

Greenwood Volunteers Improve Their District's Fire Rating

April 1st wasn't April Fools Day for the firefighters of Greenwood Volunteer Fire Department. That was the day that they were informed that they had improved the fire rating for their fire district. The new rating culminated a six month long program to re-rate the department's capabilities.

ISO, the Insurance Services Office, Inc., which rates over 45,000 fire districts in the United States, made its final rating decision after an exhaustive study. Two field representatives visited Greenwood for three days back in November of 2005 and while in the district they studied the Greenwood volunteers from every perspective. They did detailed analysis of training procedures, equipment capabilities, apparatus functionality, annual safety checks, maintenance practices, water supply, dispatch procedures, firefighter certifications, and operating guidelines to evaluate the department's overall effectiveness.

The biggest focus of the rating process for a rural department, such as Greenwood, is water supply. Greenwood doesn't have fire hydrants, like many Parker County departments, so they must demonstrate that they can effectively transport water to the site of a fire. The demonstration was held November 19th at the Sheriff's Posse grounds and the Greenwood team demonstrated an ability to flow over 1,000 gallons of water indefinitely. Their fellow firefighters from Weatherford Fire Department and Brock-Dennis, Cool-Garner and Millsap Volunteer Fire Departments helped by shuttling water from hydrants in Weatherford. This was a major accomplishment because the process to draft from a holding tank is quite complicated and set-up must be accomplished in less than five minutes. Greenwood's Captain, Sheldon Scott, who served as water supply officer for the test said, "Our firefighters and the neighboring departments did a great job and completed the set-up in three minutes and fifty-one seconds, well within the allotted time of five minutes."

Assistant Chief Chuck Tingle stated, "We worked hard for several months in preparation for the water shuttle test. The first time we set it up, we took

almost nine minutes, so we had a long way to go. We have used the techniques that we learned for the ISO demonstration on structure fires the last several months so the training has really paid off.”

Chief John Burgoyne said the real benefactors of the improved rating will be the residents of the Greenwood Fire district. The lower the rating number is, the lower the cost will be for fire insurance, which is a large part of homeowners insurance. Greenwood’s old rating was a “9” and the new rating is a “6”, which is a substantial improvement.

Burgoyne said “Just this morning I received a call from an insurance agent who was working with her underwriter to insure a new home in our district. When I told her what the new ISO rating was, she volunteered that her homeowner should save between \$100 and \$200 annually.” Chief Burgoyne emphasized that the opportunity for businesses in the Greenwood Fire District to save on their premiums is even greater.

Burgoyne stated that the mutual aid system established in Parker County, where departments have agreed to help one another, was key to earning the improved rating. “We all know that if we need help all we have to do is ask another department and they will be there for us. There is no way we could have been as effective in the ISO demonstration without the help of our neighboring departments!”