



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Message from the Board	1
Message from the Chief	2
Spotlight on Health	3
A Very Special 911 Call	4
Wildfire/Chipping Update	6
Focus on Forest Health	8
Monthly CPR Class Dates	8



Elk Creek Fire Names New Fire Chief

A Special Message from the
Elk Creek Fire Protection District Board of Directors

Welcome to 2020 and a new decade! This decade will deliver both near-term and longer-term changes for the Elk Creek Fire Protection District (ECFD); growth is on the horizon! The Board of Directors is excited to share some news, some changes, and our plans to ensure fiscal responsibility within a growing budget.

In mid-November 2019, the Board of Directors graciously accepted the resignation of Fire Chief Bill McLaughlin. While his leadership and presence will be missed, we support his unique opportunity to assist another growing community and begin working his way toward retirement. We are grateful for the dedication, passion and experience he brought to this community in his eight years as ECFD Fire Chief. We are also grateful for the foresight and mentoring that ensured we had an excellent resource at the ready to carry ECFD into the future and all that it holds.

The ECFD Board of Directors is delighted to let our community know we have promoted Deputy Chief Jacob Ware to Fire Chief Ware, effective January 8, 2020. Chief Ware brings many years of experience, outstanding community connections and great respect within ECFD and neighboring fire districts. These attributes will allow Chief Ware to swiftly, confidently and successfully handle the many key tasks ahead. These include additional sharing of services amongst fire districts with likely district mergers. Exciting times lie ahead!

We thank this community for its huge vote of confidence and support through the passage of the 2019 mill levy. With this passage, ECFD is poised to expand and more effectively serve this growing community. Today, ECFD serves roughly 15,000 residents along with numerous community businesses across 98 square miles in Jefferson and Park counties. (cont. p2...)



Special message from the Board of Directors, cont.

We are committed to use the mill levy funds to:



Ensure appropriate career and volunteer staffing to meet increasing call volumes and community expectations. We are currently in the hiring process for additional Firefighter Paramedic/EMT staff to handle the increasing level of emergency calls within the district.



Update and maintain fire stations and key equipment, including repair of helicopter landing zones, repair of aging buildings, and replacement of aging emergency vehicles.



Enhance access to emergency water supply through repair and addition of cisterns. The water supply system at Station 1 has already been repaired.



Continue funding the well-received Wildland Fire Suppression Module that provides mitigation and chipping services to the community.

ECFD is actively pursuing every item described above, and we look forward to serving this community in an even more capable fashion for many years to come!

Thank you for your outstanding support of ECFD!

~ Greg Branch

President

ECFD Board of Directors



New Beginning

Chief's Message from Chief Jacob Ware



As I sit and write this article, it not only marks the beginning of 2020, but also a new chapter for Fire Chief Bill McLaughlin, who dedicated eight years of service to the Elk Creek Fire Protection District. During his time, he oversaw many initiatives and accomplishments that made the Elk Creek Fire Protection District one of the finest fire departments in the area. McLaughlin has moved to Idaho to lead another department into the future. I want to again thank him personally for his unselfish dedication to our profession and for assisting me with the professional development I needed to succeed as your new Fire Chief.

"I am humbled and honored with the opportunity to serve as the next Fire Chief of this great organization!"

As the title suggests, it is the start of a new beginning. I am humbled and honored with the opportunity to serve as the next Fire Chief of this great organization! I would like to thank the residents, the Board of Directors and the members of the department for their unwavering support of and belief in me.

I never imagined when I joined this organization in 2003 as a volunteer that someday I would be the Fire Chief. I have lived in Conifer since 2002, and I will continue working to make this an outstanding community in which to live, work and play. I have prepared myself for this opportunity and will do everything I can to help the organization move forward. I am excited to start this new chapter. (cont. p3...)

*New Beginning
(Message from
Chief Jacob Ware), cont.*

I look forward to working with the remarkable men and women within the department; together we will continue providing the highest possible level of public safety to our community.

With the community’s support, the department has succeeded in reaching many of its goals, and that continued support provides the opportunity to create even more progress. As stated in the previous letter from the board, the recent mill levy increase has already allowed Elk Creek to begin work on several projects that will increase our infrastructure and better serve the community. We are improving our water supply systems at stations 1, 2 and 4 so there will be a reliable and sustainable water supply along the 285 corridor. We will complete much needed building improvements, including installing new bay doors, repaving the parking lot/landing zone at station 1, and performing needed maintenance on several of our other stations in the district.

“I will strive to lead this agency toward the future and to continue the legacy of Elk Creek Fire.”

All of this has been made possible by the backing of the community. I would like to say thank you again for the overwhelming support and trust that the residents have put into the Elk Creek Fire Protection District. As the Fire Chief, I will strive to lead this agency toward the future and to continue the legacy of Elk Creek Fire.



SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH Your Heart and Lungs in Winter

Being out in the cold can strain the heart and lungs. Our bodies react to cold by constricting blood vessels and increasing our heart rate, which can raise blood pressure. The added workload on the heart can trigger chest pain or even a heart attack.

Risk factors for heart attack include:

- Age over 45 for men or over 55 for women
- High blood pressure and/or high cholesterol
- Lack of regular exercise
- Previous heart problems or a family history
- Smoking
- Diabetes, obesity, autoimmune diseases, and other health conditions

Our lungs can also react to cold. Cold, dry air can trigger spasms in the airways, which can lead to shortness of breath, chest pain, and coughing. Those with **COPD or asthma** are at higher risk. **Breathe through a balaclava or scarf** to warm the air you breathe and to help retain moisture from your lungs.

While keeping your walkways clear is important to reduce the risk of injury from falls, every year people have heart attacks from the exertion. **Treat shoveling snow like you would any kind of exercise:**

- Drink plenty of water and eat small amounts frequently
- Dress in layers and stay warm and dry
- Take breaks and go inside to warm up as needed
- Try to push snow rather than lifting it

If you’re having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 9-1-1 immediately.

If you can, get inside, get warm, and rest until help arrives.

Heart attack symptoms can include:

- Pressure, tightness, pain, or a squeezing or aching sensation in your chest or arms that may spread to your neck, jaw or back
- Nausea, indigestion, heartburn or abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat
- Lightheadedness or sudden dizziness, fatigue

A person having a heart attack might not experience all of these symptoms. Time is critical - If you feel like something’s not right, call 9-1-1.

A Very Special 911 Call...

“JeffCom 911... tell me exactly what happened.” *“My wife’s going into labor and I don’t think we can leave.”*

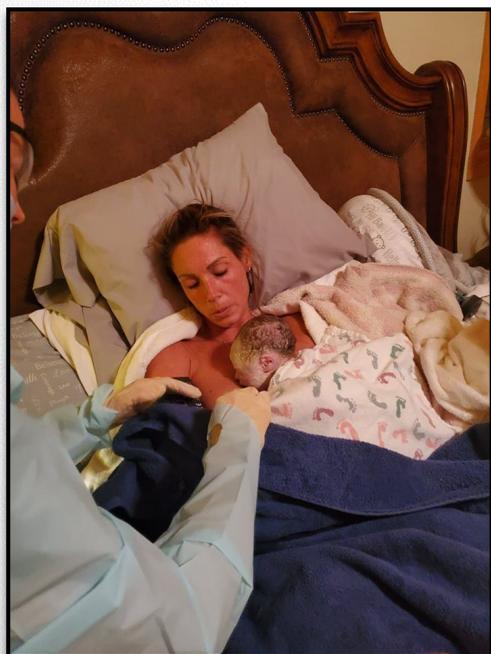
Jesse called 911 at 11:55pm on the night of November 20, 2019. Sara had woken up around 11pm with pelvic pain; shortly after, she realized she was in labor, two weeks early.

“Stay on the line with me while we’re getting help started, ok?” Elk Creek Ambulance 481 turned from Blackfoot Rd. onto a snow covered, icy Highway 285. “I think we may be delivering a baby tonight!” Paramedic Urban said to Paramedic King. Dispatch had reported contractions were less than two minutes apart. As the ambulance turned onto the highway, the report was 1 minute, 15 seconds. Half-way there: 44 seconds.



Any time contractions are less than 2 minutes apart, a baby is usually imminent; paramedics are likely to stay on scene and deliver rather than risk doing so in the back of a moving ambulance.

This November night, a winter storm had come through Conifer. After 19 minutes of navigating ice-covered roads, the ambulance pulled into Sara and Jesse Regan’s driveway near the top of Conifer Mountain. “Here they are,” Jesse said, as he waved at the Elk Creek crew from his front door, and the 911 dispatcher let Jesse hang up the phone. Four fire fighters arrived to find Sara curled up on her bed, in obvious pain and in active labor. Her husband, mother, and neighbor Courtney (who also happened to be a doula) were surrounding her. Sara was on the phone to her own doula, who was coaching her to breathe. Sara and Jesse’s two other children slept peacefully just down the hallway.



Preparations were immediately made; Paramedic King laid out a delivery kit while Paramedic Urban assessed Sara and asked her a few key questions. Outside, Paramedic Jenkins, EMT Aaronson, and a handful of law enforcement officers were dealing with a whole other situation, unbeknownst to anyone inside. The Regan’s driveway was covered in ice, and the ambulance – parking brake and all – was doing its best to slide straight toward the Regan’s house. Firefighters and police quickly grabbed pieces of firewood from a stack near the house, chocking the ambulance’s wheels in place. Paramedic Jenkins would later comment, “Outside it was crazy, trying to get the rigs ready to go, everything sliding everywhere, and then I would come inside, and it was like a complete switch – this quiet, peaceful environment.”

Sara was doing an incredible job of breathing, remaining calm, focusing. Everyone around her was calm and hyper-focused. After nearly 25 minutes, the baby had not yet shown a glimpse of itself. With no baby in sight, paramedics prepared to transition to the ambulance and go to the hospital. As Sara rolled over and began to stand, there it was, the top of a little hair-covered head. “We’re staying!” said Paramedic Urban, “Bring everything back inside!”

A Very Special 911 Call, cont.

Paramedic King rushed outside to retrieve the heart monitor and other equipment. Within two minutes of pushing, the baby had arrived—an active, beautiful little boy, who made his voice known before even making it all the way out.

“NEVER in my life would I have expected things to go as they did, but wow what a story and experience.”



“We heard the words ‘IT’S A BOY’ as he began to cry, and all at once I crumbled over my weak body into my mom and Courtney’s arms,” said Sara. “I had done it. He was here safe and healthy and beautiful. NEVER in my life would I have expected things to go as they did, but wow what a story and experience.”

Zayden Reed Regan was welcomed into Conifer and the world at 12:46am on November 21, 2019. Along with his loving family, he was surrounded by beaming Elk Creek Firefighters and Jefferson County Sheriff’s Officers; these first responders are generally there on people’s worst days, not their best. To be part of something so special can be a once-in-a-career situation, not to mention an honor and a blessing.

Sara’s mother cut the umbilical cord, and baby Zayden was laid onto Sara’s chest. “I got to hold him for the first time, where all at once things started to hit me. I had just had a baby, in my house, on my bed, with no medication, with 12 people watching and helping, my kids down the hall, a massacre scene present...and I was okay. For a moment I sat in awe of the situation, of myself and that I truly had done it, of my beautiful little boy I was now holding.”



Sara later wrote of her experience: “Thinking back for the first time now and recalling everything I went through makes me cry. I not only did a natural birth for the first time, but I delivered my beautiful baby boy at home on our bed! I had the help and support of my wonderful mom to witness it with me, my amazing neighbor Courtney who coached me through it all, and of course Jesse who made me believe I could do it

even when I didn’t. All the first responders who showed were great and so caring.”

The Regan’s have made it clear: Elk Creek Firefighters are now a part of Zayden’s family. They will get to visit, to watch him grow, to someday tell him the story of his birth from their own perspective. And visit they already have, as the happy pictures here show. All of us at Elk Creek Fire welcome little Zayden to the world, and we celebrate with his family in this most joyous of occasions!



(Story, photos and quotes used with permission from the Regan family.)

Wildfire Suppression Module and Chipping Program Update

On behalf of the Elk Creek Wildfire Division, we would like to thank you for all of your participation in the home assessment, chipping, and fuels reduction programs being implemented across the district. 2019 was an exciting year, and we look forward to continuing to provide the district with the wildfire mitigation services that are so critical in our community.

Accomplishments



The Elk Creek Wildfire Suppression Module has worked incredibly hard over the last year on both wildfire mitigation and fuels restoration projects. The Module specializes in projects in areas with steep slopes where mechanical equipment cannot be used. The Module was able to cut 49 acres in this difficult terrain and is burning the slash piles created from cutting operations when winter weather conditions allow. The Module also responded to five regional fires, including the Deer Creek Fire. Module members also supported the Forest Service at the Shawnee Peak Fire and staffed an engine in California.

“In 2019, the Module was able to chip 600 properties, totaling 8,280 piles, generating 3,312 cubic yards of chips.”

Additionally, in 2019, the Module was able to chip 600 properties, totaling 8,280 piles, generating 3,312 cubic yards of chips. For comparison, that is more than half the volume of Summit County’s dedicated chipping program.



Chipping Program Challenges

Elk Creek is always looking to improve the services to our community. We have received feedback to organize a

chipping program with more reliable removal times for homeowners. Additionally, the program is continually challenged with the efficient disposal of chips. At some points throughout the chipping season, the crew was forced to dump the chips at a disposal facility in Englewood, sometimes a 2 ½ hour round trip.

Homeowners are required to sign up on the Elk Creek Fire website. This past year, the program was overwhelmed with piles on properties where homeowners had not signed up. While we tried to accommodate this situation, it strained the program’s capabilities and will not be sustainable for operations in the future. There have also been some cases where home owners have put out nearly a quarter-mile of piles, limiting our resources to a single property owner for extended periods of time. Considering the workload the Wildfire Suppression Module is tasked with, including initial fire response, implementing a more organized chipping program will be the most efficient way to provide better customer service to all Elk Creek residents.

Solutions



This spring, when the weather allows, the Module will prioritize the left-over piles from the 2019 chipping season for those who have signed up on our website. During that time, there will be one open sign-up period on the Elk Creek Fire website. This will be announced via social media (@ElkCreekFireDepartment) and our website (www.elkcreekfire.org). The sign-up period will close after the first 300 applicants. We will then evaluate the chipping requests and split them into six groups based on location.

Applicants will then be sent a notification of the group they have been assigned for the year. We will regularly make announcements via social media and our website of the groups we are currently servicing and when the next group can anticipate their work to begin. This will give homeowners an alert to be prepared, while building in the flexibility required during the potentially busy fire season.

Wildfire Suppression Module and Chipping Program Update, cont.

Additionally, homeowners will be limited to 15 piles per address. This will allow the Module to move faster through each neighborhood, servicing more homeowners in a timely manner. While this may seem like a restrictive number, last year’s average count was 13 piles per home. Pile dimensions will stay the same (5 feet x 5 feet) as in years past. Also, the chipping program will not be available for fulfilling defensible space requirements on new construction.

During this program transition, we will remain flexible and prepared to provide the best services possible. If there is opportunity to open an additional sign-up period later in the season, we will certainly do so. These decisions will be based on several factors, including remaining workload, fire season responsibilities, and end-of-season weather and road conditions. Please monitor our website and social media for these updates.

We hope these changes provide a much more predictable and efficient program for all residents in the district. We look forward to working with you over the coming fire season to reduce the wildfire risk to your property and our community.

How can you help the Module successfully chip your piles?

See below for examples of how to properly form them.

This pile is too large, with limbs pointing in all directions. These piles make more work for the crew and take longer to chip.

(Photo Elk Creek Fire Module)



These piles are no more than 5'x5', and the limb ends are all facing the road. These piles allow the crew to work efficiently and are faster to chip.

(Photo Elk Creek Fire Module)

Focus on Forest Health

Dwarf mistletoes are parasitic plants that can cause severe damage to native conifer forests. They are a common problem in Colorado, predominantly affecting ponderosa and lodgepole pines, although they can also attack Douglas firs and piñon, limber, and bristlecone pines.



Dwarf mistletoes obtain most of their water and nutrients from their host tree. This weakens infected trees and makes them more susceptible to other pests. Dwarf mistletoes can also cause a tree to form "witch's brooms," which can provide fuel for fire to travel into the crown of the tree.

The first symptom of dwarf mistletoe infection is a slight swelling of the bark at the infection site. The parasite may not be identifiable until two to three years after the initial infection, when yellow-green or brownish-green segmented shoots begin to protrude from the bark. However, because dwarf mistletoes are slow killers, long-term management options are feasible.

Visit csfs.colostate.edu and search "dwarf mistletoe" for more information and management options. (Information from *Colorado State Forest Service* and *United States Forest Service*.)



Monthly CPR and First-Aid classes are held **every second Saturday of the month.**

The course includes Heartsaver CPR/AED (adult and child CPR and AED use, infant CPR, and how to relieve choking in adults, children, and infants) and First-Aid.

Upcoming dates are as follows:

- March 14
- April 11
- May 9
- June 13

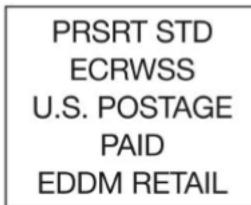
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