

Dry Spell Keeping Firefighters Busy

By Cara Mitchell

Drier than normal conditions and a frenzy of fireworks activity created an active July Fourth holiday for the DuPont Fire Department. According to a summary provided by DuPont's Interim Fire Chief Robert Merritt, the department responded to six brush fires between July first and July sixth. The two largest fires, located off of McNeil Street and Ridgeview Place, and the bluff west of the golf course, were both started by fireworks.

"The McNeil Street/Ridgeview fire on July third was very stubborn and was fought for several hours," said Chief Merritt. "Heavy fuels in the area and unseasonably dry conditions made fighting this fire difficult and required additional help from Lakewood," he said. The fire on the west bluff of the golf course extended down to the railroad tracks. "Apparently, youngsters were throwing M-80s at trains passing below and caught the bluff on fire," said Merritt.

Fire crews found walkie talkies being used by the youths who started the fire. "If they would like their walkie talkies back, they know where to find them," he said.

DuPont fire crews prepared for the busy weekend by adding additional staff. But didn't the dry conditions warrant an outright ban on fireworks? Council members repeatedly said during the July 14 Council Meeting that they received emails from residents about the danger fireworks posed this year to private property.

Mayor Jenkins said she would revisit the issue in January 2010, with the possibility of outlining a new approach to fireworks in the City. But after looking at DuPont's Municipal Code, it appears that some control was already in the hands of the council members, yet no one acted upon it.

DMC 9.12 states that "the City Council sitting in regular or special session may, by motion, more severely restrict the time limit and place for, or completely ban the use of, fireworks when the City Council finds that conditions warrant a more severe restriction." However when the Home Town Clipper asked why a ban on fireworks was not put in place due to the dry conditions, a handful of council members did not know they had the authority to ban fireworks and enforce it.

Meanwhile, warm temperatures and winds have driven fuel moistures to dangerous levels four to six weeks ahead of schedule. "The fireworks may be over, but we still need to protect our trails through out the summer and into fall," said Merritt. The DuPont Fire Department has put up signs along trails and in parks reminding users that there is a temporary ban on smoking and open pit fires due to the extreme dry conditions.

On July 8, Pierce County was placed under a Phase I burn ban until further notice. This burn ban applies to all outdoor burning except for small recreational fires in established fire pits at approved camp grounds or private property with the owner's permission. Persons with approved DNR burn permits may call 1-800-323-BURN for more information.

Steilacoom Town Council Update

By Beth Agnew

"This year's Fourth of July celebration in Steilacoom resulted in no injuries or property damage due to fireworks," reported Public Safety Director Robert Drozynski, during Steilacoom's July 7 Town Council meeting. The event was discussed at the meeting and the study session which followed. The Council will address the topic again in the future, although no date has yet been set.

A Worthington Street resident noted that there were some large private fireworks displays in Steilacoom on the Fourth of July, and urged the Council to consider making private fireworks illegal. Councilwoman Roe Marcantonio commented that she also observed some illegal fireworks displays. At the subsequent Fourth of July after-action review study session, Marcantonio suggested imposing a hefty fine for possession of illegal fireworks, as she feels it's too difficult to actually witness when private fireworks are set off.

Councilman Bruce Judson agreed, saying, "If you've got to see them do it, you're never going to enforce that." During the study session which followed the meeting, Councilman Marion Smith said of the Fourth of July, "I've never seen so many aerial displays." He recommended that Steilacoom hold a public meeting regarding fireworks.

Mayor Ron Lucas later emailed the Clipper, "if any action/change in policy is taken, the result is for 4 July 2011." Councilman Milt Davidson commented, "It was a very noisy Fourth of July." Marcantonio expressed concern during the study session that some residents who dialed 911 the evening of July 4 to report fireworks got a busy signal. The Town Council will follow-up on this subject.

Drozynski explained at the meeting that 911 calls for Steilacoom and DuPont are handled by an office that also serves many other areas, including Tacoma, Edgewood, Fircrest, University Place, unincorporated Pierce County and areas of the Key Peninsula. "There's no way they can handle that surge capacity all at the same time," he stated.

Drozynski mentioned the difficulty of staffing the facility during a time when there's an unusually high number of 911 calls, explaining that from 9:30pm to 11pm on the Fourth of July, the system is on overload. "It's do the best they can with what they have," Drozynski said of the Law Enforcement Support Agency (LESA). He later told the Clipper that in 2008, "LESA answered the 911 calls in 12 seconds or less an average of 81

percent of the time. Also in 2008, they answered 80 percent of the calls within 10 seconds."

Drozynski commented of this year's Fourth of July event, "No injuries, no fires, no custodial arrests where people were taken to jail, no brawls."

Public Works Director Mark Burlingame told the group that a street sweeper was operating at 6:30am on July 5 to begin cleaning up the town after "a near-record crowd" attended the Town's holiday celebration. Mayor Lucas said during the study session, "Our intent was to try to clean up the Town as soon as we can." He added, "It was probably a little too early."

Drozynski informed those at the meeting that, due to dry weather, a burn ban is in effect beginning July 8. He clarified, "Small backyard recreational fires are OK." Yard waste may not be burned.

Drozynski described the award of a \$7,500 Washington Traffic Safety Commission School Zone Safety Grant as the result of "a true collaborative effort" between the school superintendent, Public Safety and Public Works. He emailed the Clipper that the grant "will be used to partially support the posting of two signs on Third Street in the Saltar's school zone area. These signs will include flashing yellow warning lights and the town felt it was most appropriate to fund and incorporate speed read out devices as well for educational and compliance purposes."

The Town Council voted to accept the grant, which is covered in Agenda Bill (AB) 2259. The Council also approved an Interlocal Agreement between DuPont and Steilacoom for Building Inspections Services, AB 2262. This allows Steilacoom to engage DuPont's building inspector as needed as Steilacoom's building inspector is off work due to an injury. Town Administrator Paul Loveless announced that it could take as long as seven months for Inspector Jim Rayley to return back to work.

DuPont is interested in some of Steilacoom's Public Works staff as well. Director Burlingame announced, "The City of DuPont has approached us about the possibility of using our forces to do some street crack sealing." He added, "We'd certainly recoup our hard costs." He told the Council that more details will be presented in a report at a future meeting.

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253-964-1289
denise.ford@reachone.com

Information and events are provided for the Residents of Northwest Landing, unless otherwise noted.

EVENTS

Tacoma Concert Band & Strawberry Shortcake Feed

Sunday, August 16

Back by popular demand, we are proud to host the Tacoma Concert Band. Music starts at 6:30pm at Clocktower Park. Please visit www.tacomacconcertband.org for more information on the band. Strawberry shortcake will be sold throughout the evening for \$2. This is a community-wide event.

Movie in the Park

Saturday, August 22

This event is one of the big hits of the summer! We'll start the movie at 8:30pm, right at sunset at Ross Plaza. This year's selection: **Hotel for Dogs** (rated PG, see www.hotelfordogsmovie.com). Drinks and snacks are offered at a modest price. This is a community-wide event to be enjoyed by the entire family.

SAVE THE DATE

Date Change

Please make the following change to your event calendar. Annual Beer Tasting has been changed to October 2.

Our Thanks!

Thank you to the many volunteers who made our July 4th celebration the best ever! Your tireless efforts and hours of dedication are appreciated.

Special thanks to the 2009 July 4th Committee: Gina Irvin, Linda Cumberbatch, Shawn McDonald, Synthia Santos, Ross Mathison, Anna Skretting, Maurice Toussaint, Phil Ragsdale, Cathy DiMarco, Helen Ireland & Marc Ireland

And once again, thanks to the pancake ladies (Esther, Hazel & Elaine) and to the Forever Young Seniors for the awesome pancake breakfast.

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