



Above: Black Forest resident Donna Arkowski, center, receives the title “Honorary Fire Chief” for 45 years of service to the BFFRPD during the First Annual Awards Banquet on April 28. Arkowski joined the department in 1976 and retired as a firefighter/EMT in 2001 after 25 years, and is currently secretary of the board, a position she has held since 1976. Arkowski also did “yeoman’s work” as a volunteer during slash and chipping events run by Black Forest Together after the 2013 Black Forest Fire. Also pictured from left: Lt. Jamal Davis, firefighter Dustin Courter, Lt. Ky Emmons, Lt. Erik Beckstrom, Lt. Cody Poole, Capt. Chris Piepenburg, Donna Arkowski, Capt. William Kraus, Lt. Brandon Jones, firefighter/EMT Heather Heath, Fire/Medic Carlos Pittman, firefighter Kevin Holbrook, Fire/Medic Bre Migoya and Melissa Bottorff. *Photo by Julie Rebitski.*

- The district is still contending with operational communication issues and is evaluating all possible solutions and options and may need to replace old radios.
- Large red signs are being installed by the engine crews to identify firefighting water sources at a cost of \$39 per sign, each stating the street and capacity. The project will be completed in two phases, to include ponds and cisterns. The project will cost about \$2,000 and should be completed in early 2022.
- Apparatus fill sites are chosen during an incident to maximize time efficiencies, and may include cisterns or hydrants, with each situation and scenario being unique.
- The district website has been updated and Fire-wise assessments and recreational burn permits and guidelines are now easily accessible at www.bffire.org/firemarshal.
- Equipment, apparatus, and both stations are now decontaminated weekly using disinfectant and the recently purchased fogging machine. The practice will continue year-round regardless of the status of the current pandemic.

Training update

Rebitski said that Capt. Chris Piepenburg and Lt. Erik Beckstrom have developed a roster for potential future wildland deployments and said the following occurred in June:

- The primary focus on training has been wildland initial attack, driver operator training for supply pumpers and attack pumpers, hose packs, mock fires, and the rapid deployment of hose.
- The Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) brought 23 recruits for live burn training to the BFFRPD training center. CSFD cadre and leadership had nothing but great things to say about the realistic experience at the center and the professionalism of the BFFRPD firefighters and command staff.

Fireworks ban

Rebitski responded to public comments and said the following:

- The in-place fireworks ban for unincorporated El Paso County was rescinded by county Sheriff Bill Elder on June 14, because in accordance with state

law the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) had not approved the ban.

- BFFRPD is currently under a Stage 1 Burn Ban, and the sale and use of fireworks are prohibited. See www.bffire.org.
- BFFRPD may add extra



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