

East Fork Fire Protection District Ready To Launch New Volunteer Opportunities

Minden- After several years of struggling to maintain its volunteer firefighting forces following the traditional model of deployment and participation, the East Fork Fire Protection District is ready to provide new options for those who might be wishing to become volunteers with the District. The district's staffing is critical and with the loss of its one time strong volunteer force due to demographic changes, lack of affordable housing, and training requirements, additional career staff have been added. Career personnel provide the bulk of emergency response on a day to day basis, however, the district is financially limited to just how many career personnel can be added.

Under the new program,

volunteers will be recruited and trained in two areas of operation.

The most important role and void that volunteers can play is one of a

logistical nature. With the appropriate training, volunteers will be able to operate water tenders, support incident needs, and respond to wildland fires. District Chief Tod Carlini stated that, "**Staffing the logistical needs of an incident or being able to add trained wildland fire responders will be our primary focus with this program.**" In the past and as part of the traditional program, the district did provide extensive training to those volunteering, up to and including Firefighter I and EMT certification. The district's return on this expensive investment was negated when those trained and certified volunteers would leave the area to attain employment as career firefighters in other jurisdictions. "**We can't continue to be the entry level training academy for other agencies**" noted Chief Carlini. "**The cost benefit is simply not there.**"



Pictured are long time volunteers, Nate Leising (Driver), John Babcock, and Dave Thomas at a recent structure fire in the Ruhestroth area. All three operated water tenders at this fire, a critical need in many areas of the district.

The new program recognizes two categories of participation and membership, **Logistical Firefighter** and **Support Participant**. The district is hoping to recruit 40 new volunteers under the new program.

The **Logistical Firefighter** qualified personnel would provide critical incident logical needs at incidents but also perform fire suppression operations on wildland fires. In order to participate in wildland fire suppression, additional training and obtaining a "*Red Card*" would be necessary. Those volunteer personnel under this classification would be required to complete an application, be subjected to a complete background check, undergo physicals in accordance with NRS, complete a Logistical Academy, receive worker's compensation coverage as a "*firefighter*" and specialized training in those specific areas of logistical support. Once certified at this level, minimum required training requirements and participation levels would be required to maintain LOGISTICAL responder position status. Areas of logistical specialization would include, Squad Response and Operation, Water Tender Response and Operations, General Incident Support , SCBA Support and Wildland Firefighting .

The **Support Participant** category recognizes that there are numerous jobs and responsibilities that need to be filled in an organization. The Support Qualified Position is designed to fill those needs and broaden the opportunity for participation. The Support Qualified Position is a non-response position that allows personnel to provide tangible and valuable assistance to the volunteer units and the district. Those volunteer personnel under this classification would be required to complete an application, be subjected to a complete background check, complete a Basic Support Academy, receive worker's compensation coverage as a general volunteer, and specialized training in those specific areas of support. Once certified at this level, minimum required training requirements and participation levels would be required to maintain Support Qualified position status. Areas of support specialization would include, Station Maintenance, Care, and Housekeeping, Apparatus Care, Community Risk Reduction, Fuels Management Program, Fundraising and Publicity, Recruitment and Marketing, Fire Hydrant Testing and Painting, Emergency Management.

The district will be conducting a full recruitment effort as part of the Carson Valley Days celebration, which is honoring the first responder this year. In addition to have a presence in the annual parade, the district will be hosting events and recruitment information and opportunity at Lampe Park following the parade.

Douglas County is known for the volunteer spirit of its residents. The district at one time boasted one of the largest volunteer firefighting and emergency medical services programs in the state. While times, demographics, and economics have all played a role in the current status of volunteers in the district, this new opportunity and program seeks to change the current course. Please consider volunteering. You can contact the District Office at 775-782-9040 or visit the District's website at eastforkfire.org for more information.