



Station 61: 17061 Rolling Creek Dr., Houston, TX., 77090

Station 62: 4362 Louetta Rd., Spring, TX., 77388

Station 63: 21455 Imperial Valley, Houston, TX., 77073

## Answering the Call

'Twas the night before Christmas,  
The house was ablaze,  
The sirens were blaring,  
The Fire Fighters amazed.

The fire started quickly,  
A Christmas tree they said,  
Burst into flames,  
Bad wiring, lighting, smoked,  
popped and spread.

Quickly, quietly the flames grew and grew.  
It was the grinch of Christmas, the fire did  
ensue.

The Fire Fighters worked swiftly, their  
skills tried and true.  
Ponderosa Fire saved Christmas, and the  
family too.

Safety is important, staying diligent and  
aware.  
Fires can happen to the best of us out  
there.  
Ponderosa Fire Fighters are ready for the  
call.  
They are there for you when it's your  
worst day of all.



## Harris County Emergency Services ESD #28



## HAAS ALERT Digital Alerts for Safer Roads

<https://www.haasalert.com>

DO YOU HEAR SIRENS OR SEE LIGHTS?  
PULL TO THE RIGHT AND STOP.

PULL TO THE RIGHT FOR SIRENS & LIGHTS



NOT ONLY DOES IT HELP ENSURE YOUR  
SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS,  
IT'S THE LAW!

## Help Keep Fire Fighters Safe- Use Your Navigation App

Every second counts when emergency responders are on the road. HAAS Alert's Safety Cloud® sends real-time alerts to drivers through apps like Google Maps, Apple Maps, and Waze, warning them when fire trucks and ambulances are nearby.

You don't need to sign up, just keep your navigation app open while driving. These alerts give you time to slow down, move over, and protect those who protect us. It's a simple step that saves lives.

### More Information:

- When an emergency vehicle equipped with Safety Cloud® activates its lights, the system sends out digital alerts.
- These alerts are picked up by navigation apps like Google Maps, Apple Maps, Waze, and in-vehicle GPS systems in newer cars such as Jeep, Dodge, RAM, Mercedes.
- Drivers using these apps will see and hear alerts like "Emergency Vehicle Ahead" or "Emergency Vehicle Approaching," giving them time to slow down and move over.
- No registration or app download is required. If you're using Google Maps for directions, you are already part of the Safety Cloud® network.
- Alerts are automatic and location based, triggered by emergency vehicles in your vicinity.
- WAZE: was one of the earliest partners with the HAAS Alert.
- Stellantis vehicles such as Jeep, Dodge, Chrysler, RAM, have built in infotainment systems and receive alerts directly.
- Some models with Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz support Safety Cloud® through GPS integration.

### How you can make a difference

- ✓ Move over!
- ✓ Keep your navigation app open while driving, it is the easiest way to receive alerts.
- ✓ Share this info with friends and family to raise awareness.
- ✓ Encourage local first responders and municipalities to equip their fleets with Safety Cloud®.

**Year To Date Stats for 2025**  
**Ponderosa Fire Department**  
**Drivers Alerted-22,790**  
**Incident Totals- 3,082**  
**Run Totals- 2,531**  
**Total Responding Time- 9,873 minutes.**  
**Average Time to Scene- 3.9 minutes**

*Wishing you a joyous and happy holiday season.  
From our house to yours, Merry Christmas,  
and Happy New Year!*



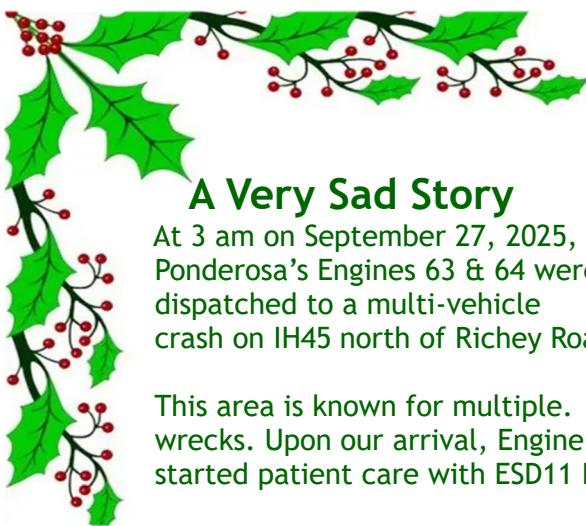
*Harris County Emergency Services  
District #28*



Stay in touch with Ponderosa Fire Department on Facebook and turn on notifications to get updated postings.

<https://www.facebook.com/PonderosaFD/>





### A Very Sad Story

At 3 am on September 27, 2025, Ponderosa's Engines 63 & 64 were dispatched to a multi-vehicle crash on IH45 north of Richey Road.

This area is known for multiple wrecks. Upon our arrival, Engine 63 started patient care with ESD11 EMS.

Engine 64 became the blocking apparatus to protect the scene and our first responders. The EMS transported the accident victims, and the wreckers were hooking up to clear the freeway.

Then, it happened...



An intoxicated driver crashed into Ponderosa's Engine 64, causing extreme damage. The driver of the vehicle was entrapped in the wreckage.

### From the Fire Fighters of Ponderosa Fire Department Station 61

### Vehicle Safety Reminders for The Holidays

The Ponderosa fire fighters were in the fire truck ready to leave the scene, seated, belted, as per protocol. The crash bounced them around, but they were okay.

They immediately began extricating the driver of the vehicle which crashed into the fire engine. It took about 25 minutes due to the extreme damage. The entire passenger compartment was disassembled using our high-tech hydraulic rescue tools, (Jaws of Life) and the expertise of our competent firefighters.

Even though they were emotionally and physically shaken by the crash and damage to our fire engine, they worked feverishly to disentangle the driver; successfully ESD 11 transported the victim to the hospital.

As attention turned to assess Engine 64, the fire truck was hurt, and badly. The damage was extensive...

The intoxicated driver had no insurance. The net effects are:

- Our insurance is impacted.
- \$250,000 in damage.
- Out of service for at least 5 months.
- Other fire engine repairs and maintenance are deferred.
- We purchased a used 2013 fire engine to fill in the gaps (\$200,000).

Ponderosa Fire Fighters followed every safety protocol in this incident, but it didn't matter.

Highway incidents similar to this are an epidemic affecting MANY agencies across our nation. Citizens are not paying attention and are driving unsafely.

So, what are we doing differently now?

The IH45 corridor is known for frequent wrecks every day. The Aldine Fire Department has purchased two specialized trucks with blocking rings (Scorpion crash protectors).



Spring Fire Department is using its high-water vehicles as blocks rather than million-dollar fire trucks, which are exceedingly difficult to obtain amid today's manufacturing crisis.



We have partnered with them to utilize their "tools" to protect our fire fighters and apparatuses. I have asked myself this question-

"Who said the fire department is the "chosen one" to block traffic?"

We are taking additional preemptive actions to prevent these horrible incidents.

Do not Drink and Drive...how many times does it take to hear this message?  
Innocent people die from driving drunk.



Stay OFF your CELL PHONE.

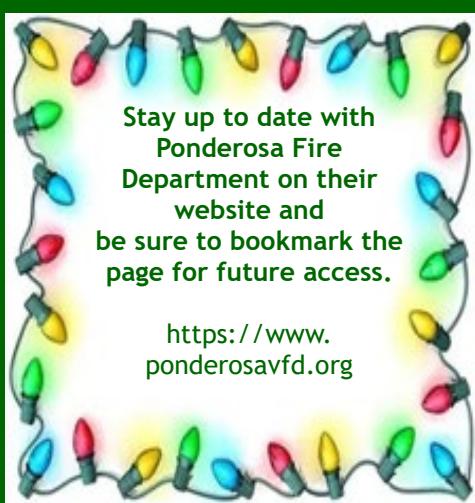


SLOW DOWN and



Stay safe, be cautious, and move to the right when you see lights.  
Do not drive into them.  
It's the law.

Ponderosa Fire Department,  
Ponderosa Fire Fighters,  
and  
Fred Windisch EFO, CFO, Fire Chief



## Season's Greetings from Station #62 Ponderosa Fire Fighters

As the holiday season fills the Ponderosa Fire District skies and families gather near fireplaces with festive candles placed about. We're reminded of the warmth that fills our homes and the quiet guardians that protect them. This season, we share a heartwarming example in short story of the Ramirez family.

One chilly December night, a candle tipped near a curtain. Minutes later, a smoke detector pierced the silence, sounding the alarm.

Maria Ramirez awoke, gathered her children, and escaped just in time. The Ponderosa Fire Fighters arrived swiftly, containing the fire before it spread. After the fire fighters left, Maria assessed the smoke-filled room, and the damage from the fire. She thought to herself, *I'll take care of all this after Christmas.* She closed the door to the room and moved Christmas into the kitchen to finish out the holidays with her children.

Days later, another alarm sounded. The Carbon monoxide detector (CO).

The CO detector warned of a hidden danger, a cracked furnace leaking deadly gas. Once again, the Ramirez family evacuated safely by Ponderosa Fire Fighters.

The Ramirez family knew that the alarms were their guardian angels and the fire fighters- the first to respond to their call.

During the gift giving season remember to give your family the gift of protection. Whether the detectors be a stocking stuffer or a wrapped gift, let every beep be a blessing. Let every alarm be a promise. And let every home be guarded by the quiet courage of technology and the brave hearts of those who serve in Ponderosa Fire Department.

From all of us at Ponderosa Fire Department Station #62.

Merry Christmas!  
Stay Safe.  
Stay Protected.

## The Sound That Saves:

### How Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors Protect Lives.

In the quiet hours before dawn, a shrill alarm pierced the silence of a suburban home. It wasn't a burglar or a storm, it was a smoke detector, doing exactly what it was designed to do: saving lives.

Smoke detectors are more than household gadgets; they are guardians of your home. According to the *Fire Safety Research Institute*, individuals often have three minutes or less to escape a home fire before conditions become fatal. Working smoke alarms provide critical early warnings, cutting the risk of death by 50%.

The *American Red Cross* reports that 2,500 lives have been saved through their "Sound the Alarm" campaign, which has installed over 3 million smoke alarms nationwide. Yet, despite their proven effectiveness, many homes still lack functioning detectors or fail to maintain them properly.

#### Key smoke alarm safety tips:

- Install alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms, and outside sleeping areas.
- Test alarms monthly and replace batteries annually.
- Replace alarms every 10 years to ensure sensor reliability.

While smoke detectors alert us to visible danger, there can be a silent killer lurking in the house, carbon monoxide (CO).

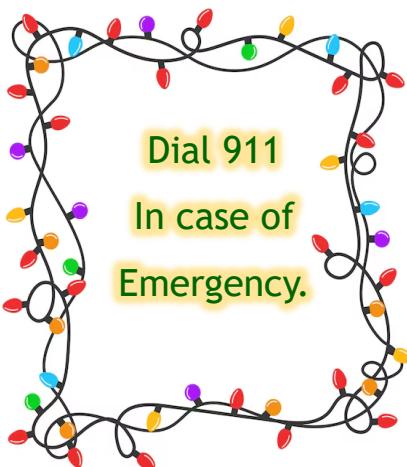
Carbon monoxide detectors protect us from the invisible. CO is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning fuels like gas, wood, charcoal, or oil. Faulty furnaces, gas stoves, fireplaces, and even cars left running in attached garages can leak CO into living spaces.

Each year, more than 400 Americans die from accidental CO poisoning, and over 20,000 visit emergency rooms. These symptoms can be a headache, dizziness, nausea, and can mimic the flu. Many victims do not realize they are in danger until it's too late.

#### Carbon monoxide safety tips:

- Install CO detectors on every level of your home, especially near sleeping areas and fuel-burning appliances.
- Test monthly, replace batteries annually, and replace detectors every 7-10 years.
- Consider combo units that detect both smoke and CO for streamlined protection.





## Preventing Holiday Fires With Heart, Hope and A Spark of Safety

A blanket of twinkling lights shimmer in the December sky along with warm gatherings of family and friends; homes come alive with joy and electricity! From glowing trees to sizzling stovetops, the festive spirit often pushes our electrical outlets to their limits.

Each year, overloaded sockets and power strips contribute to thousands of home fires. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation, overloaded outlets and faulty wires are among the top causes of holiday fires. The danger grows when high wattage devices, space heaters, kitchen appliances, or multiple light strands share a single outlet.

[\(https://www.esfi.org/top-10-holiday-safety-tips/\)](https://www.esfi.org/top-10-holiday-safety-tips/)

### Fire Prevention Tips for the Season

To keep your celebrations safe and bright, follow these essential tips:

- Avoid plugging multiple high draw devices into one outlet. Use separate circuits for heaters, ovens, and decorative lights.
- Use surge protectors wisely. Even heavy-duty power strips have limits and never daisy-chain the power strips.

-Inspect cords and plugs. Replace frayed wires, loose connections, or damaged sockets.

-Limit light strands and never connect more than three incandescent strings end-to-end.

-Turn off decorations before bedtime. Half of home fire deaths occur between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

### Please, don't let this be you...

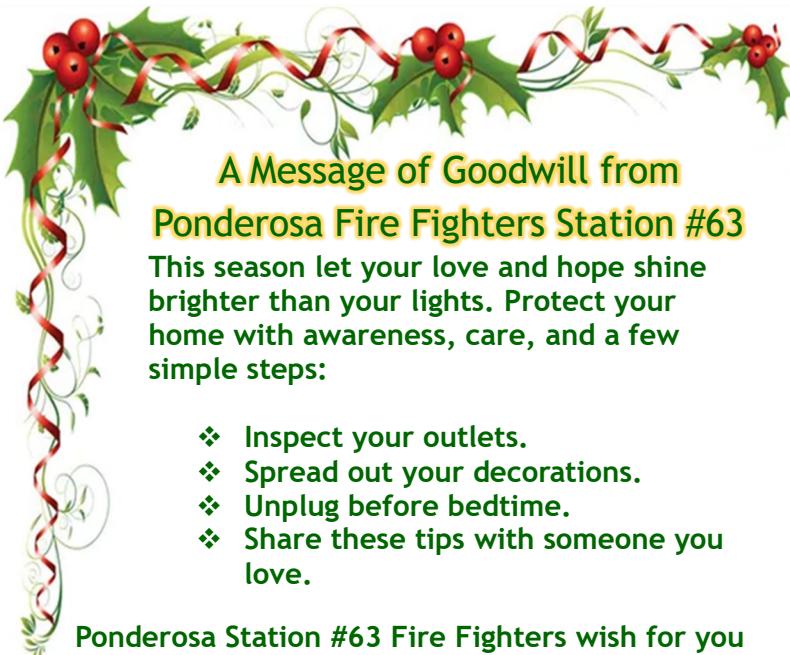
#### A Fire Safety Story Inspired by Real Risks.

It was Christmas Eve in the Smith household. The tree shimmered with lights; the kitchen buzzed with the smell of ham and all its trimmings. The space heater kept Grandma warm in her favorite chair. But behind the cheer, a single outlet bore the weight of it all.

Just after midnight, a faint burning smell crept through the living room. Luckily, their teenage son, Jason had recently learned about fire safety in school. He unplugged the heater and lights and called 911.

The Ponderosa Fire Fighters arrived to find scorched insulation behind the wall and an overloaded socket had nearly ignited. The Smith family spent Christmas morning not unwrapping gifts but sharing gratitude. "We could've lost everything," said Mrs. Smith.

"Instead, we gained a deeper appreciation for fire safety education and how good information protects our home, and the ones we love."



## A Message of Goodwill from Ponderosa Fire Fighters Station #63

This season let your love and hope shine brighter than your lights. Protect your home with awareness, care, and a few simple steps:

- ❖ Inspect your outlets.
- ❖ Spread out your decorations.
- ❖ Unplug before bedtime.
- ❖ Share these tips with someone you love.

Ponderosa Station #63 Fire Fighters wish for you this holiday season is to let every light be a symbol of safety. Let every gathering be warmed by wisdom and let every home be guarded by the quiet power of prevention.

From our fire family to yours, Merry Christmas, and may your season be safe, bright, and full of heart.

Don't let your electrical outlets look like this...



Or this...



**RENOVATIONS**  
ROOFING & REMODELING INC  
Home Safety Tip  
Don't Overload Your Outlets

Here is your sign... that your electrical outlet may be overloaded.

In many cases, electrical issues start quietly. A flickering light or a faint burning smell might not seem urgent, but they often signal deeper problems behind the walls. Property owners should treat these as early warnings rather than inconveniences.

Recognizing the key signs can help you act before an electrical fire occurs, such as:

-Frequent breaker trips. If your circuit breaker keeps shutting off, it's preventing an overload so DO NOT just reset the breaker repeatedly.

-Flickering or dimming lights as you turn on appliances indicate a power draw that exceeds the circuit's capacity. Take it seriously.

-Warm or discolored outlets that feel hot to the touch or show scorch marks mean heat buildup inside the wall.

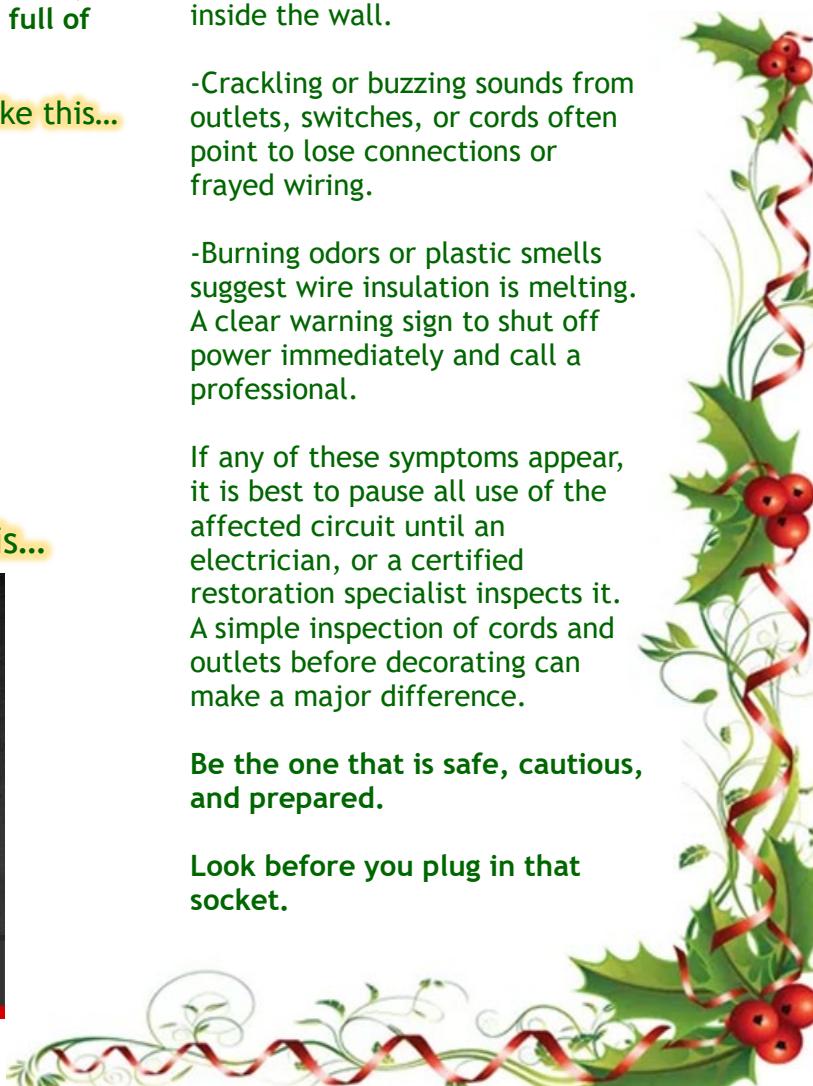
-Crackling or buzzing sounds from outlets, switches, or cords often point to loose connections or frayed wiring.

-Burning odors or plastic smells suggest wire insulation is melting. A clear warning sign to shut off power immediately and call a professional.

If any of these symptoms appear, it is best to pause all use of the affected circuit until an electrician, or a certified restoration specialist inspects it. A simple inspection of cords and outlets before decorating can make a major difference.

Be the one that is safe, cautious, and prepared.

Look before you plug in that socket.



# Curtis J. Cook Training Facility

## A Fire, A Rescue, and A Reminder: Holiday Safety in the Age of Solar

In October this year, the Ponderosa Fire Department was dispatched to a reported structure fire. Prior to the dispatch, one of Ponderosa's long-time volunteer members, B. Prell, was first on the scene and contacted TECC, (911) to report the fire.

While the units were on their way, our member, B. Prell, along with a Mark Herman, Harris County Constable Precinct 4 member, without hesitation, entered the smoke-filled home and rescued the individual. The burn victim was later transported in stable condition with burns covering 40% of their body.

Units D60, E61, TW61 arrived on scene simultaneously and initiated an aggressive interior offensive attack. But...the fire had a modern twist: solar panels on the roof, now compromised by heat and flames. As the panels collapsed into the structure, crews swiftly transitioned to a defensive strategy, prioritizing safety until the building's integrity could be confirmed. Thanks to coordinated efforts including mutual aid from ESD 17, and ESD 24 the fire was contained without further injury.

### Solar Panels and Fire Safety: What You Need to Know

Solar panels are a powerful tool for sustainability, but they introduce unique risks during a fire:

- Panels remain energized even when the grid is shut off, posing electrical hazards to fire fighters.
- Collapsed panels can block ventilation and access points, complicating suppression efforts.
- Improper installation or aging components may increase fire risk, especially during extreme weather or high electrical load.



To protect your home this season:

- Ensure your solar system is installed by certified professionals.
- Schedule annual inspections to check wiring, inverters, and panel integrity.
- Clearly label system components for emergency responders.
- Keep decorations and power cords away from solar infrastructure.

### A Holiday Message of Gratitude and Protection

This Christmas, let the story of this structure fire remind us that safety is the greatest gift we can give. The courage of Ponderosa Fire Fighters and their swift adaptation to modern fire challenges saved a life and protected a neighborhood.

As you string lights, plug in the Christmas blow-ups, and display your yard decorations take a moment of precaution and test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Inspect your outlets and solar systems. Share your home's solar layout with your local fire department and thank a fire fighter for their service.

Let every light of the season be a symbol of hope. Let every precaution be a promise and let every home be warmed by love and not risk.

**From all of us at Ponderosa Fire Department Station 61, 62, 63, and Training Facility,  
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

## More practical information regarding- **Solar Panels, Safety, and Fire Fighter Adaptation**

It all started with a dream of sustainability...  
Let's take this fictional story for example:

The Nguyen family, nestled in a quiet suburb of Houston, had long admired the sleek solar panels on their neighbors' roofs. In July, they decided it was time. After a thorough roof inspection, permit approvals, and a consultation with a certified installer, their south-facing roof was transformed into a clean energy powerhouse.

The installation was meticulous, stanchions anchored into rafters, aluminum mounting rails squared and sealed, microinverters tucked beneath each panel, and conduit routed to the main electrical panel. Within days, the system was live, quietly converting sunlight into power, reducing their bills, and shrinking their carbon footprint.

But what the Nguyens didn't realize was that their new roof also introduced new risks and ones that fire fighters across the country are rapidly learning to manage.

### **When Fire Meets Solar A New Frontier for First Responders**

Five months later...

A neighbor's call to 911 reported smoke billowing from the Nguyens' attic. Ponderosa Fire Department arrived within minutes. As crews prepared for an interior attack, they spotted the solar array which was still energized despite the home's power being shut off.

Solar panels do not stop producing electricity when the grid is disconnected. Any light source, even flashlights or apparatus spotlights can trigger voltage through hidden conduits. Fire fighters must now treat every rooftop as a potential electrical hazard.

The roof's structural load has changed too. The panels add about 3-6 pounds per square foot, and in fire conditions, that weight can compromise integrity. The surfaces of the panels get slippery, and toxic materials are released during combustion which obstruct ventilation paths to complicate traditional tactics.



Ponderosa Fire Fighters trained in solar fire protocols, adapted quickly. Through their training they know how to avoid vertical ventilation near the panels, use fog spray patterns to minimize conductivity risk, and transition to a defensive strategy when the roof's stability comes into question. Thanks to their awareness and agility, the fire was contained with no injuries or surprises.

### **How Fire Fighters Are Modernizing**

Departments like Ponderosa Fire are leading the charge in solar fire safety:

- Pre-incident planning: Mapping solar equipped homes and labeling disconnects.
- Specialized training in learning how to identify energy storage systems to shut down CD/AC flows to avoid arc flash risks.
- Updated gear using PPE rated for electrical hazards and tools designed for solar environments.
- Community education encouraging homeowners to share system layouts and install emergency shutoff signage.

As solar panels become part of our rooftops and lives, let's honor the professionals adapting to keep us safe. Let's install solar panels responsibly, label and map your house clearly, and support fire fighter training that turns risk into resilience.

**Remember: every beam of sunlight should power hope and not hazard.**

PONDEROSA  
**FIREFIGHTER**  
HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

17061 Rolling Creek Dr.  
Houston, TX 77090



This publication is intended for the residents within the Ponderosa Fire Department service area. If you received this newsletter in error, we hope you still read it and utilize the fire safety information. Copyright 2025, ESD #28, Ponderosa Fire Department



## Santa at The Fire Station Tradition, Outreach, Community

In the late 70's early 80's, a simple but powerful idea took root in our community: bring the magic of Christmas to every child, especially those who might not experience a traditional holiday. What began as a small outreach has blossomed into a cherished tradition, Santa at The Fire Station.

Each holiday season, the Ponderosa Fire Department, in partnership with the local Homeowners Association (HOA) and Texas Emergency Communication Center (TECC), transforms the fire station into a beacon of warmth, joy, and generosity. Fire trucks are decked with twinkling lights, and the sound of laughter echoes through the bays. But the true magic is in the faces of the children wide-eyed with wonder as Santa arrives, not by sleigh, but atop a shining red fire engine.

For many families, especially those facing hardship, the holidays can be difficult. Santa at The Fire Station is more than just a festive event; it's a lifeline of hope. Here, every child is welcomed, every wish is heard, and every heart is lifted. Volunteers, fire fighters, and community members come together to distribute gifts, share stories and create memories that last a lifetime.

This tradition is a testament of what makes our community special. It's about neighbors looking out for one another, about the quiet heroes who serve not just in emergencies, but in moments of joy and celebration. It's about reminding every child that they are seen, valued, and loved.

As we gather once again this year, let us remember the true spirit of the season-giving, caring, and coming together. Whether you're a longtime resident or new to the neighborhood, you are part of this story, a story written in smiles, shared laughter, and in the glow of holiday lights reflected in young eyes.

From all of us at the Ponderosa Fire Department, HOA, and TECC, we wish you a safe, joyful, and heart-filled season. May the tradition of Santa at The Fire Station continue to bring hope and happiness to our community for generations to come.

