



The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

Letter from the Chief By Michael Schmitt

Dear Residents,

The recent power outage is likely just the first one that we will experience here on the front range of Colorado as a wildfire prevention method. The impact survey that we sent out, although at the time of writing not concluded, shows that many of you are in favor of de-electrifying the power grid to prevent wildfires during high wind events. We all know that high winds are a major contributing factor for power lines and vegetation getting together and causing major fires. As far as our preparation for these types of events go, well, they surprised us as much as they surprised you when it comes to the level of notification and information provided by Xcel Energy. We did not receive a different notice than you did, and SFPD and the Boulder County Sheriff’s Office worked closely together to come up with a plan to

provide you with options and backup. For example, we do have a Lumen/CenturyLink communications box outside the station. SFPD firefighters tended day and night to a portable generator to provide that communications box with power, as the backup batteries only lasted about 17 hours. This means that without the backup and then

generator, many homes in Sunshine Canyon, Lefthand Canyon and Overland Drive would have been without a landline and internet. It is unacceptable to us that our residents are not able to call for help without a preplan from Xcel, coordinated with the County, Lumen, and us. Unfortunately that box at the station is not responsible for every home in Sunshine, therefore many of you still had a complete outage of power, phone, and internet. I would like to remind all of you to continue the good work I have seen within the community of communicating with each other on who has phone and power and who does not, so that you can utilize the neighbor’s phone when you need to call in an emergency. We also have an

**In 2023, SFPD
Firefighters participated
in 134 calls¹**

- Structural, car, & wildland fire/smoke reports – 10
- Vehicle & Bike Accident – 16
- Medical/Medical Assist – 43
- Hazardous Conditions - 3
- Other - 18
- Dispatched & Canceled in Route - 44

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¹ The total call volume for 2017: 81 calls, 2018: 80 calls, 2019: 103 calls, 2021: 104 calls, 2022:130 calls

Chief's Report

By Michael Schmitt - Continued from Page 1

exterior emergency phone box at station 2 (5880 Sunshine Canyon Drive) that you can drive to if necessary. We will be looking into getting an emergency phone box at station 1 as well. But for now, that phone at station 2 is the only one in the district and should always be functional unless a wildfire or wind has caused physical damage to the lines. But it is backed up by the station's generator, and the Lumen box outside is expected to be backed up at all times as well. We plan on getting the funds together to pay for an exterior outlet at the station that can be used directly to connect to the Lumen box so that it is not reliant on a portable generator outside and our volunteers needing to wake up in the middle of the night to check that it is still running.

We did learn a few things from this event and the survey that will help us in the future to serve you better. I really appreciate everyone's response. While we all get bombarded with surveys, ours are geared towards hearing you and your needs to see what we can optimize and tweak to be there for you, better. So responding to those is really important, and we will use surveys more frequently for that reason.

The survey included a question that asks how many of you have & what type of generator. We recently had a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm call that had a high probability to have been a fatality if it hadn't been for the person occupying the bedroom being away for just that night with fatal readings long after the generator was shut off. During the investigation to find that source (generator was off by that time but high levels still present despite venting) we also found an improperly installed furnace exhaust pipe. If you are

using a portable generator, gas space heaters and stoves please contact us to schedule a site visit. Similar to how we inspect every recreational or prescribed fire such as a pile burn that we received a permit request for, we want to be able to provide you with suggestions for placement and general safety. It is rather easy to become complacent with these issues, but the consequences are severe. Similarly, a furnace should be inspected and the chimney(s) cleaned annually. Not only will it prolong the service life of the furnace, it will run more efficiently and the technician will be able to spot issues related to the exhaust system that may not be obvious to you.

Sunshine FPD has received several important grants in recent months. To name some, we have received \$20,000 from the Department of Fire Prevention and Control for new bunker gear. Then, we received \$103,910 from Boulder County through the 1-B sales tax. These funds will be spent on a command truck that will enable myself and officers to be better prepared and present during the more common emergencies as well as large events such as wildfires. Additionally, the grant award will pay towards a 6x6 UTV that will be equipped in such a way that it can provide necessary capability for patient extraction at someone's home that has an unplowed or otherwise inaccessible driveway as well as a wildland fire "skid" with a pump and water, also capable of reaching areas that a larger truck cannot. The grant award is paying fully for a brake upgrade on engine 4505. We will be looking at purchasing the UTV at a later time when the department can fully fund it from other revenue sources, but for now the brake upgrade

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Chief's Report

By Michael Schmitt - Continued from Page 2

and pickup truck have been approved and we look forward to receiving those this year. It's an exciting time for SFPD! Separately we were part of a regional application that granted us and other districts a number of handheld radios. I can't emphasize to you enough how important it is for every firefighter to have the ability to hear and communicate what is happening on a scene, what other resources or help are needed, and how to call out for help when a dangerous situation occurs. Radios are paramount to firefighter and public safety. Unfortunately, the technology that we are "forced" to join causes every radio to be between \$5000 and \$8000, depending on version. Now picture the need to equip every firefighter out of almost 30 with one of those and you see that basically our entire annual budget wouldn't be enough. I have said it before and am saying it again, grants are crucial for us to operate well and to try to stay up to date with technology and industry standards. I am endlessly thankful to our grant writer Nicole Esplin who works hard to help us as much as possible now with one grant after another, and to Alan Kirton who continues to and has been invaluable with past grants both directly for the department and the CWPP. We would still be in the dark ages without these expensive ticket items that we simply could not afford without grants, and the people behind those grants. If there is a CWPP project that you see, you have either contributed to it with your taxes or a grant was provided (also often funded through taxes). Those projects are either forestry fuels mitigation projects or water supply projects where a community water source is built. We have some projects that we could benefit from a contractor or project manager to lend their expertise in guiding a project to completion. If you are such a

person, please let me know. I will be completely honest with you, without our residents stepping forward we can only achieve very little beyond our emergency preparedness. It is when our residents help us out and take on projects or positions like grant writing when we have a chance to shine and really make a difference for our community, and our firefighters.

The last topic is an important one, obviously. I hope that many of you were able to attend Abby Silver's important talk on the topic of wildfire mitigation. We are fortunate to have Abby's expertise and insight in the district and I'd say whenever she does a talk, it's a good thing to attend for everyone. It is a subject that we cannot avoid or allow complacency as a community.

The Fourmile Fire is almost 14 years behind us and it did not make us impermeable to wildfires. Please make sure that your property is mitigated, grasses stay short, gutters are cleaned, and you and your family (including pets) have an emergency evacuation plan. Anyone that knows me knows that I have a soft spot for animals, and in the near future we will present a plan that is geared towards the coordination of evacuating animals as a pilot project in cooperation with an animal rescue organization. Stay tuned, but do work on your mitigation and as always let me know if you have any questions at all.

Regards,

Chief Micheal Schmitt

**CWPP Committee Update -
By Abby Silver**

CWPP Planning Meeting:

This year’s meeting was held on March 26 with about 15 community members attending. We will be continuing to pursue projects that were begun or envisioned in prior years, and continue to offer the same community services that we’ve been providing. This includes:

- Community Chipping (more on this below)
- Several water projects including a pressurized hydrant at the corner of Misty Vale and CR83 and the addition of a 20,000-gallon cistern along Whispering Pines at the Y.
- Continuing to maintain our egress routes and remove hazard trees from along all district roads.
- Continued funding for our Wildfire Mitigation Rebates.
- Fuels treatment projects: implementing the Dry Gulch South project and pursuing grants for the Dry Gulch North project.

Full details and minutes from the meeting will be posted on the SFPD website.

Spring chipping is coming soon:

Boulder County’s Wildfire Partners program began offering free community chipping last fall, and SFPD

is delighted to continue taking advantage of this opportunity. The program, which is funded by the Wildfire Mitigation Sales Tax, will save the district tens of thousands of dollars!

Spring chipping will take place the week of **June 10** (weather dependent as usual). Please keep your eyes peeled for emails from our Sunshine Fire communications starting in early May with details on staging piles and how to sign up. If you plan to start working on this sooner and have any questions about specifics on how or where to stage your slash, please reach out to Abby (abberoo@msn.com) for more information.

Please note that the sign-up will be a little different this year than in the past so please read the May sign-up email carefully when it lands in your inbox.



Dry Gulch South – cutting is about to begin

The Dry Gulch South fuels treatment project involves thinning vegetation on a number of properties in the lower part of our fire district between 3100 and 3600 Sunshine Canyon Drive. The project has been divided into three subsections, and cutting is scheduled to begin on the first section in late April and the second section in June/July. The schedule for the final section is still TBD.

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<p>Save the date: Sunshine Community Festival Sunday, September 22nd, 2024 at the StarHouse</p>

CWPP Committee Update - Continued from Page 4
By Abby Silver

Sunshine Canyon Drive may occasionally be reduced to one lane while wood is being loaded for transport. Please keep an eye on your SFPD communications emails for details as the project is underway.



The start of the Dry Gulch work

Homeowners Insurance Woes

There has been a lot of chatter in Sunshine, Boulder County, and across the state and region about the challenges of securing and maintaining homeowner’s insurance, particularly in areas shown on risk maps to be more vulnerable to wildfires. This of course has been impacting our community!

There is no silver bullet that I know of to solve this problem, but a Wildfire Partners certificate can potentially help those who have received non-renewal notices and new homebuyers. Their certificate can help participants obtain or maintain insurance. The certificate can also be uploaded to your MLS listing to help you sell your home. Please contact them directly for more information at <https://wildfirepartners.org/west-boulder-county/individual-home-assessments/>

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Sunshine has partnered with our neighboring fire protection districts of Four Mile, Sugarloaf and Gold Hill to create a joint Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The four districts make up the Boulder West Wildfire Authority (BWWA). The BWWA CWPP, which was completed in 2023, is posted to the SFPD website.

Thanks!!! Abby Silver

CWPP Committee Chair: abberoo@msn.com

Burn Permits for Bonfires & Fire Pits:

Remember that **every year** in the Sunshine Fire Protection District you need a new burn permit for **fire pits** and **bonfires**. If you have a question or need a burn permit, please contact our Fire Marshal Michael Johnson (775) 790-2662 marshal@sunshine-fpd.org, or Chief Schmitt.

Sunshine Website and Community Directory

SFPD Communications:

To receive SFPD email communications or to update your email address for both urgent and non-urgent SFPD business please contact chief@sunshine-fpd.org. SFPD communications may include announcements, evacuation information, safety concerns/issues, CWPP, and fire department information. The SFPD announcement emails will not be used for conversations/discussions.

Directory:

The Community Directory is available on our Sunshine website. To make changes or for instructions and password please email directoryupdates@sunshine-fpd.org. It is password-protected for security. This directory is for just our community, please do not share it outside of our community and protect our secure access.

Sunshine Community Forum:

As a way to keep our Sunshine community connected, we created a special Google Group called the Sunshine Community Forum. It's a private group that allows all our neighbors to post non-commercial topics and respond to others, (lost dog, bear sighting, help finding a contractor, questions about our community, etc.) If you would like to join this group or more instructions on how to post to this group, please contact John Bauer at JRBauer01@gmail.com.

SFPD Mitigation Funds Are Available for Home Hardening

Multiple scientific post-wildfire disaster studies have shown that embers and surface fire are responsible for the majority of home loss during all western wildfires. There are many simple steps that each of us can take to make our homes more resilient, and SFPD wants to help!

The CWPP Committee, with board approval, has allocated funding to support improvements to the wildfire resiliency of homes in our district. This is designed as a partnership with Boulder County's Wildfire Partners program. Homeowners who join Wildfire Partners will receive a report detailing the vulnerabilities of their structure(s) and the defensible space around them, as well as a list of mitigation measures. Any SFPD taxpayer who joins the Wildfire Partners program for the first time will be eligible for up to a \$1000 match from SFPD toward either forestry work or home retrofits that are required or recommended on their Wildfire Partners report.

Examples: If home retrofit work (like creating a gravel border around the home or patching holes in siding) costs \$1000, you could receive \$500 from this fund; if it costs \$2200 the homeowner could receive \$1000. If forestry work costs \$4500 and Wildfire Partners provides their maximum of \$2000 toward this work, homeowners could receive an additional \$1000 from SFPD.

Please visit www.wildfirepartners.org for more info on the Wildfire Partners program. Please contact Abby Silver (abberoo@msn.com) with any questions or to apply for SFPD reimbursement. Receipts will be required, and homeowners' time does not count.

Fire Marshal's Report

By Michael Johnson

*Water, water, every where,
Ne any drop to drink.*

- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" 1798

In the poem recounting the travels of the gray-bearded Mariner, these well-known lines describe the conundrum of a thirsty crew as their ship idles near the Equator. Their plight - the need for drinkable, usable, water - is very much like our own. At first the comparison seems ridiculous, and of course, like any analogy, it eventually breaks down (such is the nature of analogies). But the essence of those two lines came very much to embody how I saw, and felt, about the fire fighting water supply for Sunshine Canyon.

After taking over as Marshal in 2021, the first project which I undertook was a review of the District's cistern policy and water supply. For someone in an urban area, needing to

think about water supply may seem bizarre. The hydro-rich environment of a city has a pressurized hydrant every 400-500 feet. Water supply is built into its very foundation and for a residential structure fire, this is a non-issue.

The importance of water supply is on par with having trained firefighters and capable equipment. In a sense, this virtuous triangle of suppression - people, equipment and water - is a perfect counterpoint to the age-old fire-triangle* of destruction. Take away an element of the suppression triangle, and you can't fight fire. In Sunshine Canyon, we have great people, we have equipment (some great, some good - all useful), but do we have water?

At first dip, Sunshine has a mind-boggling, 300K+ gallons of

water. Practically inconceivable that we don't meet the third leg, but that's not the end. The pivotal issue, which brings us back to the Mariner's dilemma, is do we have usable water. In this context, that is gallons per minute, on the fire. Many factors affect the answer to this question: How long does it take to move water from where we have it, to where we need it? In a very simplistic comparison, this means it would be more difficult to fight a structure fire at the end of Whispering Pines as compared to a fire adjacent to Sunshine Fire Station 2. One reason for this is their respective distance from the nearest water source, with a more nuanced view being the number of gallons per minute that could be moved onto the fire.

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* For the more savvy, the fire triangle has been replaced by a fire tetrahedron - but don't let that spoil your reading.

Wildfire Readiness Tips

- * Create a 3-5 ft. non-combustible "vegetation free" perimeter around all structures and always keep wildland grass cut to a max height of 4 in. within 30 ft. of all structures.
- * Ensure your roof has a Class A fire rating
- * Remove branches that hang over the roof
- * Keep wood piles at least 30 ft away from your house and uphill from any structures
- * Make sure gutters and the top and underside of decks are always clear of flammable debris.
- * Screen all attic, roof, soffit, and foundation vents with 1/8 in. metal screening.

Sunshine Fire Protection District Board News
Jean Gatzka, Dan Fischer, John Bauer, Pat Noyes, Dick Smith

There is a lot of very positive work happening in Sunshine that is a result of the truly amazing efforts of all the many people who volunteer to help the district and community in so many different ways.

Our district is so fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated all-volunteer team of firefighters led by Chief Schmitt. We can't thank them enough for all they do! Notably, during the recent power outage firefighters kept generators going by refilling fuel every few hours day and night to keep communications equipment functional.

Sunshine FPD is already directly benefiting from the passage of Boulder County Emergency Services Sales and Use Tax and the Wildfire Mitigation Sales and Use Tax which voters approved in November 2022.

The district received \$104,000 for apparatus improvements and new equipment and is part of a multi-district award for new radios. This wonderful new resource is funding a necessary (and costly) update for our new 4505 engine and a new command vehicle for the district.

Also, we received a Boulder County Strategic Fuels Mitigation Grant of \$170,000 for the Dry Gulch South

Fuels Reduction Project. This is in addition to \$124,600 received in a Colorado State Forest Service grant.

Getting these grants is no small task. Alan Kirton and Nicole Esplin are true heroes for all their efforts to get these grants and to coordinate the projects to get the work done.

We also want to thank all the community members who graciously help the district by contributing financially. The 2023 fund-raising effort was a great success, raising over \$18,000! The November wine-tasting and silent auction was a truly special event thanks to Emily Gebhardt, Yetta Lee, Jim Peacock, and many others. Your donations really make a difference in equipping our firefighters, engines, and supporting the work they do.

JOIN US any 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at Station One for monthly Board Meetings. Feel free to contact board members if you have any questions or concerns about what's happening in the district.

Your Sunshine Fire Protection District
Board of Directors

****** Boulder County's Emergency Alert Notification System ******

This system allows residents of Boulder County to be notified of emergency situations including mandatory evacuations notices in a variety of ways including on their **cell phone**, home, and work phones. This can be sent to you by text messaging and e-mail. You will receive time-sensitive messages for your chosen locations such as home, work, school, and family. YOU pick where you pick how.

To register for these alerts or to validate your existing account please go to: <https://boulderodm.gov/>

Fire Marshal's Report - Continued

Looking at Sunshine district as a whole, likelihood of success in fighting a structure fire ranges from excellent to very unlikely. One factor, which has been the thrust of the current Department practice with respect to cisterns, is whether there is an onsite fire fighting cistern**, typically 10K gallons. An onsite cistern can provide needed water at the outset, giving responders time to build a water supply chain from further away. I believe this practice served the District well, but I also believe it's time to tack.

For many reasons that I won't dive into here, my recommendation is that we shift emphasis from onsite cisterns, typically useful for a single house, to community cisterns. The community cisterns would be much fewer in number, larger, and strategically

placed. There are significant repercussions in this shift, including potential cost to the district at the community level as well as to individual households. In a final nod to the analogy, my recommendation reflects an undercurrent of frustration I've felt with the contrast between available water and usable water. Details are being waded through by the Fire Department Board, but ultimately this will be presented for community comment and support. When that happens, I urge all of you to get involved: engage, ask questions, understand the pros and cons, know what this change could mean and how it would affect you.

Fire Marshal Michael Johnson

** Distinct from drinking or agricultural supply cisterns, a fire fighting cistern holds water solely for the purpose of fighting fire.

Four-district Tool Library

Residents of SFPD (along with our neighbors in Fourmile, Gold Hill, and Sugarloaf) can borrow tools to help with fire mitigation from our new four-district Tool Library.

Where: Poorman Station 1740 Fourmile Canyon

How: contact Ellie Prain
districtadmin@fourmilefire.org

What:

- Electric Weed Wacker
- Pole Saw Attachment
- Hand Saw
- Rake
- Looper



Officer Caleb Seviaan getting fitted for new bunker gear that is being provided through a grant

Lithium-ion Battery Safety

With new technology comes new risks. As Lithium batteries become more prevalent in our homes there is an adherent risk that we all need to be aware of to help prevent dangerous situations.

Some items in your homes, but not limited to, that may have lithium-ion batteries are electric toothbrushes, phones, laptops, power tools, e-bikes, electric vehicles, and solar battery backup systems.

From the first sign of a problem, you could have less than one minute to escape a lithium-ion battery fire so be sure to:

- Get out if you notice an unusual smell, white or gray wispy smoke indicates there is immediate danger of fire. Get out immediately and call 911. Lithium-ion battery fires create a myriad of chemicals and gasses that are reactive, toxic, and flammable. Exposure can be lethal with as little as a breath. If you suspect such a fire do not stay in the vicinity but go to fresh air, go upwind, and call 9-1-1 as soon as possible. For perspective: Smoke from these fires are so toxic that it can cause us to take our protective gear to the hazardous waste facility as it cannot be cleaned to a safe level for firefighters to wear again even after washing.
- Choose certified devices
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Only use the charging equipment that comes with the product.
- Store batteries away from extreme temperatures, direct sunlight, exits, and anything flammable
- Never charge on a bed or flammable surface
- Charge larger devices (such as eBikes) away from your exit path and outside your home if possible.
- Do not charge larger devices overnight.
- Check battery-powered devices often for damage or abuse such as swelling or punctures.
- Listen for unusual hissing or popping sounds.
- Watch out for excessive heat or a strange odor.
- If you notice any of these warning signs, stop using the lithium-ion battery-powered device immediately.
- Responsibly dispose of old or damaged batteries by taking them to the nearest battery recycling center.
- Never discard batteries, chargers, or battery-powered devices in regular trash bins.

For more information and to watch a safety video see: <https://batteryfiresafety.org/#section-1>

SFPD OFFICERS

Chief - Michael Schmitt
(303) 246-4519
chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Chief - Henry Ballard
(303) 449-8619
deputy-chief@sunshine-fpd.org

Fire Marshal -
Michael Johnson - (775) 790-2662
marshal@sunshine-fpd.org

Deputy Fire Marshal -
Paul Hourihan - (303) 551-3443
pthourihan@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President - Jean Gatz
jeangatz@gmail.com

Treasure - Dan Fischer
fischer_dp@outlook.com

Pat Noyes
pat@patnoyes.com

Dick Smith
regjsmith@gmail.com

John Bauer
jrbauer01@gmail.com

**COMMUNITY WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)**

Co-Chairs

Abby Silver - abberoo@msn.com
Alan Kirton - alanj.kirton@gmail.com

Other Volunteer Positions

Deputy Treasurer -
Stephanie O’Hearn
stephanie@drnuzzi.com

Events Coordinator -
Emily Gebhardt
emilydreyer@hotmail.com

SFPD’s Website:
www.sunshine-fpd.org

SFPD Phone #
303.786.7731

Instagram -
@sunshinefire.boulder.
colorado

Are you ready to Volunteer for SFPD?

We are always looking for dedicated individuals to become auxiliary department members as Quartermaster, grant writers, station cleaners and organizers, event managers/support and equipment managers. Please contact **Michael Schmitt** at chief@sunshine-fpd.org if interested.

Calendar

April:

- 5 Medical Training - 7-9 PM
- 8 Practical Training - 8AM -5 PM (Wildland Refresher)
- 11 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ station #1
- 27 Classroom Training - 7 to 10 PM

May:

- 5 Medical Training 7-9 PM
- 9 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ Station 1
- 13 Practical Training 8:30 AM - 12 PM
- 25 Classroom Training -Fire Attack 7 to 10 PM

June:

- 2 Medical Training 7 -9 PM
- 10 Practical Training 8:30 - 12 PM
- 13 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM. @ Station 1
- 22 Classroom Training 7 -10 PM

Comments or suggestions for next newsletter contact:
Jennifer Lansky at 303.442.2709 or jen@lansky.cc