

Cherry Volunteer Fire Association Update February 2017

Hello fellow Association Members. It is time to provide an update about what has been happening with our Association since our last meeting in April. Allow me to review some of the activities that have happened, and then make some clarifications regarding plans for the Association.

Review of activities

As is usually the case, Cherry Fire has not had many actual calls over the last year. Some rock slides have been cleared from the roads around Cherry, a couple of lightening strikes have been checked out (one of them did destroy a large Ponderosa pine in town), and one fire was responded to that was probably too far out of our response zone. That response did allow us to reflect on how a response should be implemented. Every response should be a learning opportunity.

Personally, I cannot recall a time when so many neighbors in the Cherry area have been involved in the CVFA. More and more people are paying dues and our bank account is in very good shape. Better than I have ever seen it.

In September 10 community members attended the Arizona State Fire School in Mesa. This training, while generally basic, is always valuable. The participation level was the highest ever for Cherry Fire. Thank you to all of those who attended. Several attendees donated unused Scholarship funds to the CVFA so we were able to break even with a couple of hundred dollars left over. The Arizona Community Foundation funded all ten participants with scholarships donated by various supporters, so the CVFA did not have to spend any funds for this training.¹

The Type 6 Brush Truck that was donated to our Association by the Walker Fire Association is still in service, and should the need arise, will be a valuable apparatus due to the ability to mobilize this vehicle quickly.

The internet site Cherryfire.org continues to be an ever increasing benefit to our community. It is the glue that brings and holds us together. Mr. Wattie spends a lot of time on this ongoing project, and for this we are grateful. It is

¹ If you would like an Excel Worksheet that details each participants expenditures contact me by return email and I will send it to you.

amazing that this site gets so many visits. Please avail yourselves to the information presented there.

This past Summer the CVFA was able to acquire several radios with the programming necessary to communicate with Arizona State Forestry/Fire, the Prescott National Forest, County and other local agencies, and within our own department. The Department has been without radios for many years. It is a necessity to have adequate communications when responding to an emergency.

A number of training Saturdays have been held through the Summer and into the Fall. Currently the CVFA is not training on a regular basis. Hopefully this can be reset soon. Appropriate training is essential to any department, no matter the department's size or response history.

We are a small community with minimal responses, but we do pay our dues and we should expect a reasonable and responsible response when something does go wrong. A serious accident, a medical emergency, a structure fire, or a forest fire that threatens our community and surroundings will make our "smallness" disappear in an instant. When bad things happen, the need for training and working equipment becomes very LARGE. Any crisis becomes significant and we should be ready to help our neighbors when things go wrong.

Clarifications about plans for the CFVA

Recently while talking with a neighbor I was brought "up to date" regarding my "plans" for the CVFA. Not recognizing any of these "plans" I wondered how many persons named Curt Christy there might be in the Cherry area. I know of only one, and take it from me – one is enough. It is sometimes a mystery as to how communication can become misstated, so allow me to clarify the very few plans that myself and some other board members have for the CVFA. I shall use three letters to make this clarification – **SOS**.

S for SIMPLE

The internet dictionary used here defines *Simple* as easy to understand, plain and not decorated, not complicated by something, with few parts, *not intelligent*. Except for the last phrase, Cherry Fire should be all of the above. Personally, I do not have any desire to see the Cherry Fire force become

anything other than a local response agency. We need to work on a responsible LOCAL response, and have no business going off to get involved with fires or emergencies around the County or State. We do not need a lot of fancy new equipment (but we will take it if someone wants to give it to us), or uniforms, or equipment or training that is not relevant to our LOCAL needs. Yes, we do need the basic tools, training and safety clothing (fire resistant clothing, boots, helmets, eye protection, gloves, fire shelters etc.) that will allow us to safely respond to an emergency. In fact, we have been able to acquire many of these items over the last year. Please allow me to be clear – My desire is to hopefully see the CVFA become a responsible and disciplined group of people that respond to our neighbors when needed. There are some who disagree with me, but I do not think it wise to become an enforcement agency that patrols the Prescott National Forest telling recreational users what they can and cannot do in the PNF. That could easily become a complicating factor that would remove simplicity in a hurry. Simplicity is definitely a virtue in our LOCAL situation. Hopefully we can focus on some simple ways to make and keep Cherry and Federal Mines safer.²

O for OPERATIONAL

Operations is what the emergency and fire services do to execute a response to any emergency or event. This is a very important concept that relates to both human and other resources. To be operational, the people must be trained well, they must be able to respond quickly and efficiently based on their training, and they **MUST** work together as a team. The equipment they use must be maintained, understood, and response ready.

The Cherry Fire Department needs attention in the area of operations. The trucks are old and they are in need of important maintenance items now. There is also a need for a return to the absolute necessity of teamwork. What we do together as a team is what will make us truly operational in an emergency. Individualism does not work in any size or type of emergency response unit. I am hopeful that this will become central to what we are about as a department. Besides, it is personally fulfilling to work together to achieve the goal of helping our neighbors in a time of need.

² Lynyrd Skynyrd has a song that illustrates this idea of the Simple approach well. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMmTkKz60W8>

S for SAFETY

It has come to the attention of several board members and Association Members that there needs to be a more focused emphasis on safety. If we are not safe during an emergency, our own safety as first responders will be jeopardized, and the personal safety of the people we are responding to (and their property) will be at greater risk. Safety rules, procedures, and guidelines are as a rule written down and learned carefully by firefighters and those who support them. This is something that the CVFA needs to focus on sooner rather than later. Our By-Laws require this. I know that we would all feel horrible and be deeply saddened if someone was injured or worse during a response in our community.

Last Fall one of our Association members, having taken a Safe Driving course at the Arizona State Fire School, realized that we needed a genuine emphasis on safety within our department. He called for an Emergency Meeting per our By-Laws. At that meeting we were to address the need for Standard Operating Guidelines per the By-Laws. A meeting was called. Just before that meeting it was brought to my attention that four of the people listed on the Board had expired terms. We did not have a Quorum. So the meeting could not carry out the planned agenda until the deficiency of legitimate board members was addressed. The By-Laws were carefully followed to restore a quorum plus one additional member (in case anyone was missing from an Emergency or Regular meeting). It was also discovered that a Lead Fireman had never been appointed by the Board. That deficiency was also corrected. The By-Laws were carefully followed throughout this process. While some Association members were alarmed to see the By-Laws put into actual use, the duly elected Board members considered it appropriate and prudent to follow the By-Laws carefully. The Arizona Corporation Commission and the Internal Revenue Service (we are a 501 C3 Corporation) stipulate that we must act in accordance with our By-Laws. Any other approach or lack thereof would be negligence on the part of the CVFA.

Now that the lack of a quorum has been addressed, and two remaining Board Members can be elected at the next Annual Meeting, a follow up meeting can be called to address the original agenda pertaining to safety. We will provide a public notice about the time and place of that Emergency Meeting.

Moving Forward

My hope is that we can resolve some of the issues related to safety, operations, and simplicity within our Association. Some of the plans that I do actually want to emphasize include the following:

- 1) A Response Map/Contact guidebook that will allow ambulance agencies and other first responders to provide help in a fast, efficient and direct way to our community members. I am currently working with Lifeline Ambulance to provide them with maps, latitude and longitude coordinates, addresses, and contact phone numbers to allow them to make medical or trauma transport responses effective.
- 2) I have been asking another Fire Protection Association how best to maintain or even improve our ISO Rating as a responding department. This will make it more likely that we can have access to homeowners insurance. The Association that I have been communicating with even improved their Rating and lowered their insurance premiums. That is something I am interested in as a property owner.
- 3) There is grant money available to clear private property of brush and ladder fuels so that our properties have more Defensible Space. I have been looking into this and would like to develop a strategy to receive some of these funds and make our community safer. Along with this we could receive some training that would help us to assess private properties that would make them FireWise. I am very interested this as a homeowner and neighbor.
- 4) Another project been research and observation of the development and implementation of emergency fire sprinkler systems for structure protection. It would be fairly easy to have several of these “kits” ready for deployment should we ever experience a wildfire in the area. The kits would not be that expensive to assemble. Our firefighters could train for setting them up and using them to provide additional protection to houses/buildings that are at risk during a wildfire.
- 5) Training for our firefighters at the Arizona Wildfire and Incident Management Academy in Prescott. This level of training is mandatory in many district and volunteer fire departments. Some of us have received this training and learned a lot and enjoyed the time greatly. It is possible to bring this training to Cherry for those that cannot go to the Academy in March. The cost is often paid for by stipends and grants, or the cost is minimal. We have the funding available.

- 6) Some Association members have asked about a basic medical response in the area. Two or three AEDs have been suggested. I think this is an excellent idea. It would be an excellent use of Association funds to acquire these devices and provide the associated CPR/AED training necessary to use them. We also have two trained and certified EMTs that could be incorporated into the Department. Yavapai Regional Medical Center will provide additional training (advanced airways, IV training, etc.) to these responders and be Medical Control during a medical or trauma emergency.
- 7) Additional sources of reliable water for fighting fires. This is not an easy goal to meet. But it is something that is being worked on. More on this later.
- 8) And finally, several of our Association members have taken classes at State Fire School or from another organization to understand methods of fire fighting that will be more effective for our small volunteer department. With some group training and a small investment in several tools, our firefighters could become much safer and effective in the event of a house or vehicle fire.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Update. If you have any questions please reference my phone numbers in the Cherry Directory. I am open to any questions, concerns, or any need for clarification you may have.

For the safety and well being of Cherry and Federal Mines,

Curt Christy
CVFA Board Member.