

Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Working Together: Fire Chiefs' Associations

Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association

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Meetings: *The Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association meets from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the 4th Wednesday of each month at various locations throughout the county.*



The Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association (Fire Chiefs) works hard to improve the level of service throughout the county through increased coordination, communication, standardization, and support. The desire to work together to improve interoperability is the driving force behind the efforts of the Fire Chiefs. At their monthly meetings, the group receives regular reports from committees and/or sub groups of the Association including fire instructors/training, fire prevention officers and a fire/arson investigation unit. Cal OES, CAL FIRE, Cal Chiefs, County OES, North Coast EMS, the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council (HCFSC), and others, as available, also contribute valuable information. These meetings provide a venue for sharing information about training, prevention, standards, legislation, grants, and new initiatives and innovations. Collaboration with these and other agencies has enabled the growth of productive and effective relationships that have proven to be beneficial to all parties.

The Fire Chiefs coordinate and sustain several programs and innovations that work together to support an ever-increasing level of fire and rescue service in Humboldt County. In order to provide quick and adequate response to fires, the Fire Chiefs developed and maintain a countywide mutual aid agreement in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU was made and entered into by and between all local fire service providers in the county as well as CAL FIRE. It states that the equipment, facilities, and trained personnel of each fire department are available to the other participants in the agreement on an as requested basis, which allows for a quick, decisive dispatch of resources. This agreement has been put to the test many times since its inception and has proven to be of great value as witnessed as recently as 2012 in Fairhaven, 2015 at the Star Hotel Fire in Fortuna, and 2016 on both Fourth Street and at the former Eureka Ice & Cold Storage on the waterfront in Eureka.

The on-going collaboration between the many fire agencies in Humboldt County has resulted in development of a county-wide designator system - a standardized numbering system to identify individual departments and their apparatus, an alarm matrix system designed to streamline dispatching of resources for larger incidents requiring aid from neighboring departments and numerous initiatives providing protocols for firefighter safety during various emergency operations with the most recent addressing the hazards associated with hash oil manufacturing.

Looking out for and assisting one-another is a consistent theme within the Fire Chief's Association, recently establishing an "immediate needs" request program, enabling Individual fire agencies to solicit critical equipment needs from other fire agencies in the county. This new program has proven to be very successful in quickly fulfilling those equipment requests through donations from other fire departments. The practice of looking out for one another has also carried over into the last two years of Measure Z funding where the focus has been personal protective equipment and needed equipment items for rural fire departments.

The County Fire Service faces numerous challenges that are inherent with the rural nature of the area in which we live. We continually struggle with financial hardship, volunteer recruitment and retention and providing services beyond jurisdictional boundaries; however, the Humboldt County Fire Chiefs and the departments they serve are determined to continue to work with the Board of Supervisors and County staff to find solutions. As Humboldt County's Fire Service, we do not take lightly the responsibility of providing high quality emergency services to our communities and we appreciate and value the opportunity to provide these services.

Southern Humboldt Fire Chiefs Association

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Additional Officers:

Treasurer: Chris Fisher, Palo Verde VFD

Secretary: Cheryl Antony, Shelter Cove VFD

Procurement Officer: Jim Fulton, Briceland VFD

Meetings: *The Southern Humboldt Fire Chiefs Association meets at 6:00pm on the 4th Monday of every month at the CAL FIRE Station in Garberville.*



The Southern Humboldt Fire Chiefs Association (SHFCA) is a venue for fire departments and community organizations in Southern Humboldt to collaborate for preparedness. The SHFCA is a chapter of the Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association, a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation, and comprises firefighters from all the departments and companies in the Southern Humboldt region.

The initial purpose of the SHFCA was to provide a stronger voice for fire departments to bring more training opportunities to the southern part of the county, increase communication between local departments and with CAL FIRE, and to create a stronger fire department identification and numbering system. Successful implementation of those goals over the last 18 years has grown the SHFCA to include representatives from the Southern Humboldt Fire Safe Council, the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council, the Red Cross, the Southern Humboldt Emergency Preparedness Team (SHEPT), the County Radio Dispatch Co-op, CAL-EMA, Humboldt County OES, and other emergency preparedness groups.

The SHFCA sponsors the Southern Humboldt Technical Rescue Team (SHTRT). The SHTRT is comprised of firefighters from the local departments who specialize in rope, water, and wilderness rescue. Team members are highly dedicated firefighters who train and respond to rescues in addition to the normal training and duties of their respective fire departments. TRT updates are given each month by TRT Chief Kai Ostrow.

The SHFCA recognizes that Southern Humboldt communities need to be informed about the issues surrounding wildfires, structure fires, emergencies, and disaster management. One of the tools used to inform the public is the "Burning Issues" fire and rescue radio talk show on KMUD FM radio. This show provides the SHFCA an opportunity to voice information to the public about training, prevention, standards, legislation, grant writing, and new initiatives and innovations. The show takes place on the fifth Sunday of any month with five Sundays, 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Eel River Valley Fire Chiefs Association

Ben Fleek, Bridgeville FPD: 707-777-3424;

John Broadstock, Scotia VFD: 707-845-2995;

Lon Winburn, Fortuna FPD: 707-725-5021;

Daniel DelBiaggio, Ferndale FPD: 707-786-9909

John Church, Carlotta CSD: 707-768-1714;

Ken Nielson, Loleta FPD: 707-733-5407;

Shane Wilson, Rio Dell FPD: 707-764-3329;



Left: Eel River Valley; source: Lost Coast Outpost **Right: Eel River Valley Fire Academy**

The goal of the Eel River Valley (ERV) Fire Chiefs Association is to improve and streamline administrative and operational objectives with the major focus being interoperability throughout the immediate area. The Fire Chiefs of the Eel River Valley Fire Departments meet quarterly to discuss and improve emergency response and training within the Eel River Valley and along Highway 36, east to Bridgeville. These discussions and planning sessions have led to various auto-aid agreements, communications plans, and fire pre-planning throughout the area.

The ERV Fire Chiefs' Association represents seven volunteer fire departments (VFD), including Scotia, Rio Dell, Ferndale, Loleta, Fortuna, Carlotta, and Bridgeville; and is responsible for the development and direction of the Eel River Valley Technical Resource Team. All departments utilize the ERV Fire Academy, an 80-hour basic firefighting course, to accomplish entry level firefighter training for new members. In addition, the group hosts an annual driver-operator training, company officer training and various other topics including live-fire training on a valley-wide concept.

Through the Boy Scouts of America, the Eel River Valley Fire Chiefs supports the Explorer Learning for Life Program—a career education program that is open to youth ranging from 14 to 20 years of age. The program builds career opportunities, life skills, citizenship and community involvement, character education and leadership experience, with the goal of helping young people mature and become responsible and caring adults. The program also serves as a recruitment tool for volunteer fire agencies, as many participating youth become volunteer firefighters.