

# Smokescreen

January 2017

A Newsletter Publication of Missoula Rural Fire District

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Missoula Rural Fire District  
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Missoula, MT 59804  
[www.mrfdfire.org](http://www.mrfdfire.org)

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF — By Fire District Chief Bill Colwell

### *Missoula Rural Fire District Mission Statement*

*Missoula is our community and we strive for excellence in serving our neighbors. We will meet the community's fire, medical, and emergency needs in a professional, safe, and efficient manner. We will promote fire and life safety through education, code enforcement, and planning.*

Happy New Year!

I had the pleasure of reviewing the Missoula Rural Fire District's (MRFD) Mission Statement and Goals with crews on shift for December 1, 5, 6 and with the Volunteers during the December 1<sup>st</sup> training session. There were a lot of good questions and discussions during the four opportunities. The feedback has been positive and using the Smart Board conferencing format worked well.

For MRFD, 2016 has been a year full of community service, growth, and transition. I hope to review some of the projects and changes and project them into 2017 and the future. MRFD is a combination fire department. We have career and volunteer members who are the service providers.

Answering emergency calls for service is our number one priority. We respond from five fire station locations and cover 98 square miles in Missoula County, protecting a population of 38,500 people. There is still a week left in 2016, as I write this article, and our current call for service total is 2,290 incidents: 1,317 of those calls were emergency medical calls, 85 were fire calls, 81 hazardous condition calls, 4 rescue calls, 238 public assist and stand by calls, and 569 were coded good intent calls where someone has fallen or needs help up. This category also includes cancellations and false calls. We average about 45 calls per week, with about eighty percent being medical aid or public assist, where we respond to help people with a medical condition.



MRFD is governed by a five-person elected Board of Trustees (BOT) who volunteer their service to the community as members of the Board. MRFD and our citizens are very fortunate to have an active Board that is engaged and continues to support the activities of the organization and provide guiding leadership, policy, and funding oversight that enables the District to carry out our Mission. The current five-member Board has over 100 years combined service to MRFD. BOT members Dan Corti and Cheryl Hanson were re-elected for new terms for MRFD's BOT in May of 2016. Because of his retirement and resulting changes, Dan Corti resigned from the Board in August after serving almost 16 years. The BOT transitioned when Dick Mangan volunteered to fill the open spot until the 2017 election: he was appointed by the County Commissioners and is currently serving. BOT member Mangan has filed to run for re-election in the May 2017 election and BOT Chairperson Larry Hanson has also filed for re-election in this election. BOT members Ken Peers and Steve Cunningham are currently serving and their terms run until June of 2018.

Resource Manager (RM) Gordon Gieser announced and scheduled his retirement. Brian LaForest applied for the position of Resource Manager and was successful in that assessment and process. He has been working with Gordon as an Assistant Resource Manager since August 15, 2016, and will transition to the Resource Manager position when Gordon retires in the summer of 2017. The RM Division is busy: they have the day-to-day chores of keeping our rolling stock in top condition.

Other projects have included updating E-345, adding eDraulic extrication equipment to E-328, and putting a John Deere 850 Dozer into service. They introduced MRFD to the "Smurf," an acquired Air Force mobile service work platform for servicing our engines at their stations. They carry equipment and supplies on the truck to do most service type work in the station the unit is located. This process saves down time on the units and reduces



the amount of time the RM is moving units to service locations. They have also done specification work for breathing air compressor systems and radio communications equipment that are part of MRFD's grant application processes during 2016. An upgrade for Unit 302 has been bid and ordered and will arrive early in 2017.

Captain Rick Paulsen retired after thirty plus years of service as firefighter, fire officer, and Training Officer. This past summer, MRFD hired two new firefighters on June 27, 2016: Kirk Paulsen and Hector Gaytan. Captain Paulsen had the pleasure of completing their academy before he retired, and they started on the line during the first part of August.

Captain Jake Fuller became the new Training Technician for MRFD. Captain Fuller, along with Battalion Chief Greg Orr, the Training BC, are working closely with the Training Committee to prepare a Rookie Training Program for our newly hired firefighter Cameron Harris. Cameron was hired the end of December and will start his academy on January 3, 2017.

Captain Forest Brown is the new Liaison Officer for the Volunteers Association. He is working with Volunteer E-board members President Jeremy Gallagher and Vice President Robert Schwindt, along with the Administration, in order to strengthen the Volunteer Program. The training group is preparing to interview applicants this spring, and they are working on a volunteer academy for the early spring that will mirror the career training academy.

We have Resident Firefighter positions open currently and are accepting applications for those positions. An exciting change to the Resident Firefighter program is the acquisition of a FEMA grant called the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grant. MRFD received a recruitment and retention grant through SAFER that will enhance our tuition reimbursement program for MRFD Resident Firefighters. The grant is for a total of four years; in conjunction with the our current Resident program, MRFD can now provide a total of \$3,000 tuition reimbursement annually for each of our Resident positions. The program is designed to reimburse current MRFD Resident Firefighters up to \$1,500 at the end of the Winter and Spring Semesters. Eligible Resident Firefighters can be reimbursed for expenses receipted for attending and successfully passing classes during the previous semester. Classes can include work on an Associate's Degree, Bachelor of Science degree, an EMT, or Paramedic License training.

The retirements, along with some changes in the contract with Local 2457, have provided the opportunity for promotion. Lieutenant Toby Ballard was promoted to Captain and is the new Station Officer at MRFD Station #4, after Captain Fuller became the Training Technician. Andy Brown and Nick Houppert were promoted to lieutenant and are now floaters on C shift. We have balanced the three shifts, with 11 members on each shift working a 24/48 schedule. Balancing the shifts placed two floaters on each of the three shifts, and that caused the need for one additional lieutenant. Eric Huleatt successfully promoted to lieutenant and is the new floater on A shift. We shortened the Rotators group to six firefighter/EMTs because of this change in our staffing model, but it will return to seven firefighter/EMTs when firefighter/EMT Cameron Harris finishes his academy in February and moves to the line.

Our Injury Prevention Program has been very active doing fire prevention programs, child car seat fitting sessions and inspections in the Missoula Community. In conjunction with the Missoula County Fire Protection Association, MRFD helped deliver the match safety program to 1,378 first graders and presented the Firefighter Frank Puppet fire safety show for nearly 1,600 kindergarten students in the Missoula Community. The programs teach the following: Stop Drop and Roll, Home Fire Drills, Stay Low and Crawl Under Smoke to escape, match safety, and home fire safety rules. The Fire Marshal's Office conducted over two hundred building reviews during 2016. Those included both single family residential with sprinklers and commercial structures. The reviews also included several new apartment complexes. MRFD's Safe Kid's car seat fitting program hosts monthly appointment based car seat fitting events and does emergency walk in fitting when one of our seventeen car seat technicians are available to assist the public. During 2016, MRFD's Technicians have checked and fitted 325 car seats, helping to provide transportation safety for our youngest customers in the District.

MRFD has installed Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in our frontline units and Command vehicles. The MDTs can be moved from one engine to another. As an example, the MDT assigned to Station #4 can be utilized on E-341 or E-345 depending on the nature of the call for service. Changing to New World has been a training and technical challenge, and the installation and implementation of New World dispatching using the MDTs is a work in progress. The potential for improved customer service and firefighter safety and efficiency during response is a goal we are starting to realize as we work through the process. The dispatching, reporting and mapping parts of the New World/ MDT programming are functioning and we are working toward doing our business inspections and pre-plan information through New World and the MDTs. Having dispatch, reporting, mapping, inspection and preplanning information available to the Engine Officer or Incident Commander in the field during response is the end goal.

As part of a contract change with our computer maintenance provider we have updated and re-negotiated our Charter Contract, evaluated our Missoula County Phone system, and our Century Link service. Part of the update also includes a change to Windows 365, which has allowed MRFD to streamline our incident reporting software at the outlying stations. With the change to 365, Heidi Sather our Administrative Assistant will be able to manage MRFD's website. The changes with Charter, Century Link, and Missoula County have generated cost savings and reduced our future server maintenance costs. Part of the update also included wireless updating in each of the stations that allows the MDTs to stay online 24/7 and not incur data costs while in the stations.

I have mentioned the SAFER grant for Resident firefighter tuition reimbursement. It is important to mention other grants MRFD has been fortunate to secure in the last two years. As one of the host agencies for a Montana Regional Hazardous Materials Team, MRFD has received a Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant. The grant helps host and fund two Hazardous Materials Technician training classes and one Advanced Hazardous Material Technician class during the next three years. We also received a 2015 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for new self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs) that are now in service at MRFD. We were awarded a 2016 AFG for compressed breathing air systems that will be installed at Stations 1, 2, 4, and 5 during February of 2017. MRFD's grant writing program has been very successful and helped improve our ability to deliver service and provide safe response to our community. We are very thankful for the opportunities to apply for Federal Grants to enhance our ability to deliver improved service.

During the last two years, MRFD has updated our Mutual and Automatic Mutual Aid agreements with many of our response partners including the following: Frenchtown Rural Fire District, Missoula County Airport Authority, East Missoula Volunteer Fire Department, Potomac Greenough Fire Service Area, Clinton Volunteer Fire District, Florence Volunteer Fire District, Seeley Lake Volunteer Fire Department, and Butte Silver-Bow Fire Department.

We will initiate a web-based customer service feedback system that will be facilitated through MRFD's webpage. Our plan is to stand up the new website in February, and our customer feedback opportunity will be facilitated from a link on that site.

MRFD worked with Charter Communications and was fortunate to have the original Lolo Fire Station located on West Lewis and Clark Drive donated to the District. The log building was the home of the Lolo Volunteer Fire Department that later joined with MRFD. We currently are housing Local 2457's restored Engine #1 in the building and plan to work on restoring the building so it can become a fire museum for MRFD.

The Fuel Mitigation Crew worked through the summer in the community helping homeowners in the District to reduce the fuels around their homes and make their properties safer and more resistant to wildfire. The program cuts brush and thins trees on a property to produce defensible space around homes in the wildland urban interface. MRFD crews help 30 to 35 property owners each year with these projects, utilizing grant funding and homeowner matching funds to provide the work.

### **Goals for 2016-2017:**

- Support full-service response, serving our Community in a safe and efficient manner
- Staff initial arriving apparatus with personnel to make a positive difference on arrival at an incident
- Provide training and skill development to promote safe and efficient service and support career development for MRFD members
- Facilitate automatic mutual aid and mutual aid agreements to serve our Community's response needs
- Evaluate and support increased personnel response to major incidents
- Develop written response agreements for out-of-jurisdictional area responses
- Continue to improve documentation of station coverage and incident response of personnel, by integrating New World and TeleStaff records management programs
- Maintain active Labor Management relations with Local 2457 and the MRFD Volunteers Association to support safe and efficient service
- Explore modified benefit programs for MRFD Volunteers and work to improve retention of our Volunteer firefighters.
- Continue cooperative support with the U of M campus of the Helena College
- Facilitate implementation of Mobile Data Terminal response support in MRFD front line units and provide record management, inspection and preplan capabilities through those units

**Goals for 2016-2017 (Continued):**

- Implement New World dispatching, record management, and inspection/ preplan programs
- Maintain our ISO documentation and implement changes to support the new ISO rating schedule
- Develop an MRFD Policy Manual that parallels Missoula County's and facilitates consistency across our SOGs, as well as a transition to a Best Practices model for operations recommendations
- Support public safety and education programs and provide Safe Kids car seat fitting events for the Missoula community
- Maintain MRFD contact and involvement with neighborhood councils and homeowners groups.
- Provide a customer service feedback system
- Evaluate and compare area Master Plan recommendations
- Initiate and begin implementation of station alerting procedures and equipment, as well as integration with digital 911 response notification procedures
- Improve our facilities and infrastructure, and support our apparatus replacement process
- Develop confined space capabilities appropriate to our primary exposures
- Promote community awareness and responsibility for private property fuels reduction and seek continued funding to facilitate MRFD's fuels reduction program

There are about one hundred people who work and volunteer to carry out the Mission of Missoula Rural Fire District. Those involved folks range from the elected volunteer Board of Trustees, through the Administration, and the Career and Volunteer Firefighter/EMTs who roll the engines to the scene. The activities of each day are focused on small parts of these goals and that mission. It can be training, maintaining equipment, physical conditioning, managing the business of the District, responding a unit to a call for service or helping prevent an injury during a car accident by fitting a child's car seat. The dedicated combined effort makes it a whole. Our Mission Statement and written goals provide a finite tangible tool to measure our progress. The goals change as we succeed or adjust when we have setbacks. I talked a lot about retirements and transition during this article. The Mission and Goals are an overarching guideline to guide consistency and steer change into the future. 2016 has been a great productive year for MRFD and our customers: congratulations on a job well done. 2017 is another opportunity to serve. Wishing you a happy, and safe, New Year!

# January Smokescreen

*By Brent L. Christopherson, Assistant Chief*

If you are reading this, then most of you (I hope!) had the pleasure of being with family and enjoyed a very Merry Christmas. Of course, some of the best things about the holidays are being with family and friends and remembering how blessed we really are. Our ability to be with family and friends over the holiday season is of the utmost importance. Sometimes, however, travel, work, financial hardship, or even the weather won't allow it and there are many other reasons as well. One of the biggest difficulties around this time of year is when some of our loved ones are no longer with us. We would do anything to have them back.

Hardly a week goes by that there is not a news story about another house fire and lives that were lost. I can't help but think if those homes would have just had residential fire sprinklers in them the outcome would have been much better! Most, if not all of those people, and in many cases children, would still be alive if they did. Ask any of those folks that had a fire in which loved ones were lost, pets that are now gone, or their precious possessions destroyed, if they wished that they had residential fire sprinklers AFTER the fire: most all would probably say yes. If we could only turn back time...too bad, we can't. Most of us fall into the trap that

we always think something terrible like a house or apartment fire won't happen to us and it is only in the news and happens to others. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.



The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) shows through research and demonstrations that residential fire sprinklers have the following benefits:

- Save the lives of building occupants
- Save the lives of firefighters called to respond to a home fire
- Significantly offset the risk of premature building collapse posed to firefighters by lightweight construction components when they are involved in a fire
- Substantially reduce property loss caused by a fire

Let's start the new year by promoting the use of residential fire sprinklers even more than we do now, so that family and friends that may not be around otherwise will be because their homes are now fire sprinkler safe! Please visit the [www.firesprinklerinitiative.org](http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org) website for a whole lot of good information from National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

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Note: Total number of incidents that MRFD responded to in November 2016: 217 calls

# From the IAFF Local 2457

*By President Toby Ballard*

For the last ten years, I have been honored to be a part of the Missoula Rural Fire District. As our mission statement says, **"Missoula is our community and we strive for excellence in serving our neighbors."** The idea of serving our community is not something that is taken lightly for us either on or off duty. Everyday at work, we are happy to help in our community. It probably comes as no surprise that it is the same for us off duty. International Association of Fire Fighters Local 2457 carries out that mission in many different ways.

For over ten years now, Local 2457 has participated in the Seattle Stair Climb to raise money for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society (LLS). Local members raised money individually and in conjunction with Local 271 (Missoula Fire Department) in the Fire on Ice Hockey game. In past years, this has been one of the largest single event fundraisers of LLS. Between the hockey game and individual donations, our members have raised more than \$14,000 this year.

In our job, unfortunately we sometimes must meet people on their worst day. This year, we had a young girl sustain second and third degree burns in the Bonner area. Our firefighters were there for her on the initial call and were again privileged to be able to be with her and her family after she returned from the hospital in Seattle. Local 2457 was able to donate funds that had been set aside explicitly for burn victims many years ago, through various fundraising means such as charity golf tournaments. Because of this, Local 2457 was in a position to donate \$10,300 to the family of the child to help offset some of their medical expenses.

As we have done for many years, Local 2457 has also participated in the Fill the Boot fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. We are always proud to collect donations to aid in the treatment of the victims of this debilitating disease. This year we were able to collect over \$8,000 to continue the fight against this disease.

In the last four years, we have also been able to join up with Operation Warm to provide winter coats for children in need through Firefighter Coats for Kids. In those four years, we have been able to provide coats to over 1,000 children because of the donations that have been collected. We were already able to donate 340 coats this year with one event **still to go. This year alone, we had \$15,000 to work with because of the community's generosity.**

The Local also supports other causes throughout the year out of our Union dues, but the majority of what we have been able to accomplish has been achieved with the help of our community. We will always be here for the people of our community; but more importantly, we know that the people we serve are also willing to help each other. Together we have done great things and in the future I am sure that we will do many more.

Outside of fundraising efforts this year, we have also had several changes in the Local. Unfortunately, this year we lost one of our brothers, John Fidler. John was known to all and will be missed both inside the District and out. John positively affected many lives and this showed with the overwhelming support we saw during his memorial service.

In the last year, we have also seen two more members join the Local with one more coming soon. Kirk Paulsen and **Hector Gaytan have been a welcome addition to the Local. Kirk's hiring was special in that the spot he filled was that of** long time Local member and his father, Rick Paulsen, after his retirement. In the New Year, we are also looking forward to having Cameron Harris join us. He will be a welcome addition to our family.

**This year we also saw a change in Local 2457's Executive board. Ron Lubke stepped down after four years of being** President and we will never be able to thank him enough for the service he provided while in the position. Ron continues to be an active member and a valued part of the Local. As Ron retired, I was voted in to the position of President of Local 2457. I consider myself fortunate to be able to serve the Local in this capacity and am incredibly humbled by the support I have been given. Cooper Berry is continuing as Treasurer while Kory Burgess has filled the Vice President position and Chris Mohr has taken over as Secretary.

Missoula is our community and we are proud to serve it, on and off the job. We are thankful every day that we are allowed to do such meaningful and fulfilling work. We will continue to serve our community and would like to thank everyone for supporting all of the efforts of the Local and the District. We wish you all the best for your 2017. We will be here for you.

Thank you.  
Toby Ballard  
President, IAFF Local 2457

## BOT MEETINGS

The following is not a complete record. Contact Heidi at Station 1 if you would like a complete copy of meeting minutes.

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING: Nov 10, 2016**

**LOCAL 2457: President Toby Ballard reported:** Operation Warm has conducted three events so far this year: at Head Start, DeSmet School, and Bonner School. Between these three schools, we have distributed 340 coats. We are also planning to go to Hawthorne School before Thanksgiving and then try to do one or two more events in December. In total, we should be able to visit five or six schools. Also, we plan on donating to another project that will help Montana kids. During the December Local 2457 meeting, there was a unanimous vote to accept Mr. Casey Gunter as the new MRFD Chaplain, should the Board choose to accept him.

### **STAFF REPORTS:**

**Fire District Chief Bill Colwell reported:** There have been two significant incidents within the last three months on Interstate 90. Chief Colwell recently met with the new Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team coordinator, and they are looking to set up some peer support training. We are working on mental health wellness to train peer support. We want our crews to build a little stronger After Action Review (AAR) on small and medium incidents. We want to build relationships before a serious incident happens. Also, we are looking forward to having a new chaplain to assist us in that regard.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Introduction of the MRFD Chaplain:** Chief Colwell announced that Mr. Casey Gunter is retired Missoula City Police and retired University of Montana Police. He had felt inspired to choose MRFD to serve in the capacity as a chaplain. Captain Michael Bowman had invited him to come out for a ride along, and he has since been out for several ride along opportunities to meet the crews. They have all taken to him favorably, and as President Ballard had reported, he has received the full approval of the Local 2457. After further discussion, Secretary Cheryl Hanson moved to approve Mr. Casey Gunter as the new MRFD Chaplain. Vice Chair Ken Peers seconded the motion. Motion voted and passed. Mr. Gunter expressed his thanks to the Board, and said that he is honored to be able to now serve in this capacity.

**Clinton Donation Contract:** Chief Colwell explained that this was regarding the donation of the Survivair RIT (rapid intervention team) Pack to Clinton Fire. After a brief discussion, Vice Chair Ken Peers moved to sign this donation contract. Secretary Cheryl Hanson seconded the motion. Motion voted and passed.

# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jan 6 Dan Corti  
Jan 8 Sam Johnson  
Jan 18 Jason Dufner  
Jan 22 Tim Sayles  
Jan 27 Max Kottwitz



# Happy Birthday!

## ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS AND RESIDENTS!

Each Volunteer and Resident must have their completed report turned in by the 5th of each month, to ensure that they have no lapse in their worker's compensation coverage.

The primary purpose for the time record is to record your shift time.

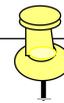
Please note that the section for "Training" hours refers to the training activities hosted by the training division.

If you respond to an incident *in addition* to your normal volunteer shift, please also record that under "Incidents" on your time record.

**\*\*DON'T FORGET — TURN IN YOUR DEC HOURS\*\***



**Congratulations to  
Lieutenant Eric Huleatt  
on your recent promotion!  
Well done!**



**Mark your  
Calendars:**

**2017  
AWARDS  
BANQUET  
MARCH**

*Details coming soon!*

## **Child Safety Seat Checkup Events**

**WHEN:** Saturday, Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>  
10:00 a.m — 2:00 p.m.  
**Appointment is Required!**

**WHERE:** MRFD Station #1  
2521 South Ave West, Missoula



*If you, or someone you know, would like to have help in getting a child's car seat or booster seat inspected/installed, please contact Station 1 at 549-6172 to schedule a free appointment!*