



NEWS RELEASE

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TVF&R Burns Homes for Training on Bull Mountain

Hundreds of TVF&R firefighters are training with live fire, real smoke and burning homes in the Bull Mountain area of Washington County this month. The six homes are owned by a developer who planned to tear the homes down and replace them.

Although firefighters are frequently exposed to live fire during both emergencies and training, this opportunity is unique. Firefighters are taking part in compartment fire behavior training (CFBT), which allows them to study how fire, heat and smoke move through a structure as a fire develops and then practice safely cooling the air and extinguishing the flames.

TVF&R has been training inside and outside these structures for weeks. Firefighter instructors have prepared the homes so that they can burn each structure one room at a time, allowing them to set and put out multiple fires and cycle dozens of firefighters through each home.

“During CFBT exercises, firefighters encounter situations which resemble the stage of fire development they’re frequently faced with when they arrive at a burning building,” says TVF&R firefighter Matt Laas, “grey/black smoke is drifting from a building and inside heavy smoke fills the air, leaving a cooler, safer layer of air near the floor. This gives us a chance to practice proper door entry and gas cooling techniques as we locate and extinguish the fire.”

More than three hundred firefighters from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue, Clark County Fire District 6 and the Portland Air Base have trained in the homes. TVF&R has cycled every engine and truck company in the fire district through the training at least once.

When firefighters are done with their CFBT drills in each home, TVF&R prepares it to be burned to the ground in a controlled and safe manner. Before the homes are burned, firefighters ensure that the flames will not spread to any surrounding structures.

These final “burn-downs” are used as training for both veteran and probationary firefighters and provide a valuable opportunity to observe fire behavior and smoke conditions in a burning structure.

TVF&R plans to conduct further interior CFBT training operations tomorrow (April 21st) and then, conditions permitting, expects to burn another home to the ground on Friday, April 23rd, followed by another burn-down over the weekend. Firefighters from TVF&R’s training division will only conduct a full burn-down if conditions fall within very specific parameters. If weather conditions change or if there is a significant increase in call volume within the region, TVF&R may cancel or postpone the training operations.

“This is the kind of training opportunity that doesn’t come around very often,” firefighter Laas says, “we’re glad to have the chance to train so many of our firefighters.”