

A BRIGHT SPOT IN BOONVILLE

A Report on the Anderson Valley Fire Department (date)

Summary

The 2005/2006 Mendocino County Grand Jury conducted an oversight of the Anderson Valley Fire Department, and found it to be in notably good condition.

Background

The 2004/2005 Mendocino County Grand Jury conducted an oversight of seven rural fire districts within Mendocino County. The 2005/2006 Mendocino Grand Jury continued this work by reviewing an additional four districts, including the Anderson Valley Fire Department, which is part of the Anderson Valley Community Services District.

Methods

The Grand Jury conducted site visits and interviewed department personnel as well as state and County officials. The Grand Jury also reviewed relevant documents such as their budget and personnel roster.

Findings

1. The Anderson Valley Fire Department (AVFD) enjoys a high level of community support.
2. The 2005/2006 budget for the AVFD is \$282,581.
3. The AVFD maintains six months worth of operating reserves.
4. The Anderson Valley Community Services District covers 160 square miles.
5. The AVFD responds to calls within an area covering approximately 200 square miles.
6. The AVFD has a roster of 36 personnel, which includes one chief, one battalion chief, eight captains, four lieutenants, 20 firefighters and two cadets.
7. The office of chief is the only paid position.
8. All available personnel respond to fire calls.
9. Responders receive an \$8.00 stipend for each call.
10. The AVFD has an ongoing training program.
11. The AVFD has an active fleet of 21 vehicles distributed among the seven stations of the AVFD.
12. Forty-three percent of the active fleet was obtained through the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program.
13. The AVFD has a long range plan for replacing equipment and facilities.
14. The AVFD has an inactive fleet of ten vehicles.
15. Sixty percent of the inactive fleet was obtained through the FEPP program.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the AVFD:

1. work to maintain and promote the current level of community support.
(Findings 1, 6, 8, 9)
2. begin the process of disposing of inactive FEPP vehicles. (Findings 11-15)

Comments

With the exception of the chief's position, the AVFD is staffed entirely by volunteers. The department provides volunteers with a pair of firefighter's boots when they join the department. A stipend of \$8.00 per call is intended to provide the volunteers with enough money to replace their boots when they are no longer serviceable. Volunteers cover out of their own pockets expenses incurred while on a call.

Much of the department's equipment was obtained through the FEPP program, which provides a vital and much needed source of equipment for small rural fire departments. FEPP requires that unserviceable or excess equipment initially acquired through the program only be disposed of through a long and complicated process which involves considerable time and paperwork to complete. Due to already high workloads, this process is often low on the list of priorities for a department. Not surprisingly, the AVFD has several vehicles which are no longer serviceable and are currently stored in various locations within the district. Some of the currently active equipment is on the verge of becoming unserviceable and will also need to be stored. The only solution to this problem is to proceed through the disposal process before storage becomes a serious problem for the District. Further information on the FEPP program can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/fepp/>.

The AVFD currently enjoys an unusually high level of community support. Appreciative local residents performed much of the construction on the new station in Boonville.

Response Required

Board of Directors, Anderson Valley Community Services District (Findings 1-15, Recommendations 1-2)

Chief, Anderson Valley Fire Department (Findings 6-15, Recommendations 1-2)