

Fishers Peak Fire Protection District SFTR Fire Drill

Summary

On June 9th, 2022, we were fortunate to have the Fisher's Peak Fire Protection District (FPFPD) come to SFTR and provide us with a powerful presentation and fire drill rehearsal. They began with a very informative briefing where numerous facts were shared regarding fire and smoke danger. Once they were done with the initial presentation, they took us on a simulated fire drill, followed by a detailed debriefing. Chief Hollerman from Stonewall and Chief Buddy from FPFPD (as well as numerous volunteer staff, including our own John & Johnny Cantin) spent approximately an hour posing questions and providing answers during the debriefing portion of our fire drill. It was a great success.

Details

During our briefing, we were told to carpool and to stay in tight formation. The dust that we would generate would simulate smoke and reduced visibility; however, the fire captains emphasized over and over again that during a real fire we could have considerably more dust and heavy smoke on both sides of our vehicle, so the fire drill couldn't come close to emulating a real fire.

Our captains advised us that if a fire occurred on the ranch during the daylight, we should turn on our headlights so that incoming firefighters could easily identify our cars and we would be more visible to other vehicles. They also warned us not use our hazards because we could be mistaken for an emergency vehicle.

Although the fire drill was supposed to take us all the way down to the bridge at Exit 6, they decided to guide us off the road at the cattle corrals near the dumpsters and then asked us a simple question: What would you do if something was blocking your path to Exit 6? How would you escape? What is your backup plan? *Is there a safe, reliable back up plan?*

The biggest thing they wanted to emphasize is that since there is only one exit off the ranch, it is imperative for us to learn our roads and chart several escape routes in case the usual exit route is compromised. They encouraged us to have a map in every car, with alternate routes highlighted.

They spent some time discussing the "Ready, Set & Go" guidelines. If a volunteer or mandatory evacuation is issued, your go-bag must be ready at a moment's notice. Also, it is very important to have an established plan of where you will go (e.g., a defined meeting place) so that other family members and friends know where to find you. It is possible that cell communications will be limited or non-existent, so a pre-established plan is critical.

The firefighters requested that once we have safely evacuated, we place orange cones at the entrance of our driveway with a message (preferably in black magic marker) stating that we had safely evacuated. This is very helpful! It saves them from conducting time consuming home inspections. They also stated that they would most likely start throwing out markers (heavy washers with reflective tape) near the roads that lead to exit in case we become disoriented with the smoke and fire (especially at night). They encouraged everyone to leave early! This will help ensure that we have time to safely leave the ranch, and that the firefighters can focus their resources on fighting the fire, instead of conducting rescues.

They warned us that fire can race uphill at an alarming rate, so never assume that the fire might be far away, especially if you live in an area with elevated topography. They also advised that if you have livestock and are having a difficult time hauling them out, set them loose so that they have a chance to fight for their own lives. They also encouraged everyone to stay in their car with the windows closed, unless there was a compelling reason to leave the car, because the vehicle offers some protection.

The FHWMC is currently working very hard to find alternate routes off the ranch. The captains encouraged us to keep a bolt cutter in at least one vehicle in case you are the first one to reach the escape route. Obviously, they encouraged anyone who didn't have a bolt cutter to break through the gate with your vehicle, if necessary.

There was a significant amount of time spent on discussing when someone might need to build their own fire break. They were not encouraging us to take this step unless we were trapped, and certain that rescue was not coming. This is a last-ditch effort. They encouraged everyone to know how to set a fire to create a fire break. This is a dangerous, radical step that everyone should research (or attend some fire training) before attempting.

Please consider joining the FPPFD.
Visit fisherspeakfire.com to learn more.

The FPPFD Auxiliary is also welcoming new members.
Email Carmen Richards jrlocators@aol.com for more information.

For more information on mitigation efforts, FireWise, or joining the FHWM committee, please contact Michelle Blake at michelle1colorado@gmail.com or visit <https://santafetrailranch.com/fhwm-committee>