

SMOKE SIGNALS



SEPTEMBER 2017

2017: YEAR OF THE FLOOD
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OFFICERS

FIRE CHIEF

Jerry Peters

CAPTAINS

James Luther

Martin Peters

Jake Blackburn

Marty Striefler

With the recent devastation in Texas as a result of Hurricane Harvey, flooding is all over the news and at the forefront of everyone's mind. The United States has never seen anything like the 50-plus inches of rain that fell in some parts of southeastern Texas, nor was anyone prepared for such an event. Even with the water now receding, the problems for the Gulf Coast of Texas are just beginning. Swift water rescues, chemical incidents, gas spills, air pollution, toxic water from sewage, risk of electrocution from downed or underground power lines, mold, mosquitoes, and lack of supplies are just a few of the plethora of issues now facing the region. As of August 31st, it was being reported that over 1,000 homes in Texas were destroyed and close to 50,000 were



damaged, and over 32,000 people were in shelters across the state. While many people in Texas brace for an unknown future, one thing is for certain, it will take years of clean-up and billions of dollars to rebuild Houston and the surrounding areas.

While we here in Northwest Arkansas cannot empathize with exactly what our neighbors in Texas are dealing with, this incident is a reminder of the effects of flood-



ing, its dangers, and what we as a community, and as a fire department, can do to be as prepared as possible for such an incident. As many of you may recall, Northwest Arkansas faced its own flooding issues back in April of 2017 when parts of Northwest Arkansas received over eight (8) inches of rain in a 24-hour period. Starting on the morning of April 29th, and continuing into April 30th, all of the fire departments in Northwest Arkansas were inundated with emergency calls resulting from torrential rains and flood waters. The volunteers at the Wedington Fire Department worked nearly a month's worth of calls in that 24-hour time period. In our area alone, there were multiple downed trees which were blocking roadways and required removal, at least eight (8) water rescues, a storm shelter extrication, electrical hazards, and transportation of victims. Wedington worked closely with our neighboring departments and the Washington County Urban Search and Rescue Team to successfully coordinate several rescues in and out

of our area. Nevertheless, the danger of these types of incidents, for residents and firefighters, cannot be overlooked. Several members of our community could not be rescued because of the flood waters and were forced to shelter in their attics, and one (1) of the water rescues ended in the recovery of a victim who had been swept off the road in his vehicle and was not located until the next day when flood waters receded. In all, the Wedington area had eight

(8) homes that sustained significant damage as a result of the flood waters, not to mention the damage to roadways,



bridges, and our own fire station. During the height of the storm, several inches of water gushed into Station 1 on Hwy. 16 and left large ruts in our gravel parking lot, exposing pipes and leaving debris everywhere. Thankfully, with the assistance of several firefighters between calls and the generosity of our neighbor, Mr. Duane Beeks, the station only sustained minor damage and the gravel in our parking lot was recovered and replaced to allow us to continue operating.

In order to be prepared for incidents like the one in April, the Wedington Fire Department sends many of its firefighters to swift water training. Currently, of the 25 volunteers on our roster, 19 have traveled out of the area to receive training specific to swift water operations, with a number of those having received certification as swift water technicians. Water rescues are also a point of emphasis at our trainings, which occur bi-monthly. The Wedington Fire Department currently has five (5) of its volunteers on the Washington County Urban Search and Rescue Team, a unit which also regularly meets to debrief and train for such events.

As we look back on the flooding in Texas, and prepare for future water events in our own area, we hope everyone will stay safe and remain diligent in protecting themselves in case of this type of emergency. Now is the

time to create your own flood plan. Be aware of your flood risk, and know where you can go to get to higher ground, and how you can get there. Stock an emergency preparedness kit for your home and your vehicle. Listen to your local radio or television stations for updates, and have a weather radio available. If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground. If you are advised to evacuate your home, do so immediately. When the water comes, avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Do not drive over bridges that are over fast-moving floodwaters, as floodwaters can scour foundation materials from around the footing and make bridges unstable. If floodwaters rise around your car but the water is not moving, abandon the car and move to higher ground. Never leave your car and enter moving water. Just six (6) inches of water can knock you down, and one (1) foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. If you get stuck in your vehicle or home, or are concerned about your ability to evacuate because of quickly rising waters, call 911 immediately. The faster we are made aware of the situation, the faster we can respond. Avoid camping or parking along streams, rivers, and creeks during heavy



rainfall, as these areas can flood quickly and with little warning.

After the flood, return home only after

authorities say it is safe. Do not attempt to drive through areas that are still flooded. Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded and watch out for debris. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Also, avoid standing water, as it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. For more information, do not hesitate to contact the fire department.

Although we cannot prevent the rain from falling, we can all continue to prepare and be ready to do our part. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to serve you and look forward to another successful year in 2018.



Our 4th **Safety Awareness Day** was another huge success! The Washington County Sheriff's Department came out and did ID cards for all the kids, and everyone was cooled off with the free ice cream sundaes and lemonade. The kids also really enjoyed the Washington County Smoke Trailer, Ozarks Electric demo, and Smokey the Bear. We would like to send out a big thank you to all the local departments that participated in this year's event, and hope everyone is able to come out again next year.



NEW



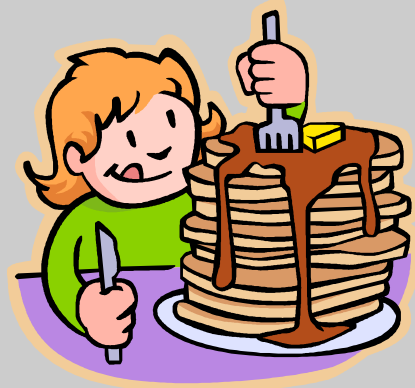
The Wedington Fire Department recently purchased a 2017 Ram 2500 to be its new medic truck. The new truck has a 6.4L HEMI engine, 4x4, crew cab, and long bed. This truck replaces the department's old medic which was a 2000 Ford F-150, with only a single cab, and over 150,000 miles. The new medic will seat up to 5 firefighters/first responders, and will respond primarily on medical calls, but will be available for all emergencies. With over 2/3 of our call volume being medical, having a reliable and versatile medic is a must, and we feel we this truck will do everything we need it to do for a long time into the future.

Country Breakfast

Saturday, September 23rd

6 am to 11 am

Highway 16 West



(Pancakes, scrambled eggs, biscuits & gravy, bacon, sausage, drinks)

Adults \$6.00 / Children 6-12 \$2.00 / Under 6 Free



Get a reflective address sign today and help us find your house during an emergency. Email your order to firedept@wedington.org or call us at 479-443-7802. Or submit an order to us at our country breakfast on Sept. 23rd. The signs are only \$10 each and can be hung horizontally or vertically.



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