost importance. Check on your child frequently or be near-by while he or she is in the crib.

If you notice products that do not comply with current safety standards, report them to the Consumer Product Safety Commission hot-line (1-800-638-CPSC). For more information on crib safety, or general child safety, please contact the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

Water Safety

As temperatures heat up, people will begin using public and private pools and hot tubs, and heading out to larger bodies of water like lakes, rivers and the ocean. The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District recommends a multi-layered approach for parents and caregivers to help prevent drowning:

- Teach children water safety and swimming skills as early as possible.
- Install a self-closing and self-latching gate around the pool so that children do not have direct access to the pool from the house.
- Alarm every house door that leads to the pool to alert you if a child has gone outside.
- Install a safety pool cover to securely cover the water area.
- NEVER leave children unsupervised in or around any body of water even for a moment.
- Do not allow children to play in the area around the pool. Remove all toys, tricycles—anything that might attract a child—from the vicinity.
- Do not rely on flotation devices to protect your children in the water.
- Know your emergency number (911) and keep life-saving equipment, such as a pole, life preserver and rope, stored conveniently in the pool area.
- Parents, guardians and caregivers should learn CPR and First Aid, and maintain these certifications.

Drowning is the leading cause of death among children from infants to four years of age. Remember that supervision is the key. For more information on drowning prevention or training courses, contact the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District wants you and your family to be safe. Please feel free to contact the Fire Prevention Division at (925) 838-6600 with questions or comments between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Be Prepared: What Would You Do in a Natural Disaster?

The news is full of reports of natural disasters that have destroyed people's lives: fires, floods, earthquakes, mud slides, and of course the devastating tsunami in Indonesia. News of natural disasters affect all of us—igniting a compassionate heart wanting to help, or inspiring us to learn more about their unpredictable ways. The one thing that natural disasters most certainly should do is to cause us to ask, "What would I do if I were in a similar situation?"

First and foremost: PREPARE. Preparation is key, and not just preparation in one or two areas. For example: If you go to the store and buy a six pack of soda, some candy bars, a roll of toilet paper, and some Band-Aids, do you think you're prepared for the next "Loma Prieta" earthquake? You are not. Even once you have the right supplies, it is important to store the emergency supplies appropriately.

To be prepared for an emergency, you need to address all of the issues below:

Emotions: Are you emotionally and mentally prepared? Are you going to panic, or will you be able to confidently execute your own emergency action plan? Make a plan with your family, carry family and friends' phone numbers, and have a meeting place if you get separated.

Food and Water: You need to have enough clean water and food for you and your family (and pets) to last for a minimum of 3 days.

Insurance: Have you videotaped or photographed the contents of your home for insurance purposes? If possible, store the video or photos with family or friends who live in another town.

Children: Check with your child's day care and school to find out if they have an emergency plan (and that they practice it.) You need to know what their plan is and make sure they have a way to reach you.

Gas and Water Lines: Do you know where your water and gas shut-offs are and how to operate them?

Home and Work: Finally, do you have supplies in your home, car and at work? The next time you go to the store, pick up some canned goods (and a can opener), water, snacks, and basic first-aid items.

The San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District can help you prepare to be self-sufficient in a major disaster. For a comprehensive list of emergency supplies, or if you have any questions on being prepared for a disaster, call SRVFPD at 925-838-6600, or visit www.srvfire.ca.gov

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Fire Line
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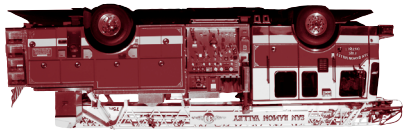

Helpful Information from Your Local Fire District