



The Sunshine Fire Protection District Newsletter

Letter from the Chief
By Michael Schmitt

Dear Sunshine Residents,

As we get closer to autumn, winter weather won't be far. Whether you have been living in this community for a while or are brand new, we are here to help if you have any questions on winter preparedness. It is, of course, in our interest to be able to help you have a clear driveway. Another good resource is CDOT, the Colorado Department of Transportation. Their website at <https://www.codot.gov/travel/winter-driving/winter-preparedness> provides several good tips.

If you would like to schedule a visit from us, please let me know, and we'll be happy to give you some pointers as well. If you do rely on a snow removal service, now is the time to start making those calls to see which contractor best fits your needs. I understand that there aren't many, but if you communicate with your neighbors, you can

request pricing as a group. This is helpful for contractors who prefer to plow driveways of several homes next to each other rather than driving miles between each customer.

Living in our beautiful rural area comes with unique responsibilities. As you tackle your annual property maintenance, I want to highlight a few key items that are crucial for the safety and well-being of our entire community.

As of July 31, 2025, SFPD has responded to 75 calls.

- Structural, car, & wildland fire/smoke reports – 8
- Vehicle/Bike Accident – 1
- Medical/Medical Assist – 26
- Hazardous Conditions - 1
- Other/Autom. Alarm Activated - 3
- Dispatched & Canceled in Route - 36

1. Emergency Vehicle Access: Is Your Driveway Ready?

One of the biggest obstacles we face during an emergency is a poorly maintained driveway. Our fire engines are significantly longer, wider, and heavier (40,000-50,000 lbs) than a standard vehicle and have a high center of gravity. This makes navigating narrow or steep driveways challenging. To ensure we can reach you when you need us most, please ensure your driveway meets the Boulder County Emergency Vehicle Access Standard:

- Width: A minimum of 12 feet, with an additional 2 feet of shoulder on each side.
- Vertical Clearance: At least 13 feet and 6 inches, free of overhanging tree branches.
- Grade: No more than 12-16%, depending on the length.

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Letter from the Chief - Cont
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- Surface: A well-maintained, graded surface that is cleared of snow and ice in the winter.
- Pullouts: A pullout should be placed about every 400', sometimes that can be less given a lack of curviness of the road.

While the physical space isn't always achievable with our older mountain driveways, vegetation is the main culprit for us, besides the narrow roads with no pullouts. We frequently encounter driveways with overhanging trees or surfaces that haven't been graded in years, which can seriously delay or even prevent our response. Additionally, please keep driveway pullouts and wide turns clear. These areas are designed for emergency vehicles to maneuver and are not intended for parking cars, RVs, or trailers.

If you are unsure whether our largest engine can safely access your home, please contact me directly. We are happy to schedule a visit to assess your driveway.

2. Can We Find You? The Importance of Clear House Numbers

In an emergency, seconds count. Please ensure your

house number is large, reflective, and clearly visible from the main road, day or night. Overgrown grass, shrubs, or decorative rocks can easily obscure signs. Clear signage is vital not only for us but also for our partners at the Boulder County Sheriff's Office and AMR ambulances, who may not be as familiar with our district.

3. Burn Permits: A Partnership for Safe Burning

The Sunshine Fire Protection District (SFPD) requires a local burn permit in addition to the one issued by Boulder County. This allows us to connect directly with residents about safe burning practices. Our goal is not to prohibit fires but to prevent wildfires. We've seen everything from hot fireplace coals tossed in dry grass to campfires built under trees. The SFPD permit process provides us with a visit to your property, assess the situation, and offer guidance to ensure your burn is safe for you and the community. We have had many situations in the past where as part of this process we were able to prevent fires that had a high probability of turning into a serious issue.

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*****IMPORTANT WINTER ASH & COAL SAFETY NOTICE*****

- The ONLY proper method of disposing of ashes and coals is to put them in a metal container with a lid that is designed for that task, then drown them with water.
- The ONLY way to know if they are cool is if you can put your hand in the coals/ashes, all the way to the bottom, without your hand getting hot.
- NEVER dispose of warm or hot ashes on your deck.
- NEVER cover ashes with snow regardless of where they are placed

Letter from the Chief - Cont

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4. Smoke & CO Detectors

Please continue to test your detectors monthly, change batteries at least annually, and remove excessive dust. As you clean or test them, check the date on the back of the detector, and replace any expired detectors. We have had several calls in the last couple of years where it was sheer fortune that nothing worse had happened because a functioning CO detector alerted the family and saved lives. I can't stress the importance of these small and relatively cheap life-saving devices enough.

THANK YOU: I would like to express my gratitude for the many people who are helping us as a fire department and as a district "truck along" so well. I am probably going to forget someone, as I sometimes only hear about the involvement later, for which I am sorry.

We have Emily Gebhardt and her daughter Maddie, who continue to help with a plethora of items in and around the stations. If you have noticed how tidy and clean the station and its surroundings were at the community fest, well, that wasn't me or a firefighter. Emily and Maddie are a joy to be around while they help the firefighters who are already stretched with time on training and calls. Emily, of course, continues to organize events and help us get food for our training. You can ask the firefighters; when Emily makes the food, a level of excitement starts making the rounds.

Beth Byerlein and Jennifer Newton painted the bathroom at Station 1, following a remodel that included a new shower, completed by Dan Fischer and Michael Greenberg. I can't stress enough how important it was to get a shower in one of the stations.

This Reduces our firefighters' exposure to carcinogens and helps prevent them from taking them home to their families. This is really important to us, and a shower is a vital step to prevent this from happening.

Cindy Howard, Patrice Landauer, and Emily Gebhardt who did a ton of work in pulling off yet another successful Sunshine Community "Festival".

David Battany, who many may not know, has a history of serving the district back to the early 1980's. If you run into him, ask him about his number of anecdotes from those days. David over a short period of time has helped us in a variety of ways.

Jennifer Lansky, who helped find a suitable way to honor Don Dick's contribution to the district and community. She continues to not only create this newsletter but also manage some vital back-office functions.

Thank you all for making a difference in helping us succeed. None of those pieces of the puzzle is small.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our dedicated SFPD Firefighters, who selflessly answer the call, day and night.

I would also like to welcome a new SFPD firefighter, Kevin Schulte, who is now in the midst of the structure fire academy for the next three months. Enjoy!

If you, as a resident in Sunshine Canyon, have any questions for me, please always get in touch. If it is an emergency, never call or text me, call 9-1-1 instead.

Michael Schmitt

Chief, Sunshine Fire Protection District

CWPP Committee Update

By Abby Silver & Alan Kirton

We are constantly seeing examples of what an amazing community we have in Sunshine. From our well-attended community events and meetings to our active online community forum and friendly chats when we meet, it's obvious we feel proud and privileged to live in a place where we care about each other and the natural environment we call home. With that in mind, it's wonderful to recognize that the wildfire mitigation work you do on your property helps protect your human and non-human neighbors too!

Individual mitigation efforts are important, but when they are aggregated across the community, that's where true resiliency exists. Creating defensible space around your home not only reduces the likelihood of flames spreading from the forest to your house, it also prevents a house fire from spreading to the adjacent forest and effecting neighboring houses. And fuels mitigation is designed to limit fire intensity and spread when (not if) fire returns to our landscape. Together we can make a difference!

Fall Chipping Event October 20-24

Sign-up is Happening Now:

SFPD is taking advantage of Wildfire Partners' free community chipping again this year. The program, which is funded by the Wildfire Mitigation Sales Tax, saves the district tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Fall chipping is scheduled to take place October 20-24. Emails have already been sent out with instructions for signing up and more will follow as we get closer to the date of the event.

If you 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 each participant will need to register. Please read the sign-up email carefully when it lands in

your inbox. Registration ends on **October 14.**

Financial Incentives for Wildfire Mitigation:

There are financial incentives available to SFPD residents to help offset the costs of wildfire mitigation projects.

- Start with a free Wildfire Partners individual home assessment.
- Anyone who is enrolled in that program is eligible for up to a \$2000 matching award for forestry work from Wildfire Partners if you hire a contractor from their approved list.
- SFPD is also offering up to an additional \$1000 match for completing any action items in the report that are Recommended or Required. Receipts and before and after photos will be needed. Reach out to Abby abberoo@msn.com with any questions. A WP assessment is a requirement for SFPD residents to qualify.

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Michael Johnson at the Districts Cistern meeting

CWPP Committee Update - Cont
 By Abby Silver & Alan Kirton

Dry Gulch South Fuels Reduction Project is Completed!

The Dry Gulch South fuels reduction project involved thinning vegetation on 14 properties covering 70 acres on both sides of Sunshine Canyon between 3100 and 3700 Sunshine Canyon Drive. There were 7 homes within the project area that had their D-space enhanced. The funding for the project came from a CSFS Incentives for Local Government Grant (\$124,600), a Boulder County Strategic Fuels Mitigation Grant (\$169,880) and the SFPD CWPP mill levy (\$116,000).

Dry Gulch North Fuels Reduction Project – The Project is Now Fully Funded

The Dry Gulch North fuels treatment project will involve thinning vegetation on 10 properties covering 57.4 acres on both sides of Sunshine Canyon between 3700 and 4100. There are 8 homes within the project area that will have their D-space enhanced.

With the help of CSFS the project boundaries have been marked and the trees to be removed have been marked. The next step in the process is to send out an

RFP to forestry contractors to get bids on work. The RFP and bid process is expected to last about 6 weeks. Cutting and extraction is expected to begin late this fall or early spring 2026. We have until the end of 2027 to complete the work.

Project funding is coming from a CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant (\$188,846) and a Boulder County Strategic Fuels Mitigation Grant (\$188,846). SFPD has also been awarded a USDA State Fire Assistance Grant (\$136,010) which, at this point, is still funded. The grants exceed the project estimated cost of \$377,892 so the expectation is that we will not need to use any SFPD funds for this project.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Sunshine has partnered with our neighboring fire protection districts of Four Mile, Sugar Loaf 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 on the SFPD website.



Save the Date:



**For the Third Annual
 Sunshine Wine Tasting Fundraiser!
 NOVEMBER 7th at the Sunshine
 Schoolhouse 6-9 pm.**

Sunshine FPD Board News

Dick Smith, Dan Fischer, Jennifer Newton, Bill Stahl, and Marc Kohler

Hi Folks, Happy Fall

This summer has been rather eventful for the Board. The new Board members (Bill Stahl and Jennifer Newton) officially took the oath of office in May. The Board then selected Dick Smith as the new chair and Pat Noyes as secretary. Dan Fischer will remain as treasurer. Many thanks to former chair Jean Gatza and John Bauer for their service to the district as they leave the Board. John will remain as our communications director. In July, Pat Noyes resigned her position on the Board. Subsequently, the Board selected Marc Kohler to fill the remainder of Pat's term on the Board until 2027. Introducing him:

Marc moved to Sunshine Canyon nine years ago and lives in the house his parents built in 1992. He is a dad, a husband, and a volunteer SFPD firefighter.

Bill Stahl then agreed to be Board secretary to replace Pat. We thank Pat for her time serving on the Board. Pat has also been diligently updating the Sunshine directory. Look for that update to be coming out soon.

In June, Fire Marshal Michael Johnson gave a presentation to the community on a proposed cistern plan for the district. The plan includes installation of 7 new 20,000-gal cisterns, plus a hydrant connected to the Station 2 cistern. The cisterns would primarily be located along Sunshine Canyon Drive and situated to include as many homes within 1000 ft as possible. The hydrant would be located on County Road 83. Michael's presentation was well received and there was much discussion about how and when to implement the plan. If you missed the presentation, or want more information, the slides that Michael prepared are available in the SFPD web page under the Community Wildfire Protection Planning tab.

In July, Dan Fischer and Michael Greenberg completed the shower installation at Station 1. Thank you to both for all the volunteer hours they put into that project. The shower looks great and has already been put to use by Chief Schmidt. Check it out when you get a chance.

This past year we have experienced what only can be considered to be an insurance crisis. Home insurance policy rates have been substantially raised, and in many cases, canceled all together. The Board and Chief Schmidt have been researching ways to improve the situation. Implementing an expedited water policy plan and creating a parttime paid position for the fire chief are important steps that could achieve a more favorable ISO insurance rating for the district (ISO is a private rating organization relied on by the insurance industry in evaluating risk). However, these are not steps that the current district budget will accommodate. The estimate is that additional funding, represented by a 6.1 mill levy increase, would be needed to modestly accomplish those two steps. This would result in an annual tax increase for our residents of approximately \$365 for each million dollars of actual value (as determined by the Boulder County Appraiser) for your home.

Board Meetings: The 2nd Tuesday of the month at Fire Station #1 from 6:30 - 8:30 PM. These meetings are always open to the public, and our agenda leaves time for public comment and input.

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Sunshine FPD Board News - Continued

The Board has opted to let the community decide with a November ballot measure whether taking these steps to potentially improve our ISO rating, while maintaining and enhancing the capabilities of our firefighters, is a worthwhile endeavor. Consequently, you will see on the November ballot a single mill levy request coupling the paid chief position and cistern funding together. Both have been determined by the District Board as essential for an improved ISO rating. Meanwhile, Chief Schmidt will be continuing discussions with ISO officials to this end.

On a lighter note, this is being written a few days before our community festival. As Spring is way too late to thank our festival organizers, let me whole-heartedly up-front thank Emily Gehardt, Patrice Landauer, and Cindy Howard for their tireless efforts in putting together the festival. Hope that you had an opportunity to attend.

Be sure to follow all the news in the district by visiting our website at www.SunshineFPD.org.

Are you planning to burn slash this winter?

If so, you need two burn permits, one from the county and one from SFPD.

- Boulder County Permit information: <https://www.bouldercounty.org/safety/fire/burn-permits/>
- SFPD Permit: <http://www.sunshine-fpd.org/downloads/Slash-burn-permit-v4.pdf>

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to our fabulous neighbors Emily Gebhardt, Patrice Landauer, and Cindy Howard for planning a wonderful Sunshine Fall Festival. Your extraordinary effort and creativity is appreciated. Also, thank you to all who came out and enjoyed the festivities and Gregg Freeman fabulous band, Blue Revolution, for providing live music.



Our Community Festival leaders
Patrice Landauer, Cindy Howard, and
Emily Gebhardt with Jean Gatza

Communication & Sunshine 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. Help us by keeping this information updated with your information.

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. If you would like to join this group, please contact John Bauer at JRBauer01@gmail.com. Also, please email John if you would like more instructions on how to post to the group.

Historic Sunshine Arts and Crafts Fair

One day only!!

Saturday, October 4, 2025

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunshine School House

387 County Rd. 83, Boulder, CO 80302

Artwork, Fine Arts, Crafts, Jewelry, Pottery, Repurposed Materials, Vintage Tie-Dye, Honey, Baked Goods, Delightful Conversations, Community Enrichment and Much More!



Blue Revolution playing at the Community Fest



Don Dick's memorial at Station #2



A Sunshine Fire Fighter enjoying the view while on break from fighting the South Rim Fire in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison



Chief Schmitt at the South Rim Fire in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison

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

Chair - Dick Smith
regjsmith@gmail.com

Jennifer Newton
(310) 704-7706
livjoyously@yahoo.com

Treasure - Dan Fischer
fischer_dp@outlook.com

Marc Koehler
marckoehler@gmail.com

Bill Stahl (720) 775-2057

**COMMUNITY WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)**

Co-Chairs

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

Other Volunteer Positions

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

Events Coordinators -
Patrice Landauer:
patriceca@aol.com
Cindy Howard:
cindyrgold@aol.com

SFPD’s Website:
www.sunshinefpd.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

Oct:

- 1 Medical Training - 7-9 PM
- 7 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ station #1
- 11 Practical Training - 8AM -12 PM
- 23 Classroom Training - 7 to 10 PM

Nov:

- 5 Medical Training 7-9 PM
- 7 Winetasting Fundraiser 6-9 PM
- 8 Practical Training 8:30 AM - 12 PM
- 11 SFPD Board Meeting 7:30 PM @ Station 1

Dec:

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

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