

Cityscape – July 2018

By Jason Boaz

The summer season is upon us, bringing warmer, drier weather to the area as well as increased fire danger. Grasses have grown tall with the winter rains and even a small ember can start a fire. As a result, on June 18, the seasonal burn ban took effect to restrict open burning in the North Bay.

With last October still fresh in our minds, it is important that we stay vigilant and prepare ourselves and our community. Here are a few things the Healdsburg Fire Department is doing and some ways you can best prepare your home and family from fire.

Additional Firefighters: 2017 was the busiest year on record for Healdsburg Fire, with crews responding to 1,834 incidents. With the adoption of the fiscal year 2018-19 budget, the Council authorized the hiring an additional full-time firefighter funded with Measure V. We now have three personnel on duty at the station 24 hours a day.

The Fire Department also brought on board nine new reserve firefighters. These members are an integral part of the department, providing staffing for additional resources, covering the station, and assisting with mutual aid requests. Becoming a reserve firefighter requires a large time commitment and we are fortunate to have such a diverse and engaged community in Healdsburg who are willing to contribute their time.

You may notice more fire engines out and about in the community. That's because Healdsburg Fire participates in a county-wide up-staffing program. During red-flag warnings -- when high winds, lightning or other weather-related events signal an increased fire risk -- fire departments around the county bolster resources to strengthen a response.

New Wildland Fire Vehicle: Healdsburg Fire is taking delivery of a new wildland apparatus designed to fit in areas with tight access and narrow roads. This mini-attack pumper is a four-wheel drive crew cab pick-up outfitted with a pump, hose and other equipment. This purchase is also funded partially by Measure V.

Weed Abatement Program: We mitigate fire risk to the community with an aggressive weed-abatement program. Every year, we inspect properties for weeds, brush or other debris that can cause a fire. Once this is done, we notify property owners and give them 30 days to cut back the weeds and brush. If they fail to do so, the City completes the work using its own contractors and bills the homeowner.

The City Utility Department also inspects all overhead transmission lines annually and clears trees around them. If you see tree limbs that may pose a fire hazard, please notify the Fire Department at 431-3360.

Here are some ways you can mitigate fire risk to you and your home:

- Clear dead or dying vegetation within 100 feet of any structure and use fire-resistant plants and nonflammable ground cover.
- Clear gutters and roofs of leaves or debris and keep flammable furniture, firewood or anything that can easily spread fire away from your home.
- Mow your lawn early in the morning, when the humidity level is high with a ready source of water on hand.
- Create an evacuation plan and stockpile enough food and water to sustain your family for 72 hours.

Learn more by going to the FireSafe Sonoma website at www.firesafesonoma.org and clicking on the “Living with Fire in Sonoma County” link.

In addition, Healdsburg Fire works closely with many community groups to help implement their own community-based programs. We encourage you to train and prepare with your neighbors. Please contact the Fire Department for more information; we’re glad to provide resources and assist in any way we can.

Have a fire-safe summer!