

FALL 2021



# INTER-CANYON FIRE ELK CREEK FIRE



COMBINED NEWSLETTER

## *Greetings to all residents!*

Welcome to the first combined Inter-Canyon Fire (ICFPD) and Elk Creek Fire (ECFPD) newsletter. As cross-boundary collaboration increases, we felt it would serve residents in both districts to provide information to a wider audience. In this special issue, you will be introduced to both fire district's Chiefs and hear from them about collaboration efforts. You will learn about one of our volunteers and the great work they are doing for the community. As usual, we will share some health tips (this month we remind you of the signs of stroke). Be sure to check out the back page for how to sign up for our Community Connect Programs. Here, you can create your **household life safety profile**, which really helps us out in an emergency. Finally, please consider becoming a **volunteer** by joining our **2022 FIRE ACADEMY!** We hope you enjoy this new joint venture!

## ***Meet the Fire Chiefs***

We sat down with Chief Skip Shirlaw from Inter-Canyon Fire Protection District (ICFPD) and Chief Jacob Ware with Elk Creek Fire Protection District (ECFPD) to learn a bit about them and to hear about cross-boundary collaboration between the two districts.

**Chief Shirlaw** is a Colorado native who grew up in Lakewood. He attended Colorado State University where he studied Sociology. After college, Shirlaw worked as a probation officer for over 20 years. He and his wife, Holly, now live in the Inter-Canyon district. (Cont. p.2)



*ICFPD Fire Chief Skip Shirlaw (left), and  
ECFPD Fire Chief Jacob Ware (right)*

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They have one daughter who currently studies at Colorado State University. Shirlaw served as an ICFPD volunteer since 2007 and became Fire Chief in 2016. In his off-time, Chief Shirlaw is interested in “all kinds of projects” including new hobbies like woodworking and at-home beer brewing. He is very excited to begin working with Holly to restore their 1970 Barracuda.

**Chief Ware** was born in southern California and also lived in Florida during his teen years. He attended college in Kentucky where he studied photojournalism and then spent several years working for various news outlets as a photojournalist. He moved to Colorado in 1999 after he married his wife, Alyse. They moved to Conifer in 2002, and Chief Ware began volunteering with ECFPD in 2003. During this time, he also worked for the Forest Service on engines and hand crews. He acquired a full-time job as a firefighter/EMT with ECFPD in 2008, was later promoted to Captain, then Deputy Chief, and he officially became the Fire Chief in early 2020. Chief Ware spends his off-time rafting, riding dirt bikes, mountain biking, and skateboarding. He and Alyse have two elementary-school aged children, a boy and a girl.



*Both ICFPD and ECFPD responded to the 2017 wildland fire near the West Ranch complex.*

**Tell us about the cross-boundary collaboration that is happening between ICFPD and ECFPD – how did it start, and where is it going?**

“We’ve had mutual aid and automatic aid agreements for a number of years, and this is really a natural progression of that,” states Chief Ware. Both Chiefs recall a specific incident where a simple but important conversation took place – one that accelerated that progression. “In 2017, we had a wildland fire off Hwy 285 near the West Ranch complex, and both departments responded,” recalls Chief Shirlaw.

Chief Ware was originally the Incident Commander on the fire because Shirlaw was on a different fire. “When he came back, I passed command over to him,” remembers Chief Ware. “That whole process went really well, and we said, ‘why are we not doing more of this collaboration?’”

“That really began that conversation,” states Chief Shirlaw. “For about a year and a half we would meet as Chiefs and discuss it. As our acuity goes up, as our 911 calls increase,

we're thinking, 'wow, we can't necessarily do this by ourselves. We need to rely on each other.' So why are we not collaborating more, training together more, utilizing mutual resources more? We're all doing the same stuff, but we can do it much better as a team. Eventually, we thought, 'let's do this, let's get serious about this.'"

Chief Ware describes how that desire to "get serious" led to the decision to work with a consulting company to conduct a feasibility study on consolidation, exploring what the next steps may be. "It will give us the framework and options. The consulting company specializes in these studies and can give us an objective view of what is going to be best for the districts. They will talk about what makes sense and what would provide a better service for the taxpayers. Would it be combining departments? Staying how we are and providing mutual aid? This is what they are analyzing."



*Local fire departments often participate in mutual aid response, such as during this fire near Foxtan earlier this year.*

"The consulting company understands combination departments," says Chief Shirlaw. "That is a big benefit; we want and need to keep engaging our volunteers and to increase recruitment and retention. Our volunteers are vital; we rely on them heavily."

The consultants' report should be complete early winter of 2021. Both Chiefs are anxious for the results. "What's really cool about this collaboration is we're not just looking at 'what do I need today,'" relays Chief Shirlaw. "We're looking at where we are going to be in ten, fifteen, twenty years." "What's going to be the best for our residents in the future?" asks Chief Ware. "We want to lay that foundation for these agencies."

**"We can't necessarily do this by ourselves.  
We need to rely on each other."**

In the meantime, the two departments are already sharing in some very helpful collaborations. Members of the Conifer Wildland Division, a joint effort between the two departments, are conducting home assessments together in both districts. They are also striving to improve wildland fire risk in both districts through better mapping and planning. "They are driving around the district putting eyes on every single square foot of both of our districts to create better mapping," shares Chief Shirlaw. The mapping process will not only help with response, but it will also help with prioritizing projects within the districts.

A joint Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is also in the works. "There is cost-savings with the economy of scale," states Chief Ware. "Both districts could (Cont. p.4)

### Meet the Fire Chiefs cont.

pay the same amount for the product separately, and when it was done, we would be sharing it with each other anyway. We realized that we should just do it as one – we can share the cost, and that important data belongs to all of us.”

As a part of protection planning, the Conifer Wildland Division is hard at work mitigating hazardous fuels in both districts – and that benefits everyone. “They are physically removing fuels from around residences, removing fuels from the community,” states Chief Shirlaw. “That effects that house, that effects that neighborhood, that effects the community at large.”



*ICFPD and ECFPD work together throughout the year to reduce fuels in both districts.*

Both Chiefs credit the success of these joint programs to the staff members from both districts that joined together to make it all happen. “Wildland Captain Ben Yellin, Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Julia Kalish, Wildland and Training Captain John Mandl, Suppression Module Lead Jayson Papenfus, and all the members of the fuels mitigation crew and chipping programs - they have brought their history and knowledge here and put it together in a collaborative effort to make a significant impact on both communities,” reports Chief Ware.

The two departments are also collaborating on the fire and EMS fronts, training together and working toward continuity of equipment. “We are talking to each other about how we do things, what gear we have, and how we get things closer together,” says Chief Shirlaw. “For example, we just all ordered the same supply hose – same color, same amount on each truck, so when someone from ICFPD walks up to an ECFPD engine, it’s going to look just like an ICFPD engine, and they will know what and where everything is.”

As far as the big picture is concerned, both Chiefs anticipate new doors opening. “I’m excited to see what the future holds and how this synergistic partnership would be able to increase the services to the residents of our district,” says Chief Ware. “We care very deeply for our communities, says Chief Shirlaw. “We live here, these are our neighbors, this is where our kids go to school. We have 100% vested interest. We also care about our departments; we care about our people. We’re invested in this process. This is where we want to be. We look forward to being a picture of excellence of what a fire department looks like.”

## ***Spotlight on Health:*** ***Know the Signs of Stroke***

Every year, ICFPD and ECFPD respond to many emergency calls involving stroke or stroke-like symptoms. Stroke is a leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of serious disability for adults. Knowing how to conduct a few simple tests for the signs of stroke can help give 911 operators critical information prior to emergency medical provider arrival.

An easy way to remember the most common signs of stroke and how to respond is with the acronym **F.A.S.T.**:

**F = Face drooping:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side droop?

**A = Arm weakness:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**S = Speech difficulty:** Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred?

**T = Time to call 9-1-1:** If the person shows any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

(Information and graphic credit to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[www.cdc.gov/stroke/facts\\_stroke.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/stroke/facts_stroke.htm))

### **Other common signs of stroke are:**

- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause
- Sudden numbness of the face, arm, or leg
- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding others

If you think that you or someone you know is having a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately. Stroke is a medical emergency, and stroke treatment and outcomes depend on how fast you get to the hospital.

## **If Stroke Happens, Act F.A.S.T.**



### **F—FACE DROOPING**

Ask the person to smile. Does one side droop?



### **A—ARM WEAKNESS**

Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?



### **S—SPEECH DIFFICULTY**

Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred?



### **T—TIME TO CALL 9-1-1**

If the person shows any of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

## ***Volunteer Highlight: Ken Shine***



At Elk Creek Fire and Inter-Canyon Fire, volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel make up an important part of our ranks. Dedicating time, effort, and care, they work alongside staff to serve their community. They are your neighbors, your friends, and – some days – the ones who come to your aid in a time of need. In this and future issues, we will introduce you to some of them, and give you a glimpse of who they are. So, be sure to say hello when you see them in the grocery store, in the post office, or at the house next door!

**Ken Shine** is a Firefighter and Emergency Medical Responder. Shine attended Elk Creek Fire's Academy in 2018 and has been very active with the fire service since. He currently serves as the President of the Elk Creek Fire Membership Association.

Shine has lived in Pine, CO, since 2016. Born and raised in the south coast of the United Kingdom, he has been in the United States since 1999. While Shine has historically worked in the IT and telecommunications industries, he chose to be more hands-on in his community since coming to Conifer. When not volunteering at Elk Creek Fire, Shine drives school buses for the Platte Canyon School District. A few years ago, you may have met him behind the deli counter at the Conifer King Soopers. (He was the one with the charming British accent!) We talked to Shine about becoming a firefighter in his community, and here is what he told us.

### **What made you want to volunteer as a firefighter?**

"Community is the simple answer. I have volunteered with various organizations throughout my life, and when we moved to Colorado, I thought: what can I do to help my community? Firefighting attracted me because I had served seven years in the Army Reserves, and I liked the structure and camaraderie of something with a paramilitary aspect."

*"...when we moved to Colorado, I thought: what can I do to help my community?"*

**What is your favorite part of being a firefighter?** "All of the reasons I did it in the first place: the community, the camaraderie, being part of a team, and feeling like you're doing some good."

*"You get to help people in all sorts of different ways - sometimes on the worst day of their life, and sometimes they are just not feeling well".*

**What kind of calls (response to 911 requests) have stood out to you?** "It's really the whole picture. It's that one day, we are showing up to someone who may be having a heart attack. The next day, it's a car that is rolled over and upside down, and we have to use all our tools to get people out. The next day, it's a fire. You get to help people in all sorts of different ways - sometimes on the worst day of their life, and sometimes they are just not feeling well. Sometimes, the best thing is when we get to tell someone there is nothing wrong with them. The tough side is when you try, and someone does not make it. Those are the hard ones."

**What are you looking forward to in the coming years as a firefighter?** "I'm always interested in learning new skills and gaining more experience. In the autumn of 2019, I was able to work as a wildland firefighter on the 64A Fire, and again in 2020 on the Picture Canyon Fire. In 2021, I've been able to work on more wildfires around the country. So, I'm looking forward to continued learning about wildland firefighting."

**What do you do when you're not fighting fires, helping people with medical emergencies, or driving school buses?**

"I like to fish, hike, ski, snowboard, and spend time with my wife, my dogs, and my cats. I also volunteer for Jefferson County Open Space doing educational presentations at Pine Valley Ranch, and my wife and I walk dogs at the Intermountain Humane Society."

As if he weren't busy enough with all of the above, you may also see Shine performing home assessments in the districts - he has taken the Wildland Urban Interface Home Assessment class in order to advise homeowners on the best plan for mitigation of their properties to protect against wildfire and home ignition. We think it's fair to say that Shine is a, well, shining example of an amazing volunteer firefighter. We thank him - and all our volunteers - for their time, dedication, and commitment to the fire departments and to the community. Please consider joining them this coming January!



*Ken Shine acts as a "victim" for an ice rescue exercise in January of 2021 at the Davis Ponds in Staunton State Park.*



### Elk Creek Community Connect

Together, Building a Safer Community Through Prevention, Preparedness & Response

CREATE YOUR HOUSEHOLD LIFE SAFETY PROFILE TODAY



#### HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Create a safe, secure account
2. Enter the info that matters most
3. Help your Fire Department when seconds count



Community Connect



# VOLUNTEER

### Be there when your community needs you the most.

Now accepting applications for a combined fire academy (Elk Creek Fire, Inter-Canyon Fire, Indian Hills Fire, Platte Canyon Fire, North Fork Fire).

**Deadline extended until November 7th!**

Go to [www.elkcreekfire.org](http://www.elkcreekfire.org) or scan:



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