

P O N D E R O S A
FIREFIGHTER
 HARRIS COUNTY ESD # 28

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



Fire Extinguisher, Fire Extinguisher, wherefore art thou, oh Fire Extinguisher....?

Here is the funny-not-funny- truth; most people hide their fire extinguishers in the worst possible places, and they don't realize it until they're standing in smoke thinking, "Now where did I put that thing..."

Common and unhelpful spots are under the kitchen sink, in the pantry behind food or appliances, or in the laundry room behind detergent bottles, in the garage cabinet, in a hall closet, and on the floor behind the door. Individuals hide them because they're "ugly" or they don't want guests to see them, BUT safety beats aesthetics every time!

Here is where fire extinguishers should be: (remind yourself to think visible, reachable, and near-but not inside- the danger zone).

Mount a fire extinguisher in the KITCHEN, on the wall or a cabinet near the exit, NOT next to the stove. You want to be able to grab it while backing out, NOT reaching over the flames.

In the GARAGE, mount near the door leading into the house, NOT buried in a cabinet.

Considering your FIREPLACE area, mount on the same wall as the fireplace but several feet away, NO, NOT on the hearth. Just close enough to grab, and far enough not to be engulfed in flames.

The LAUNDRY room fire extinguisher should be near the entrance, NOT behind the washer and dryer.

The BEDROOM and HALLWAYS should have a small fire extinguisher or fire blanket near the door, especially if you have older wiring, space heaters, or candles.

UPSTAIRS, the fire extinguisher should be at the top of the stairs, NOT at the bottom. You don't want to run down into the smoke to get it.

The Rule of Thumb...If you can't point to it within three seconds, it's not in the right place. Having one visible and mounted is not overkill. It's neighborly wisdom!

How to use Extinguisher





HARRIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT #28



Ponderosa Fire Department has achieved the Public Protection Class (PPC) rating of 2!

-ESD Board Member- Erika Smiley's Ride-Along With Ponderosa Firefighters at Station #61



I have lived in this district for most of my life. In 2020, I joined the ESD Board to give back to my community in a slightly untraditional way. While I have served on the board for six years, I recently experienced a first that surprised even me: ***“my very first ride-along!”***

“For those unfamiliar, a ride-along is when a civilian joins first responders during a shift to observe their work firsthand.”

I arrived at Station #61 on a Saturday afternoon, where two firefighters gave me a tour of the station.

While Station #61 also serves as ESD headquarters, I quickly realized that although I visit the building often, I usually stay on the administrative side of the house.

The tour included the gym, dorms, and garage space. Midway through the walkthrough, sirens and alerts rang through the station signaling a call. It turned out to be a medical call, and I was invited to go along. I climbed, and I do mean climbed, into the engine, took the center seat, and off we went. Let me say this clearly, not as an ESD Commissioner but just as Erika.

“PLEASE, when you hear sirens, do your absolute best to make room for emergency vehicles. FM 1960 is a beast in normal conditions. Experiencing it at full speed on a Saturday afternoon with lights and sirens is something else entirely.”

When we arrived on scene, an ambulance had already arrived and was providing care, and as long as the person received help, that was the most important thing. We loaded back up and returned to the station. By that point, my adrenaline was pumping, and I was ready for whatever came next.

What I quickly learned is that when firefighters return from a call, they simply resume their normal duties. Those duties include training, equipment checks, station upkeep, and making sure everything is ready for the next call. Meanwhile, I was standing by, waiting for the next siren.

Fun Fact: During my entire five-hour ride along, that single medical call was the only call of my “shift.” As one firefighter explained, that is just life at the station. Sometimes it is rush, rush, other times it is just normal, but there is always something to do!

Training happens regularly to ensure everyone is prepared. Firefighters also conduct detailed engine inspections to make sure all equipment and apparatus are functional and ready for duty.

Then came the unexpected highlight of the day... One of the firefighters asked if I wanted to go up in Tower 61. As the name suggests, Tower 61 includes a ladder that can extend up, 100 feet in the air at a full 90-degree angle. It can also lower almost completely to the ground. After considering that I had good insurance and may never get this chance again, I said YES!

(...Ride-Along continues... by Erika Smiley)

I also said a good Southern prayer! Then up I went. I climbed onto the truck, crawled across it, and entered what can best be described as a very large bucket. I was secured with a heavy-duty belt and carabiner.

The day was crystal clear and beautiful! From the top, I could see the IAH control tower, downtown Houston, and the Galleria area. After about ten minutes, the wind picked up, and I briefly thought, well, this might be it. Thankfully, it was not! The bucket was lowered; I climbed down safely and lived to tell the story.

A few takeaways from the day... There is always something happening at a fire station. Firefighters truly operate as a unit, from training to maintaining their home away from home. That sense of teamwork is evident in everything they do. As a commissioner, I often experience the administrative side of operation, and getting even this small glimpse into the daily work of firefighters was invaluable.

Proud to serve my commission, Erika.



WHY you MUST PULL TO THE RIGHT for SIRENS and LIGHTS in Texas It's the law- Texas Transportation Code 545.156

When an emergency vehicle approaches using both lights and siren, drivers are legally required to yield to the right of way, immediately pull to the right-hand edge or curb. Stop and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed. This applies unless a police officer directs otherwise. This is not optional, not "if convenient," and not "if you feel like it." It's a statutory requirement. Fire trucks need the entire lane and then some. Fire engines are large, heavy, and slow to maneuver. When cars freeze in place or stop in the middle of the lane, firefighters lose precious seconds weaving around them and seconds do matter. These seconds could prevent a cardiac arrest, a house fire, saving a vehicle entrapment, stroke, or breathing emergencies. A delay of even 30 seconds can change the outcome.

Slowing down is NOT enough. Stopping in the lane blocks paths. If a driver stops in the middle of the road, the fire truck must brake hard, change lanes, swing wide into oncoming traffic, or come to a complete stop. This is dangerous for everyone. Pulling to the right creates a predictable, safe corridor for emergency vehicles. Failure to yield can lead to fines and legal penalties. Under Texas law, failing to move for an emergency vehicle can result in a traffic citation, fines (which vary by county), and liability if your failure to yield contributes to a crash. Under the expanded MOVE OVER / SLOW DOWN law, drivers who fail to respond appropriately to emergency vehicles on the roadside can face fines from \$1,250-\$4,000 plus the possibility of jail time if someone is injured.

Sirens and Lights Matter: Emergency vehicles must use both to claim right-of-way. Texas law requires emergency vehicles to use audible and visual signals when exercising their right to move through traffic. This ensures drivers have fair warning and know they must yield.

**Sirens + Lights = Pull Right and Stop
Not left- RIGHT
Do not "freeze in place."
Do not "slow down a little."
Do not "I'll just keep going because I'm almost home."
Pull Right + Stop = Every Time.
Harris County ESD #28, Ponderosa Fire District**



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

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

**Ponderosa Fire Department
Station #61**



In Ponderosa Fire Districts, Where YOU Park Matters.... More than YOU Think!

All is quiet at the fire station. Firefighters are going about their daily routines when suddenly the alarm sounds. In seconds, they drop everything, climb into the truck, and hit the route-calculation button in the cab. The clock starts immediately, and every second matters when someone's home, health, or life is at risk.

Most emergency routes take firefighters through residential streets. Increasingly, those streets are difficult, and sometimes impossible, for a fire truck to navigate because of vehicles parked on both sides of the street.

This isn't a small inconvenience. It's a real barrier to emergency response.

Our residential streets are 26.5 feet wide.
A typical vehicle is 5.5 to 8.5 feet wide.

This doesn't include-
The distance from the curb.
Side Mirrors.
The angle of the parking job.

A Fire Truck

10 Feet Wide.
40-45 Feet Long.

It does not bend, squeeze, or "shimmy" through tight spaces the way a passenger car can.

When cars are parked on both sides of the street, the remaining space is often too narrow for a fire truck to pass. At intersections, where the truck must turn, the problem becomes even more severe. In these situations, firefighters have only a few options.

To Back Up
Reroute,
Try another street,
While losing precious time.

Here are some everyday examples of improper parking. Cars parked on both sides of a residential street. This creates a choke point where a fire truck physically cannot fit through. Even a few inches matter. Double-parking or stopping for just a minute is a definite NO! This is illegal in Texas and directly blocks traffic flow.



When you park your vehicle far from the curb, even 6-12" forces emergency vehicles to slow, stop, or reroute, costing minutes in situations where seconds matter.



Parking opposite another car on a street is one of the most common causes of blocked access in neighborhoods. Even if each car is legally parked, the combination creates an impassable corridor.

Cont'd Parking Matters...



Texas Law Parking Requirements

- 15 feet from Fire Hydrants
- 20 feet from Fire Station Driveways
- 75 feet on the opposite side of a Fire Station entrance

Why This Matters

When a fire truck is delayed by even 30 seconds, lives are at risk. Fire doubles in size every minute, and cardiac arrest survival drops rapidly with each minute of delay. Clear streets are not courtesy; they are life safety.

At the end of the day, the message is simple: every single second matters, and every inch of roadway counts.

When cars are parked too close to corners, too far from the curb, or lined up on both sides of a street, our firefighters lose the space they need to reach you in an emergency. A fire engine can't squeeze through a gap meant for a sedan, and an ambulance can't save a life if it can't get to the front door.

For the men and women of the Ponderosa Fire Department, this isn't an inconvenience; it's a matter of duty. Their commitment is to reach every resident as quickly and safely as possible. But that commitment only works when our streets stay clear enough for them to do their job. A single improperly parked vehicle can delay a response, block a hydrant, or force a fire truck to reroute around an entire block.

When you park responsibly, you become part of the safety system. You help keep access open; you help keep your neighbors protected. You help ensure that when someone calls 911, the firefighters who serve this community can honor their promise: **to show up fast, prepared, and without obstruction.**

It's a small act with an enormous impact, and it's one of the easiest ways every resident can support the firefighters who stand ready for us day and night.

Park in your driveway, not in the front of your house, not on the side of your house, not on your grass. Access to your home, because of a fire, is paramount and seconds count, and so does your life.

**Stay Safe, Park Correctly,
Be Conscientious, and
Be Respectful of our Life Saving
First Responders.**



Written by: Ken Koenig, Treasurer, Harris County Board Commissioner, ESD #28, and the Firefighters of Ponderosa Fire Department



Don't let this happen to YOU!
Texas Transportation Code - TRANSP § 545.156
| FindLaw



Stay up to date with Ponderosa Fire Department on their website and be sure to bookmark the page for future access.

<https://www.ponderosavfd.org>

Ponderosa Fire Department Station #62



Spring, oh the wonder of it all...

Birds chirping, bunnies hopping, flowers blooming, grass greening, and then... *those annoying leaves from last year and this year's freeze. Here they are again! And that tree that's suddenly dead. When did it fall over? Why is it already rotted into chips?* You stand there, looking, thinking: *Hmmm, I don't want to haul this off, I'm just going to let it burn and smolder. No one will ever know. I'll do it at night when everyone's inside, and they can't smell the smoke.* Oh, the best laid plans of mice and men....

Why can't you burn trees, stumps, or leaves in the Ponderosa Fire District? Why the consequences are no joke! Unincorporated Harris County is subject to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) rules.

These rules say:

- No burning of household waste, or yard waste.
- No burning of leaves, limbs, stumps, or brush.
- No burning for convenience.
- No burning to "get rid of debris."
- No burning at night, ever.

The only exceptions are very narrow, such as land-clearing with a permit and the use of heavy equipment. Homeowners do not qualify. So, that idea, *"I'll just burn this stump quietly!"* It's prohibited.

Smoke is a public health hazard.

Burning leaves and rotted wood produce fine particulate matter with toxic compounds. That heavy smoke drifts into neighbors' homes and can trigger asthma attacks, heart issues, respiratory distress, and emergency medical calls.

Stumps and rotted logs burn unpredictably, and this is the part most people do not know. A stump can smolder underground for hours or days. The roots can ignite underground, and fire can travel under fences or into mulch beds. A "small burn pile" can reignite long after the homeowner has gone inside. Ponderosa Fire District homes sit under dense tree canopies, and our properties are bordered by wood fences. A single ember in dry leaves or a smoldering stump can turn into a structure fire in minutes.

If a neighbor sees or smells smoke, they will call 911.

Ponderosa Fire Department must respond as if it's a structure fire until proven otherwise. This means engines rolling, crews deployed, water used, investigation required, and the homeowner is now on the radar for illegal burning. You can be fined- this is YOUR hard-earned money! TCEQ and Harris County Pollution Control can issue civil penalties up to thousands of dollars, daily fines if the burn continues, and cost recovery for fire department response. Most HOAs and deed-restricted communities prohibit backyard burning because it endangers neighboring properties.

Safe alternatives to be the "good neighbor."

- Know when your heavy trash pickup day is.
- Follow the rules your Trash Company has established for yard debris.
- Bag those leaves, and call haul-off services for chipping and mulching services.
- Make sure you remind the service not to dump the debris in the back of the subdivision. (Yeah, that happens too, and there is a fine!)

Keep your local fire district safe, be a good neighbor, and keep your community safe.



To help and serve, Ponderosa Fire District and ESD#28.



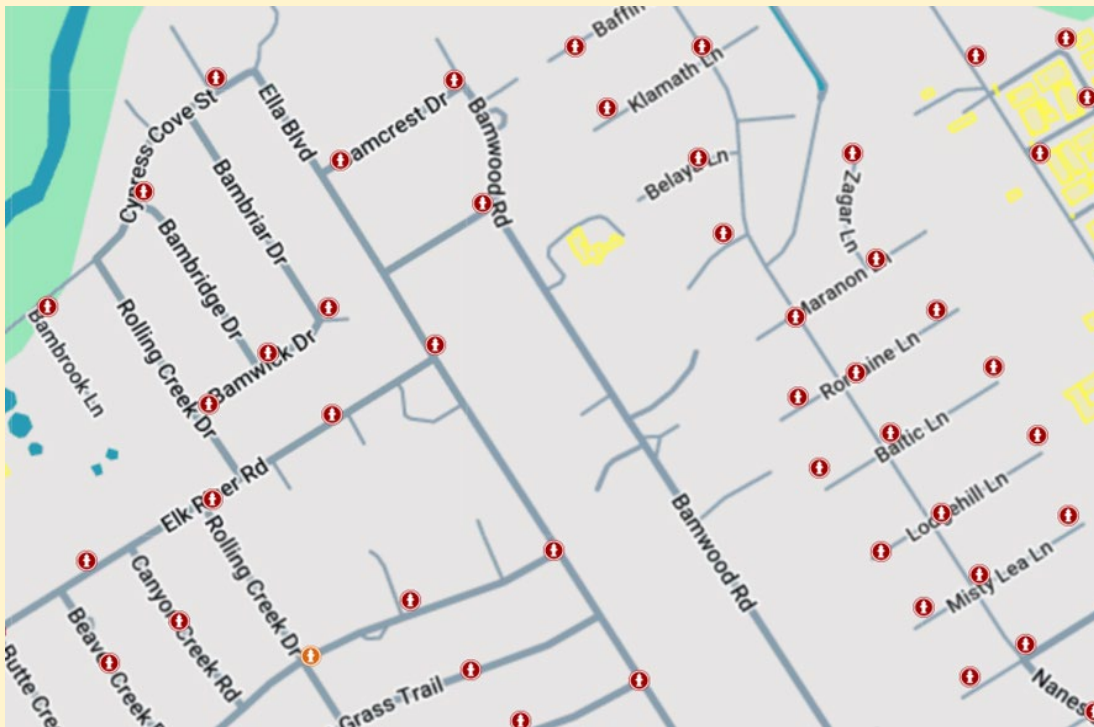
How Firefighters Use Hydrant Mapping Technology to Improve Response Time.

- closest hydrants identified
- best flow selected
- out-of-service hydrants avoided
- hose-lay distances planned
- optimal truck placement
- low-flow hydrants avoided
- faster water on the fire
- issues documented
- records updated

When a fire breaks out, every second matters, and so does every gallon of water. Behind the scenes, your fire district uses a sophisticated hydrant-mapping system that helps firefighters locate the closest, most reliable water source before they even arrive on the scene. This technology is installed on every fire truck and updated regularly as the district continues to map hydrants and add water-main information.

Hydrant mapping is part of a broader trend in the fire service using Geographical Information System (GIS) software and pre-incident planning tools to visualize water supplies, document hydrant status, and support faster, safer decision-making on the fireground.

Your fire district has all hydrants in the community mapped and is actively working on marking them online with water-main sizes. This gives firefighters a real-time picture of the water supply available on any street, not just where hydrants are, but how much water they are likely to provide.



Modern hydrant mapping and pre-plan platforms Typically offer:

- GPS-accurate hydrant locations
- Flow Capacity (GPM)
- Water-main size overlays
- In-service, Out-of-Service
- Maintenance and testing history
- Integration with pre-incident plans and mapping tools

Because this software is loaded on every fire truck, crews can see the closest hydrants, their expected flow rates, and any known issues while they are still en route. That removes the guesswork and speeds up water-supply decisions during structure fires.

Who flushes the hydrants? Many residents assume the fire department flushes hydrants, but in this district, individual water districts handle hydrant flushing. Some water districts flush hydrants every 6-months, while others do so every 12 months. The fire department itself does not perform hydrant flushing. Instead, it relies on the water districts' maintenance programs and incorporates that information into the hydrant-mapping system. This division of responsibility is common. Water utilities manage the underground infrastructure and hydrant condition, while fire departments focus on operational readiness and accurate records.

Hydrant mapping may not be visible to the public, but it directly affects fire protection in your neighborhood. Your district's commitment to mapping every hydrant, adding water-main sizes, and equipping each fire truck with this software is one of the quiet, behind-the-scenes ways Ponderosa Forest firefighters protect lives and property every day. (<https://www.eso.com/fire/hydrants-software/>)



Dial 911
In the cause of
emergency.

Ponderosa Fire Department Station #63



When firefighters arrive on scene, one of the first actions is deploying handlines.

These are the hoses that crews pull from the engine and advance toward the fire. Handline deployment is fast, physical, and highly coordinated. Every second counts, and so does choosing the right hose for the job.

At Ponderosa Fire Department, crews use a standardized set of hose sizes and colors that allow instant identification, even in low-visibility conditions. Here's how it all comes together on the fireground.

Deploying a handline involves several rapid steps:

- Pulling the hose from the engine.
- Stretching it toward the fire while avoiding kinks and obstacles.
- Charging the line by filling it with water from the hydrant or engine tank.
- Bleeding the air and setting the correct nozzle pattern.
- Advancing the line into the structure or toward the fire's exterior.
- Coordinating flow and movement between the nozzle operator and backup firefighter.

It's a choreography of muscle memory, communication, and training, and the hose size determines how much water the crew can deliver.

Ponderosa Fire District uses a clear, consistent color system that helps firefighters instantly identify hose diameter and purpose.



Supply Lines:

- Yellow-5", the main large-diameter hose (LDH) used to bring high-volume water from a hydrant to the engine.
- Yellow-3", a mid-diameter supply line used for secondary water supply, appliances, or feeding additional attack lines.

Attack Lines:

- Tan-2", a high-flow attack line used when crews need more water than a standard 1.75" can deliver. It's ideal for larger rooms, higher heat, or commercial spaces.
- Red-1.75", the district's primary interior attack line. Lightweight, maneuverable, and perfect for most residential fires.



These colors allow firefighters to grab the right line instantly, even in smoke, darkness, or high-stress moments. Different fires demand different water flows.

Here is how the crew decides:

- Small to moderate residential fires-the 1.75" red line is the go-to. It balances maneuverability with strong fire-knockdown capability.
- Larger rooms, heavy fire load, or commercial spaces- the 2" tan line provides higher GPM and more reach.
- Longer distances or defensive operations use 3" or 5" supply lines to feed appliances, manifolds, or master streams.

The goal is always the same: to get the right amount of water to the right place as quickly and safely as possible.

Because every Ponderosa fire truck carry hydrant-mapping software, crews know before they arrive which hydrant is closest and which hydrant has the best flow. How far the deployment of handlines will be and whether they will need a 1.75," 2", or a longer supply line.

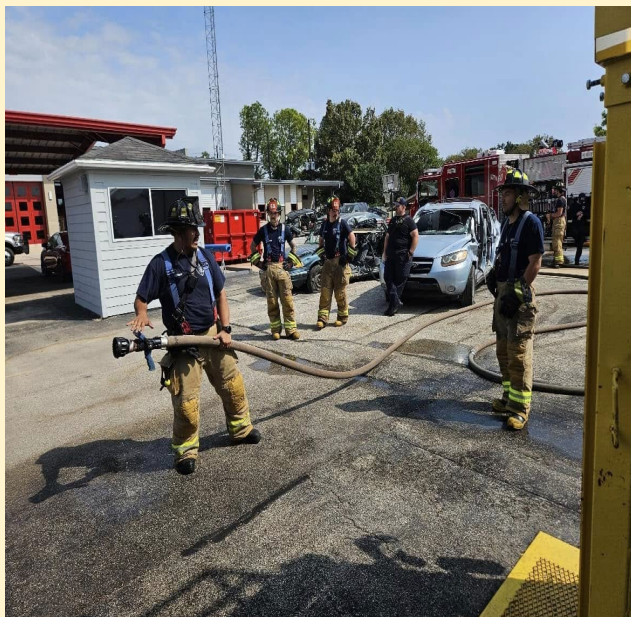
This pairing of smart hydrant data and the right handline is what makes Ponderosa Fire Department operations fast, efficient, and safe.

It's this quiet, steady professionalism that keeps our neighborhoods safe one handline at a time.

-Ponderosa Firefighters



1.75" and 2" Attack Lines



3" and 5" Supply Lines



Duty in every decision.

Commitment in every action.

Service in every line they deploy.

<https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighter-training/firefighter-fundamentals-handline-deployment-and-nozzle-control/>



**Duty,
Pride,
Commitment**

**Curtis J. Cook
Training Facility**



**School is still in session,
and
So is driving safety!**

According to [txdot.gov/safety/driving-laws/school-bus-safety](https://www.txdot.gov/safety/driving-laws/school-bus-safety), school bus drivers do everything they can to keep children safe. Motorists are responsible for driving safely around school buses. No exceptions.

In 2024, 11 people were killed and 93 seriously injured in the 2,480 crashes involving school buses in Texas. Driver inattention and speed were the top contributing factors in those crashes.

DRIVING TIPS:

1. Follow School buses at a safe distance, keeping in mind that they make frequent stops.
2. Watch for children around buses and remember that they may not always look for vehicles before crossing the street.
3. Always stop for flashing red lights or a stop sign on a school bus, regardless of which direction you're headed, unless the bus is on the opposite roadway of a divided highway. Continue once the bus has moved, the flashing lights stop flashing, or the bus driver signals it's okay to pass.
4. Violations can lead to a fine of up to \$1,250.00 for a first offense.

**Slow Down and
STOP**

Don't let this be you...



Ponderosa Firefighters want you to pay attention, have patience, and watch out for the children!

Entrapment is never just “getting someone out.”

It’s a layered, high-risk operation that demands a specific skillset.

Firefighters aren’t just “the first responders with the tools.” They’re the only responders trained in the full spectrum of what entrapment requires: Physics, medicine, hazard control, and coordinated rescue under pressure.

Extrication is a technical rescue discipline. Firefighters train extensively in vehicle stabilization, glass management, cutting, spreading, and lifting techniques. Understanding how modern vehicle frames collapse and working with airbags, high-strength steel, and crumple zones. This is physics, engineering, and muscle memory.

Firefighters learn on crushed, rolled, electric/hybrid, and stacked or pinned vehicles. Because in the real world, no two entrapments will ever look the same.

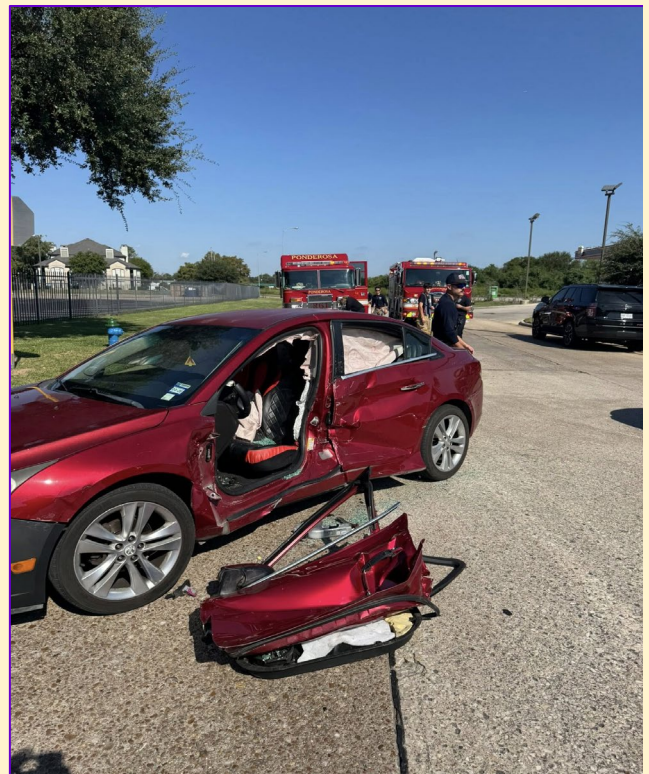
Firefighters protect the victim before they touch any tools. Extrication is medical before it’s mechanical. Firefighters learn how to assess injuries without moving the patient. They learn how to stabilize the spine, pelvis, and airways. They also learn how to prevent shock and how to coordinate with EMS for safe removal.

A trapped person may have internal bleeding, spinal injuries, pelvic fractures, crush injuries, and compromised breathing. If you move a victim incorrectly, things can get worse. Firefighters are trained to prevent that from happening.

Firefighters control each hazard at the scene while coordinating the entire rescue operation. They train for worst-case scenarios and have the equipment that no one else does. Equipment such as hydraulic cutters and spreaders, stabilization struts, rescue airbags, Sawzall and cutting tools, glass removal tools, cribbing and wedges, and medical gear for trauma. This equipment is expensive, heavy, and requires training to use safely.

Entrapment is not a “pull them out” situation. It’s a medical rescue, a technical rescue, and a hazard-control operation all at once. Firefighters are the only responders trained to handle all three simultaneously.

**Slow down.
Save lives.
Stay alert.**



P O N D E R O S A FIREFIGHTER

HARRIS COUNTY ESD #28

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

17061 Rolling Creek Dr.
Houston, TX 77090



Backwards and Forwards -by Fred Windisch, Fire Chief-

We enter a new year with continued improvements planned for 2026 and beyond. Looking back at 2025 shows how strongly this agency remains focused on serving our residents, businesses, and everyone who passes through the district.

2025 Response Statistics

- 2,870 total emergency responses
- 356 fire incidents
- 1,693 EMS incidents
- 17 entrapments
- 804 other incidents
- 739 incoming automatic fire alarms
 - 85 required a response (11.5%)
 - Only 1 involved smoke/electrical issues
 - We invoice for false alarms.
 - Non-emergent false alarms continue to be a nationwide issue.

A Night We Won't Forget-

On September 27, 2025, one of our fire engines was T-boned on IH-45 by an intoxicated, uninsured driver. It took our crews 25 minutes to extricate the driver.

- Insurance cost: \$250,000
- Engine out of service: at least six months!
- Temporary replacement: a used engine purchased for \$180,000.

Because of this loss, we have had to delay preventive maintenance on other apparatus.

Apparatus Updates-

The three replacement fire engines ordered in October 2022 are expected to arrive in May or June 2026. Extensive delays have become common across the industry due to manufacturing backlogs that began during the COVID period.

Staffing-

We continue hiring full-time Firefighters/EMTs, but the regional hiring pool remains shallow and competitive. All three stations remain staffed 24/7 with a combination of full-time and part-time personnel.

Insurance Services Office (ISO) Rating-

The ISO recently regraded our agency. The scoring is based on:

- 50% water supply
- 40% fire department
- 10% communications

We missed achieving a Public Protection Class 1 rating by one point, remaining a Class 2 department. Please confirm with your insurance agent that your property is listed as PPC2, and as Mattress Mack says, *"It will save you money!"*

Final Reminder-

Prevent Cooking Fire (#1 Avoidable Run)

1. Stay in the kitchen when cooking, especially when using oil or cooking at high heat.
2. Keep towels, paper goods, and sleeves away from burners.
3. If a small grease fire starts, slide a lid over the pan and turn off the heat, and NEVER USE WATER.

Stop Illegal Yard Burning

1. Burning leaves, brush, or stumps can spark fast-moving fires.
2. Smoke often triggers 911 calls from neighbors.
3. Follow county burn restrictions and use proper disposal methods instead.

Maintain Smoke Alarms and CO Detectors

1. Test alarms monthly.
2. Replace batteries yearly.
3. Install alarms in every bedroom and hallway.
4. Working alarms reduce fire deaths by more than half.

Prevent Medical Emergencies with Simple Habits

1. Stay hydrated, especially in Texas heat.
2. Check on elderly neighbors during extreme temperatures.
3. Keep medications organized to avoid accidental overdoses.

When seconds matter, firefighters shouldn't have to guess which house is yours. Please make sure your house numbers are large, reflective, and clearly visible from the street, day, and night. Trim back your bushes, replace faded numbers, and double-check that the porch lights illuminate them. Let's be vigilant for safety in our communities.