

TLMFPD residents than does current American Medical Response contract billing in other parts of the county. The board also approved a new fee schedule for 2015 based on the recommendation in Chief Truty's memo that yearly increases are needed to offset annual increases in expenses.

Chief's report

Trost's comments included:

- All fleet vehicles are repaired and back to routine maintenance status.
- Battalion Chief Dan Davis performed one-week training on Colorado Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol traffic incident management for north group chiefs, including how to use mutual

response and coordinate with all other agencies that would respond to accidents on I-25.

- The merger committee's kickoff meeting happened Oct. 25, and 30 people from TLMFPD, Donald Wescott FPD, and Larkspur FPD attended to establish brainstorming committees for the possible larger fire protection district.
- The El Paso County Board of County Commissioners will conduct a workshop on Dec. 4 discussing language for a new burn ordinance for open burning of slash piles. Current burn ordinances only consider air quality, not fire hazard risks.

Financial report

District accountant Frances Esty said expenses were right

on track, and overall revenue was considerably ahead of budget for this time of year, including a spike in impact fees collected from Vistas at Jackson Creek.

The meeting went into executive session to discuss personnel issues at 7:15 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 10 in the Administration Center at 166 Second St. in Monument. The Jan. 28 meeting will be at 645 Beacon Lite Road. Meetings are usually held the fourth Wednesday of each month. For information, contact Jennifer Martin at 719-484-0911.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lisahatfield@ocn.me.

Community Wildfire Mitigation Plan meeting, Nov. 1

Work now to achieve a fire-adapted community



Above: John Vincent, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District fire marshal, encouraged all neighborhoods in the Tri-Lakes area to work toward becoming "fire-adapted communities" that could survive a wildfire. "Don't wait until there is smoke in the air to do the work," he said. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.

By Lisa Hatfield

"By the time a wildfire is racing toward your house, it is too late to fix it," says Fire Marshal John Vincent of the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District. "Clear out excess fuels now, and set a good example yourself. Reach out to help your neighbors."

Vincent encouraged neighborhoods to strive toward being "fire-adapted communities." Wildfires don't last as long and are less destructive where there are fewer trees and shrubs making "ladder fuels," and the trees have been thinned so that the strongest can grow strong and tall.

On Nov. 1, Vincent told community members at the Emergency Preparedness Group of the Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church that the bottom line is that each per-

son can control how much fuel is on their property for a fire to consume. Mitigation must become a lifestyle for homeowners in the Tri-Lakes area, and it must occur throughout the year and there is always something to mitigate, Vincent warned.

During a wildfire, firefighters must do home assessments in three seconds to decide if a home is worth the effort or is it "non-survivable." If a home is surrounded with scrub oak bushes and dense thickets of pine trees, the home is "non-defendable," Vincent said. "It puts my life in danger (as a firefighter) when you have too many trees on your property."

If a street is lined with scrub oak, it may become completely impassable during an emergency as the scrub oak burns, fire engines get stuck, and cars full of evacuees get trapped. Clearing it back from the road can help.

A neighborhood with a Firewise designation means its residents have created an action plan that commits them to a sustained program of wildfire mitigation. They have begun a plan to make their own properties safer and then reached out to help neighbors. A Firewise community has acknowledged that "It could happen to us, so we are going to take action now, while we have time."

Some developers understand the need for change, and they will both collaborate with nearby neighborhoods and build new housing developments that are already fuel

mitigated before the homes are sold, Vincent said. For example, Bob Schilpp of Higby Estates said residents have collaborated with the future Classic Homes development south of them and are helping with wildfire mitigation work along the shared property boundary, using Firewise methods.

See <http://www.tlmfire.org/ready-set-go> or write to jvincent@tlmfire.org for more information on your own property's fuels mitigation needs or how to start a Firewise group in your neighborhood.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lisahatfield@ocn.me.

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