

Westport Fire Holiday Message

Westport residents:

I take great pleasure in writing this message to all of you who sleep better knowing that Westport Fire stands ready to respond to emergencies in the community. Officially organized over 60 years ago, Westport Fire is steeped with history and the spirit of volunteerism. Volunteers have come and gone over the years, but the pride and soul of the organization has lived long, and even today- prospers because of your support. It is our intention to maintain that pride and trust beholden to us.

2023 has been an incredible year for your fire district. Much has happened in terms of our responses and services. Our call volume has increased dramatically. To date, we have received 212 requests for services- and had personnel available to respond nearing 90% of the time. Last year, we were requested to 153 calls for service. This represents a 28% increase in call volume in just the last year. We are not alone, as our neighboring agencies are also seeing dramatic increases in service requests.

In the past year, we have “on-boarded” six new volunteers including support services, a district chaplain and three new firefighters- some of whom will be taking our Emergency Medical responder certification. This brings our total staff up to 16 personnel- the highest in many years. We have sent personnel on mobilizations (conflagrations) to Eastern Oregon as part of Oregon State Fire Marshal Office teams, taught classes out of the area, helped our neighboring agencies on major calls, and received training accredited through the National Fire Academy.

This past summer was quite challenging to our team. In a 30-day period, we responded to a major house fire, barn fire, and a 44-acre fast-moving wildfire on the west end of our community. Our volunteers turned out in force and worked extremely hard, long hours at these incidents. Throughout it all, our crews shined through and were ready for the next call.

We have also been blessed with grants and donations towards improving our service by way of new equipment and some staffing help. This year alone, Private donors, corporations, along with local, state, and federal agencies provided us with over \$82,000 to add to our staffing (wildland season) and in money awards and equipment. These include items such as a vehicle extrication tool (“Jaws of Life”), new wildland fire Personal Protective Equipment, a new “quick-response” pickup, new fire hose for our entire district, emergency lighting, communication equipment, hose cleaning and attachments items, uniform jackets, smoke detectors to distribute to the public, chainsaws and more! We deeply appreciate the graciousness of these donors and grantees!

We recently paved our parking lot and will be looking at making our fire station more ADA compliant. Early in 2023, we hosted an Emergency Medical Responder academy. Six Westport Fire volunteers obtained state certification along with 10 from other County agencies. Over 670 man-hours of training went into this class. We will be hosting it again in 2024. We also hosted an accredited National Fire Protection Agency Driver class, and 18 volunteers from across Clatsop County were in attendance. All said and done, Westport Fire provided over 1200 man-hours of training this year locally and region wide. We are thrilled that there were zero reportable injuries this year to our personnel!

In terms of public relations, we did much. We developed and implemented a volunteer “Community Resource Specialist” position. Tazjia Darr works with people in the community to connect them with resources already available. Her responsibility is to provide information to those in need help with bills, services, smoke detectors, Medicare, Social Security, Veterans, food assistance and other programs. Westport personnel attended the Clatskanie Health and Safety Fair where we handed out information about smoke detectors, defensible space and FireMed. We taught fire safety for an outdoor school and at birthday parties.

Whew! Yes, it has been a busy year! Even so, we are still here- committed to serving you as best we can. As your Fire Chief, I take that responsibility very seriously. As long as you still want me here, I will be here- doing whatever I can to make your fire district the best it can be. I will not stop finding grants and donors to upgrade to the newest, safest, and most efficient emergency equipment possible. I promise to be fiscally responsible with your tax dollars to ensure the continued vitality and success of this fine organization. I will work closely with other agencies to make certain that public safety in Westport is kept in the loop on upcoming and emergency issues which may affect our community. Your safety is paramount, and I stand ready to maintain that.

“Pride. Honor. Integrity”. This is the motto which adorns our newest vehicle and will be added to the rest of our public messaging over time. Westport Fire is and has always been a proud organization. That will never change. Our personnel will display honorable characteristics when serving you. We will always try to “do the right thing, for the right reasons at the right time.” Finally, integrity is essential to public trust. My goal as your Fire Chief is to never give you a reason to question my integrity. My phone is always on, my door is always open, and my heart will always put the needs of the district above any personal gain. If you ever have any concerns, do not ever hesitate to talk to me. I welcome the opportunity to explain our district operations to whomever would like to know about it.

As always, I invite you to come talk to us about joining this fine organization. Your community needs the help. Even if you are not interested in “running into burning buildings”, we can find a place for your help. Whether that be medical calls, support services, maintenance, IT, or whatever skill set you have- we can put it to work. Our members will welcome you with open arms. We can provide you with training, equipment, and a sense of pride. Volunteering to help others in a time of crisis is an incredible feeling- and I believe there is no higher calling. Sound interesting? Want to ask a few more questions? Email Volunteer@westportfireor.com.

As this year comes to a close during the holidays, I felt it was important to let you know what your fire district has been up to in 2023. As I stated earlier, I won't stop looking for ways to improve in 2024. As your Fire Chief, I am honored to be here and serve you. Thank you.

Whatever holiday you may or may not observe this time of year, my hope is that it brings you and your family happiness and joy. Please be safe and sound.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Greg