

P.O. Box 634
Albion, CA 95410



Spring 2022
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In the Line of Fire

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

A message from the ALRFPD Board President

Sometimes it seems all the news is bad. No matter where you turn or who you talk to, things seem hopeless. But we know that isn't true. We know that hope is always within us and help is always within reach. We just sometimes forget.

2021 was a year fraught with catastrophic fires across our district, and although we had one very bad fire on Comptche-Ukiah Road, we have been lucky to have a relatively peaceful interval.

As many places in our district halted services during the COVID-19 pandemic, our department found ways to adapt while continuing to provide emergency services without interruption. We also used this opportunity to enhance our preparedness on many dimensions—most not visible to the public.

Take, for instance, the addition of a new 30 x 40 foot metal building with rollup door at our Station 812 (host to the ALRFPD Auxiliary picnic). This new facility houses engine 8181 and helps us provide for faster response times up the ridge.

We also completed percolation testing and most of the preliminary studies necessary to determine placement and scope of a brand new Station 810 in Albion Village. A Board Committee has met regularly to formulate preliminary options for presentation to the public for input and comment when complete. I would add (and emphasize) that right now our planning is only to determine what is possible for the site. Nothing will be done without extensive and well-noticed public input.

We received several grants in 2021 which are helping us replace our old, outdated equipment. In addition, a number of community members have generously contributed, helping facilitate the addition of another Rescue Truck along with allowing us to take advantage of a CalFire group purchase to replace one of our aging engines.

And because of the amazing community support we receive, the Albion-Little River Fire Protection District volunteer firefighters—year in and year out—continue to be a constant valuable resource for us.

As our drought continues and fire dangers grow with it, our district needs to be ready to deal with whatever comes our way—from fire to the many medical emergencies that occur each month. I appeal to our community to continue to support our department and its expansion. We are all truly in this together. The District is us.

Chuck Greenberg, President
Albion-Little River Fire Protection District Board of Directors



Assistant Chief Dan Gates manning the engine at a recent call.

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DID YOU KNOW...

Volunteer fire departments have been around for a long time. Where did they originate and who started them?

The man who established the first volunteer fire department also invented bifocals, wrote and printed Poor Richard's Almanack, studied electricity and helped draft the Declaration of Independence. His name was Benjamin Franklin. The first volunteer fire department began in Philadelphia in 1736.

CHIEF'S CORNER

Happy Spring and the wonderful rain it brings! This year it feels especially good as we wind (cautiously) down from the pandemic and make a little progress combating the drought in our area. But as conditions and climate change, it also brings new challenges to our all volunteer fire department and that translates into:

- Water supply insecurity
- Longer wildfire season
- More frequent responses to weather-related emergencies
- Health and safety concerns for fire and EMS volunteers
- A need for advanced skillsets among volunteer firefighters and EMT's
- Emotional and physical tolls on our core group of emergency responders

Here in our rural community, we rely solely on volunteer firefighters and EMT's for an initial emergency response. Without their dedication, someone who needs immediate critical care is faced with life or death. Without their dedication, a small fire that goes out of control could become a

deadly wildfire in minutes. Without their dedication, our community would be in serious trouble during any emergency. We must not take their dedication for granted.

Although our pre-1960's volunteer fire department was comprised of all able-bodied men in the community, our more complicated lifestyles and increasing state and federal mandates require us to look at updated models to assure we all remain safe and protected.

In our district, we currently have 30 firefighters. *Sixteen of those volunteers* are still in their initial probationary periods, meaning, *they are not yet fully trained to respond to emergencies.*

In 2021, our firefighters responded to 269 emergencies, with the bulk of calls being medical aid. Ten years earlier, in 2011, firefighters responded to 156 calls. Our numbers are trending upwards, and in the future, as we experience more people moving to the area along with an increase in tourism, we are rapidly *(CHIEF—page 2)*



ALRFPD Statistics

ALRFPD currently has 30 active members and one support member. Five members are EMT's. 16 members are in their probationary periods.

There are 5 volunteer board members.

Number of calls in 2021—269

Types of calls in 2021:

Vegetation Fire—3
Structure Fire—3
Other Fires—22
Traffic Collision—41
Medical—142
Public Assist—43

ALRFPD maintains **five locations** throughout the district.

Visit our website: www.alrfpd.com

ARE YOU NEW TO OUR COMMUNITY?

Our county has had a rough few years of fires, floods and COVID-19. If you've just moved here, you're probably aware of the need to be informed about emergency situations and where to look for information.

That's where our Albion-Little River Fire Safe Council steps in!

The Council wants you to know that they've created a packet of community resources focused on emergency and evacuation procedures developed to help you and your family stay safe.

Highlights include:

- Introducing yourself to your neighbors as safety procedures are intertwined with neighbors knowing who is nearby, contact information, and special needs.
- Sign up information for available emergency alerts such as PG&E's alert system, MendoAlert, MendoReady.org and Nixle systems
- What to do if an Evacuation Order is imminent.

This handy Welcome Packet is available through your realtor or through the Fire Safe Council committee members. If you have not received a copy, please contact Sydelle Lapidus at sydelle@mcn.org or Susan Deringer at sdeckermano3@gmail.com.

CHIEF (from page 2)

approaching our breaking point of about 300 calls. That point happens when our volunteer model has pushed the capacity of our volunteers beyond their ability to safely respond.

To put this into perspective, let's step back for a minute and look at what is required for a volunteer firefighter or medical responder to be legally equipped to respond to emergencies:

1. Volunteer firefighters are required to perform at the same level as a paid professional firefighter, as mandated by the State of California. As a community, we should expect nothing less—when you call 911, you want to receive the best, most professional service and/or care possible.
2. Volunteer firefighters are required to achieve Firefighter I status within six months to one year of joining a fire department. This involves extensive training and attending an annual Fire Academy every weekend from January through April. This is a huge time commitment. The Mendocino County Chief's Association (MCCA) sponsors the academy each year on weekends to work around volunteer's regular employment schedules. Although attendance at the Academy provides a majority of Firefighter I requirements, the shortfall is that they cannot provide a testing requirement to achieve State of California certification.
3. It is desirable (but not required) for volunteers to receive Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification. Training for this certification requires an additional 180 hours of



ALRFPD personnel Dan Gates and Shaun Lindeblad assist with medical patient transport from ambulance to aircraft recently. (Photo courtesy of EMT Sheila Klopfer)

training, but is important, considering the bulk of calls in our district are medical aid.

Now consider, that in our district, the ages of our volunteers range between 21 and 70—the majority fitting in the latter group of that age range. Younger volunteers have a retention rate of approximately two years, mostly because of the lack of affordable housing and our cost of living. Those who manage to stay in the area re busy not only working full time, but raising young families and lack the extra time commitment required to become a volunteer firefighter.

Volunteers respond to calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays. Many hold fulltime jobs. In 2021 alone that took up 74% of calls for the entire year. That's a huge amount of stress on a handful of volunteers. And it's not just the *number* of calls, but the *types* of calls our group attends, from vehicle accidents involving fatalities to serious medical conditions such as stroke and hear attack—sometimes happening with days or even hours of each other.

I am concerned about our core group of emergency responders. If we don't do anything, we will burn them out, both physically and emotionally. That's not good for the responders, and it's certainly not good for the safety and protection of our community.

To be able to address our changing world, we need to creatively restructure our fire department operations, whether this involves moving towards a shift program where we staff and pay two firefighter EMT's 24/7 who can handle most of the calls, or combining paid firefighters with volunteers. Perhaps we need to have a paid fire department. This, of course, only highlights the need for an up-to-date Central Fire Station (see page 6).

Every year we see the State of California increasing CalFire's budget exponentially—no questions asked. CalFire is a wonderful partner to us, but the fact is, they only respond to approximately 30% of mutual assistance calls *when they are available*. With the increase of deadly wildfires cropping up everywhere in our state, *they are even less available*. Budget-wise, local government fire departments are left to fend for themselves, of course receiving county money, but from a finite budget. It is not sustainable for the county to take money from one agency in need to give to another agency in need. The money we receive from fundraisers and donations is amazing, but also unable to sustain our growing needs.

Our community *must* recognize that *safety and protection come at a cost*. Everyone is stretched. Although our district revenues have increased and generous donations from our community are strong, we need a solid and sustainable solution if we're to continue to thrive together.

In the coming months, I will be scheduling a community meeting to discuss our dilemma and to hear some feedback from you, our stakeholders. Working as a community, my hope is that together we can find solutions. We want ot hear your perception of our department, your perspective on the current situation, and how you may be able to contribute. And as always, please accept our sincere thanks for your generous monetary contributions to our department.

With this tough couple of years behind us, I look forward to getting us all back together. Enjoy the rain ad I look forward to seeing you all at the BBQ in July!

OUR DONORS

The Albion-Little River Fire Protection District would like to thank all who donated and have helped support our organization. If you have any questions, please call the District at (707) 937-4022 or email office@albionfire.com.

If you'd like to make an online donation, please visit our website at www.alrfpd.com/donate-today or by mail at P.O. Box 634, Albion, CA 95410. Please make your check payable to ALRFPD.

All gifts listed below
were received between
December 12, 2020 and
April 15, 2022

FIREFIGHTER HERO (\$500 AND UP)

Alan & Rose Marie Baron Donor Fund	ALRFPD Auxiliary	Anonymous Donor
Brian Larky	Chuck & Claire Ellis Greenberg	Cris Beaty
CRV Collection	Douglas Dodds & Leon Hamaekers	Dr. Charles Homcy & Diane Sylvester
Ellen M. Beaty	Gwen Lowery	Jerome L. & Patricia P. Thomas
John & Kathryn Hughes	Judy Malin	Larry & Susan Eckerman
Lisa Orselli & Bob Rodriguez	Lynda Reed	Margaret A. Hagen & Michael C. Jolliffe
Martha Wagner Estate	Mendocino Coast Children's Fund	Nicola Kathryn Jack
Nicolas Paul	Paul M. Siegel	Peter Lit & Darcy Mahoney
Rita Crane	Rodric A. Lorimer	Sam Middleton
Sidra Stone	Steven & Deborah Farmar	Steven & Deborah Wolfe

FIREFIGHTER FRIEND (\$200—\$499)

Alix Sabin	Anonymous Donor	Corners of the Mouth
Howard & Sharon Lau	Jeff & Sherri Fikes	Jeffrey Sinsheimer
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Meredith Smith	Noah D. Lebowitz & Tracy F. Hollander	Pamela Linstedt & Rose Daencer
Sharon Hansen	Susan Hawes	Tom Wodetzki & Sharon Hansen

FIREFIGHTER SUPPORTER (UP TO \$199)

Ann Zolinger	Connie C. Reynolds	David & Deanna Bing
David & Donna Forsberg	David & Roberta Belson	Doris H. Hammer
Esther J. Faber	Joan Moore	Joel Kies & Caroline Bonfield
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Marchi Family Charitable Foundation	Mina Cohen	Mitchell Sprague
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Ricia Araiza	Rick Harris	Robert & Vicki Bruce
Robert Schlosser & Duiane Hofberg	Sam & Babs Levine	Sandra Berrigan
Susan Larkin & James Ehlers	Teresa McGuire	Terri Bogue
Tides Turn	William H. & Karen K. Lewis	

A BIG THANK YOU

Last year when Chief Rees told our board of directors the district needed to look at replacing our well-used and worn engine, and that our Rescue Truck was not far behind in needing replacement, the board was at a loss as to how to fund these major purchases. In the past, the District had used conventional methods such as lease to purchase, but this time we were not only faced with aging firefighting vehicles, but stations that were built years ago and in need of extensive repairs and replacement as well. The District only had so much money and it was a dilemma of what to do first...

But then, a few really good things happened.

First, our department was offered an opportunity to purchase a new Type 3 Wildland engine at a very competitive grouped rate through Cal-Fire. Although our budget was tight, we couldn't pass up the cost benefit, and adjusted things to make it work. As for the Rescue Truck, that would have to wait until...well, a champion stepped in to help. That champion was a lady named Rose Marie Baron—and it allowed us to say “yes” to the additional purchase of a Rescue Truck.

You see, Rose Marie and her late husband, Alan, spent many happy vacations in Albion and developed a deep love of our beautiful coast. She and Alan formed a donors fund, and when she learned of our needs, made a substantial contribution citing that she “...is honored to contribute to the safety of our community.” Her generosity allowed us to pay for a new Rescue Truck in its entirety, and for that we are truly grateful.

“[I’m]...honored to contribute to the safety of [the Albion-Little River] community.”

-Rose Marie Baron

A WORD ABOUT OUR FIREFIGHTERS

We don't normally think of the folks who are volunteer firefighters as donors to our department, but in fact, that's exactly what they are—gifting their time and energy to help us.

Each day, rain or shine, hot or cold, weekday or holiday, our volunteers show up.

They show up at all hours—during the day, in the middle of the night—to help their friends and neighbors.

They come from many backgrounds and careers. Many of them had no experience when they joined the department but were willing to start at the bottom—constantly training.

The values our firefighters share are what makes our organization strong. As an organization, we would be hard-pressed financially to replace the work these amazing volunteers do—more importantly, we would be poorer in spirit if we did not have them.

Next time you see a firefighter, be sure to thank them for their donation.

Heroes come in many forms, and our district would be hard pressed to make sure our firefighters are well equipped to meet the needs of today's changing landscape without folks like Rose Marie. Thank you to Rose Marie and to all who donate. We couldn't do it without you!

GRANT CORNER

By Lea Christensen, Ph.D.

Our district has five physical locations throughout the Albion and Little River communities. Some of the buildings are nicer than others. Some of the buildings are nothing but sheds that house fire department vehicles. One thing is for certain though—all you need to do is look around and see that the District is slowly, steadily making improvements so we can be ready to be there for you. How are we doing it?

To begin with, we are lucky to be in a highly supportive community where folks care about their properties, their neighbors, and each other. Truthfully, we could not do it without your support. Your funds go to maintaining our stations and keeping our firefighters supplied with equipment and clothing.

But we also know it takes more.

So during the pandemic, we got busy and began applying for grants to cover specific needs. And we succeeded!

In July, we were approved for a United States Department of Agriculture grant for vehicle radios, support struts and fire hoses.

In October, our ALRFPD Auxiliary received a grant on our behalf for cliff rescue equipment through the Community Foundation of Mendocino's Nonprofit Covid Relief Fund

And in December we received a California COVID-19 Relief Funds grant for the purchase of special laundry equipment and firefighter gear.

Do you have interest and/or experience in grant writing? We'd love to have you on our team! Please contact Lea Christensen at lea@albionfire.com for information on how you can contribute.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ALBION-LITTLE RIVER FPD?

By Lee Welty

While 2021 was a punishing fire season for much of the state with such devastating and large fires all around, our district managed to get through the heart of the fire season without any major incidents.

We spent the majority of our time and effort into improving our stations, replacing old equipment and training, since each fire season proves to be more and more challenging. And our diligence and persistence paid off!

STATION 812—LITTLE-RIVER AIRPORT

One of our goals was to add a new metal building at

ALRFPD Station 812 near the Little River Airport. We're happy to announce that



project was completed and Engine 8181 is being dispatched from this new building.

STATION 810—ALBION VILLAGE

The planned work at our Station 810 in Albion Village was completed and now boasts an ADA compliant bathroom and ramp to the office area which is used as a district meeting place. On Wednesday afternoons, ALRFPD hosts an arm of the Fort Bragg Food Bank.



And that's not all! A section of the office

space at Station 810 is being modified to provide a pleasant workspace for our administrative staff and a secure and clean place to house our business documents.



Our building committee has met regularly to formulate preliminary options for a new Fire Station 810. The new station will contain all the elements necessary for a complete fire department under one roof, and plans should be completed for public review by the end of the year.

NEW APPARATUS

Because of the generosity of our community including a major donation, the district has been able to purchase two new trucks to replace our aging equipment and improve our firefighters' response capabilities.

Our new Type 3 Wildland Engine replaces our Engine 8171 which was an older model on loan to us from the U.S. Forest Service.

The new engine, a Type 3, Model 34 is part of a "tag-on" order through Cal-Fire and is under contract with Boise Mobile Equipment, Idaho. Expected delivery is early 2023.

The second truck—a new Rescue Truck scheduled to arrive in early summer, is courtesy of a generous donation made by the Alan and Rose Marie Baron Donor Fund. Our new Rescue, purchased through Sport Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge in Fort Bragg, is a Ford 2022 RAM with many upgraded features. Due to age, wear and tear, our old Rescue will still be with us, but downgraded to a utility vehicle.

And it was your donations that helped make all these improvements possible. Charitable contributions to the Albion-Little River Fire Protection District (Albion-Little River Fire Department) are tax deductible under section 170(c)(1) [charitable contributions to government units] of the Internal Revenue Code if made for a public purpose.

MEET OUR FAMILY

DAN GATES

His friends will tell you that Dan Gates, who serves as our department's assistant chief and training officer, is a very special guy. "If you leave him alone for a minute, he will find a problem to solve, something to fix, or someone to help," says Gabrielle Levine, a fellow firefighter.

For Gates, his "can-do" work ethic brings a wealth of experience to our department as fire service is second nature—it runs in the family. His father, Rusty Gates, served for 40 years as a volunteer; his sister, Judy was a member of the Elk Volunteer Fire Department; and his son, Nathan is on CalFire's Helitac crew.

Gates first joined fire service in 1998 with the Comptche Fire Department—admitting he joined as a way to meet like minded others. He soon found his calling and learned being a firefighter was a wonderful way to contribute to his community. Gates completed the Chief's Academy and was active with the department for six years before moving to Olympia, WA.

Joining the Littlerock, WA Fire Rescue, Gates was quickly promoted to lieutenant in his third year of service and spent a total of six years there before returning to Comptche for another year, and then joined the Albion-Little River Fire Protection District in 2019.

Gates also comes with another talent—he makes his career as a heavy equipment mechanic, working on trucks and logging equipment—and keeps our fire trucks well maintained, ready for whatever comes our way. Many locals might recognize "Ruby," his big red work truck, and some might remember him as the Mendocino school bus driver 42 years ago.



THE BARBEQUE IS BACK!*

SPONSORED BY THE ALBION-LITTLE RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY

Join us on Saturday, July 9, from Noon to 5PM at ALRFPD Station 812 at 43100 Little River Airport Rd., Little River, for our annual Summer Barbeque to raise funds for the Albion-Little River Fire Protection District.

Support our firefighters while munching down on tasty barbecued chicken, tri-tip, chili beans, corn-on-the-cob, garlic bread and desserts.

We're featuring live music, bar, auction featuring wine and other high end items along with an opportunity to mix with your neighbors. If you'd like to help with preparation, event staffing, or by donating auction items or dessert items, please contact our Auxiliary—information below.

Tickets are available day of the event. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$12 for 7-12 year olds, and free for children under 7 with a paying adult.

**Pending any potential public health restrictions.*

VOLUNTEER WITH OUR AUXILIARY!

The ALRFPD Auxiliary is the backbone of our district—supporting our firefighters through fundraising—most notably through their annual barbeque. With a very small main staff, they rely on volunteers to keep the wheels of events and programs moving forward. If you're looking for an impactful way to give back to first responders, the Fire Department Auxiliary is for you! Call Susy Kitahara at 707-937-3714 or Carolyn Latkin at 707-937-5633 for more information.

What if volunteer firefighters DIDN'T VOLUNTEER?



Your community needs you.

Operational and administrative opportunities are available for volunteers of all backgrounds and skill sets.



707-937-4022

www.alrfpd.com
office@albionfire.com

BECOME AN ALBION-LITTLE RIVER VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER. JOIN TODAY!

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OUR TEAM

The Albion-Little River Fire Protection District's mission is to provide the personnel and resources necessary for protection of life and property in the Albion and Little River communities against threats from structural and wildland fires, medical emergencies, hazardous material releases, and disasters, natural or man-made.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Wendy Meyer



Training to respond at all hours is a critical component of a firefighter's repertoire.