



NORTHERN SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

2023 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING WINE COUNTRY FOR OVER 100 YEARS

This is the first newsletter from the “Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District” following two consolidations and a name change over the past four years. For those of you receiving this newsletter for the first time, here is why:

- Geyserville Fire Protection District annexed the Knights Valley Volunteer Fire Company territory of County Service Area 40 in 2019.
- Also in 2019, the Geyserville Fire Protection District changed its name to Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District.
- In 2023, the Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District finalized the annexations of the following County Service Area 40 areas:
 - * Fitch Mountain (outside of Healdsburg city limits)
 - * Lower Dry Creek Valley to Sweetwater Springs Road
 - * Mill Creek Road/Community
 - * Bailhache Avenue and Rio Lindo Avenue
 - * The Geysers

Our District is 263,727 acres and represents 26% of the county’s landmass. Our resident population is less than 10,000. We pride ourselves in specializing in rural fire and emergency services, embracing preparedness and prevention, and do not believe in a “one size fits all” approach to providing services. We need to work together to:

- Prevent emergencies
- Be prepared for when emergencies occur
- Stay resilient during and after emergencies

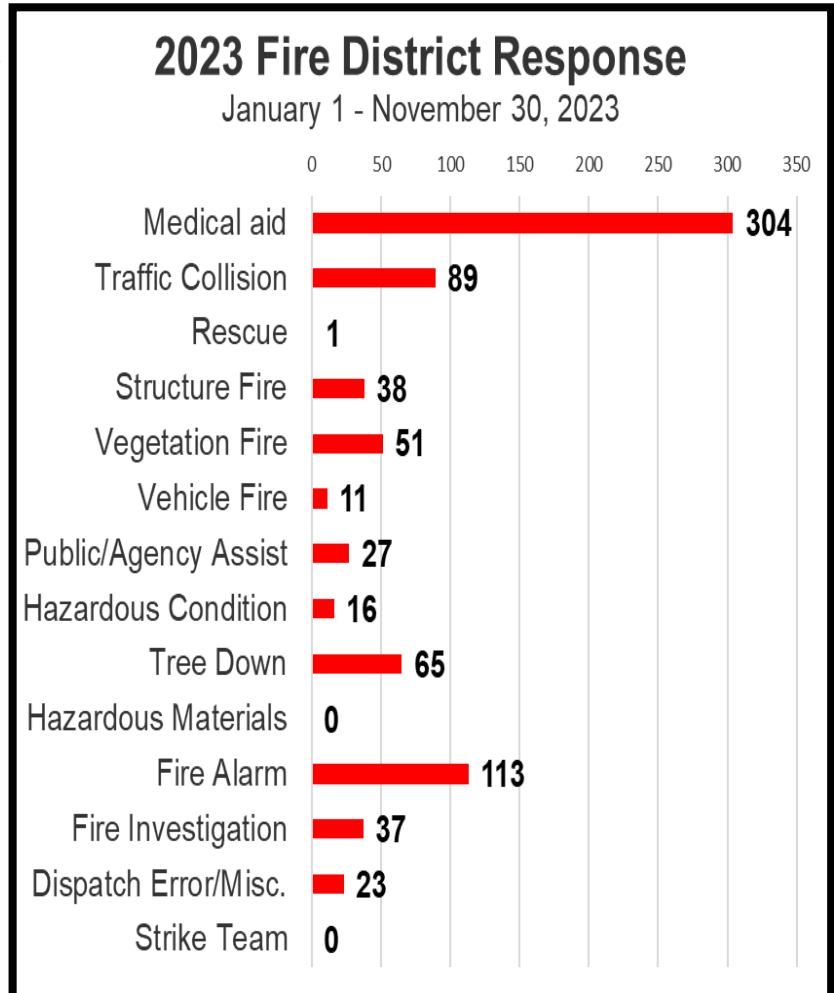
The District is governed by a five member board and is independent from the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors. The Board meets the third Thursday of each month at 6 PM. Please visit our website to learn more about YOUR fire department: www.northernsonomacountyfire.org

ARE WE BEING EFFECTIVE?

It's relatively easy to discuss how we extinguish a fire or provide medical care to save a life, but it's more difficult to measure success when we prevent an emergency. We firmly believe that our efforts (District, community, and each person) to prevent emergencies have been effective! We are experiencing less structure fires, less wildfires (especially under windy conditions), less severe medical emergencies, and overall less emergencies. We must remain prepared for emergencies and we must continue our focus on prevention and preparedness. **Over 50% of the District's personnel hours are dedicated to prevention and preparedness, including community meetings, CPR and first aid courses, business and defensible space inspections, shaded fuel break treatments, and prescribed burning.**

This graph categorizes the District's responses by incident type, and includes both incidents within the District's boundary and when the District provided assistance to other agencies such as the City of Healdsburg, Sonoma County Fire District and Cloverdale Fire Protection District.

- A majority of our incidents are related to medical emergencies, which is consistent with other fire agencies.
 - ◇ Portions of the District have response times that exceed 15 minutes. Knowing "basic" first aid and CPR can make a difference. The District offers courses to train residents in first aid and CPR.
 - ◇ We also respond to many medical alarms that are not emergencies including smart phone crash detections. Please call your service provider to cancel our response if these devices call 911 on your behalf.
- "Fire Alarms" are the second most common incident type.
 - ◇ Nearly 100% of our responses to fire alarms are "false alarms."
 - ◇ Please post your alarm company's telephone number next to your alarm panel and call your alarm company to cancel our response if there are no signs of fire. We will respond if you think there may be a fire. Otherwise, our response may make us unavailable for another emergency.



- The District is the first responder to trees down affecting roadways. Technically this is not our jurisdiction, but we are often the agency that is most readily available.
 - ◇ Most trees fall due to weather events and place firefighters in dangerous conditions where additional trees may fall. The District is taking a proactive stance to remove or trim trees along public roadways to reduce emergency responses.
- The trend over the past 5+ years is that we have more vegetation fires than structure fires and more structures have burned as the result of a vegetation fire.
 - ◇ Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms, wildfire structural hardening, and defensible space are all ways to mitigate risk. It is also essential to understand how to use a fire extinguisher and when it's safe to mow dry grass.

WHAT MORE CAN WE DO?

The District is always striving to do more but we cannot do it alone. We need to continue to educate and collaborate with property owners, residents, business, and other public safety agencies to identify and mitigate risk. Here is a summary of what we are doing:

- Using funds from donations and the Wine Country to the Rescue fundraiser, the District partnered with the Cloverdale Healthcare District to fund a **paramedic staffed vehicle** that can respond independent of an ambulance and firefighter staffed apparatus. The current staffing model is not around the clock but is intended to reduce response times to rural areas, respond to simultaneous medical emergencies, and provide staffing for incidents involving multiple casualties. The District would like to continue to expand this partnership and also improve services working with Bell's Ambulance and Cloverdale Health Care District
- Using primarily grant funding from CAL FIRE and the County of Sonoma, the District **has increased the number of full time employees dedicated to vegetation management to 8 positions**. These 8 positions work alongside part time employees to provide staffing 7 days a week with 4-10 employees each day to perform vegetation management to mimic the role of natural wildfire and reduce our future wildfire risk.
- Using funds from an Alexander Valley Association (AVA) donation and mitigation funds from the River Rock Casino the District, working with the Northern Sonoma County Fire Foundation and AVA, will embark on a **renovation of the Alexander Valley Fire Station** to continue to be used as a volunteer staffed fire station and be available for short term staffing during predicted weather events and associated emergencies.
- Using funds raised from the annual Wine Country to the Rescue fundraiser, a **helicopter dip site was installed in The Geysers**. This dip site was first used on Thanksgiving Day in 2022 for a wildfire and again during the "Big Fire" in The Geysers on October 18, 2023. Another dip site has been established in The Geysers and two are located in our neighboring fire district, South Lake County Fire Protection District, to provide a network of 4 dip sites that we hope can eventually be used, day or night, year round to reduce the risk from our wind driven east to west moving wildfires.
- Using funds from the County of Sonoma, **defensible space inspections were completed on Fitch Mountain**. This area of the District has a potential for structure to structure fire spread during windy conditions. Defensible space inspections and structure hardening improvements will reduce wildfire risk.

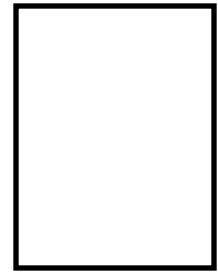
WITH PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING, WE CAN DO MORE

The District is funded by a portion of your property tax bill and two portions of the District, North East Geyserville and the Sotoyome area, pay an additional parcel based tax. Sonoma County fire agencies including city fire departments and fire districts, are proposing to increase sales tax by ½% to fund fire and emergency services. Voters will see this measure on their March 2024 ballot. 5% of the generated revenue will be allocated to the District to increase staffing at the Geyserville Fire Station and help build and fund staffing at a new fire station in eastern Alexander Valley or western Knights Valley. If this tax passes, we will look to confirm a location to build a fire station. The District will also receive an additional 5% to employ additional full time vegetation management employees to implement vegetation management projects throughout the county. More information can be found at <https://www.safersonomacounty.org/>.

2023 Training Burn



Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District
PO Box 217
Geyserville, CA 95441



This newsletter is a collaboration between the Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District and the Northern Sonoma County Fire Foundation. It is published annually in the Fall. It is intended to provide information to the community about news and events as it relates to the Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District. If you are receiving this newsletter then our records show one of the following: You live within the fire district, you own property within the fire district, you are a registered voter, or you have donated money to the GVFA/Northern Sonoma County Fire Foundation. If you think that you have received this newsletter in error or would like to be removed from our mailing list please contact us at (707) 857-4373.

