



# SONOMA VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT

Community Firewire Newsletter

First Quarter 2026

## Chief's Corner



We are proud to share the latest edition of our district newsletter. The strong connection we share with our community remains the foundation of everything we do, and your trust and support drive our commitment to providing the highest level of service, safety, and care.

As we prepare for the upcoming wildfire season, our department remains focused on year-round training, fuels reduction efforts, and wildfire preparedness. Our crews continually sharpen their skills through realistic training scenarios, equipment readiness, and coordinated planning to ensure we are ready to respond when it matters most. This year, our team has also been actively engaged in a variety of public education events and community outreach opportunities. From attending local meetings, safety fairs, and preparedness workshops and school visits, these efforts help strengthen community awareness and ensure residents have the tools and knowledge to stay safe. As we move further into the year, we are grateful for your continued partnership and proud to serve this community. – Chief Akre

# Sonoma Valley Fire News

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Women in Public Safety Event

Members proudly participated in an event hosted by Santa Rosa Fire & Police, joining colleagues from across the region in recognition of the important role women play in public safety. This event provided an opportunity to connect, share experiences, and highlight the dedication and professionalism women bring to the fire service and law enforcement fields.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the women of our organization, as well as those throughout our partner agencies, for their daily commitment, leadership, and service to the community.



L-R- Firefighter Sofia, Firefighter Molly and Prevention Specialist Shantel

## Employee Spotlight



Captain Luke Loftus recently completed his tenure in the Training Bureau. Luke played a key role in strengthening training across the Valley, elevating both volunteer and full-time firefighter development. He was instrumental in expanding valley-wide volunteer training nights and enhancing daily training for career staff, bringing in outside instructors and introducing modern firefighting techniques that improved readiness and performance. We welcome him back to the engine in El Verano on 'C' Shift in April.

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## 2026 January - March Call Volume

Our top priority is the safety and well-being of our community.

Medical- 1,010

Fire- 16

Public Assist- 488

False Alarms- 71

Total Calls- 1,585

(+ 1% over 4Q)

# In The News

## New SVFD Volunteer Firefighters

In November, the Sonoma Valley Fire District hosted a volunteer firefighter academy. After the twelve week academy which concluded in February, members had to take their final manipulative skills testing. We are pleased that all nine new members passed and we have welcomed them on board as new volunteers. These new volunteers will be sworn in at our badge pinning ceremony in April. Being able to have new volunteers strengthens our ability to protect and serve the community.

Once these new volunteers complete more training, they will be able to work part-time shifts as the fourth firefighter on our staffed engine companies. This allows us to bolster our daily staffing levels.



## New Hire

We would like to welcome aboard a new full-time firefighter to our agency. Oliver began his career with us as a volunteer in 2023. He was just hired full-time in March 2026. He is currently attending paramedic school while working. Welcome aboard.



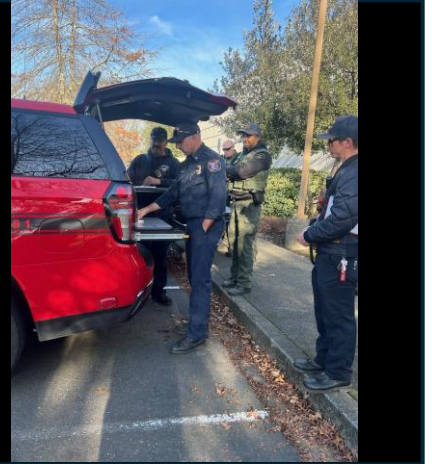
# Training

## Total Training Hours

- January 2026- March 2026- 2,664 hours

## Training Highlights

- Active Attacker/Multi Agency
- Drafting
- Ladder truck operation
- Driver operator course
- Vehicle extrication



# Meet Your Crew

## Sonoma Station 1- 'C' Shift

Captain Laura Banuelos became a full time member in 2017 after graduating from Cal and spending time abroad. Her family has been in the valley for over 90 years, including her grandfather “Grampa Norm” who was a Sonoma Fire volunteer and helped start the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks show (with Al Mazza and Wayne Wirick, Sr.). Laura resides in El Verano with her husband and young daughters.

Engineer Travis Paolini started in the fire service in 2009 as a volunteer with the Kenwood Fire District. He attended Santa Rosa Junior College Paramedic program and the College of the Siskiyous Fire Academy. Travis was hired as a lateral firefighter from Patterson Fire Department in 2019.

Galen has worked for Sonoma Valley Fire since 2021. He volunteered at Russian River Fire District for two years before that. He has been married to his wife Krista for 17 years. They have four children. Both Krista and Galen are proud to be involved in local first responder culture as Krista was a 911 dispatcher for REDCOM for 10 years before moving onto other career goals.

Trevor Pappas has been with Sonoma since 2024. He enjoys serving the community and brings a strong focus on providing quality patient care and safe operations on every call. Outside the firehouse, Trevor enjoys woodworking, where he likes designing and building. In his free time, he enjoys bass fishing and spending time outdoors.

Hayden Busch is a Sonoma County native and second generation firefighter proudly following in the footsteps of his mother and father. Deeply connected to the community he serves, he is committed to providing the highest level of service to the citizens. In his free time, he enjoys cooking, spending time outdoors, walking his dog, being with his girlfriend, and unwinding watching a good movie.



Left to Right: Trevor, Gavin (vol.), Travis, Hayden, Galen, Laura

# Fire Prevention

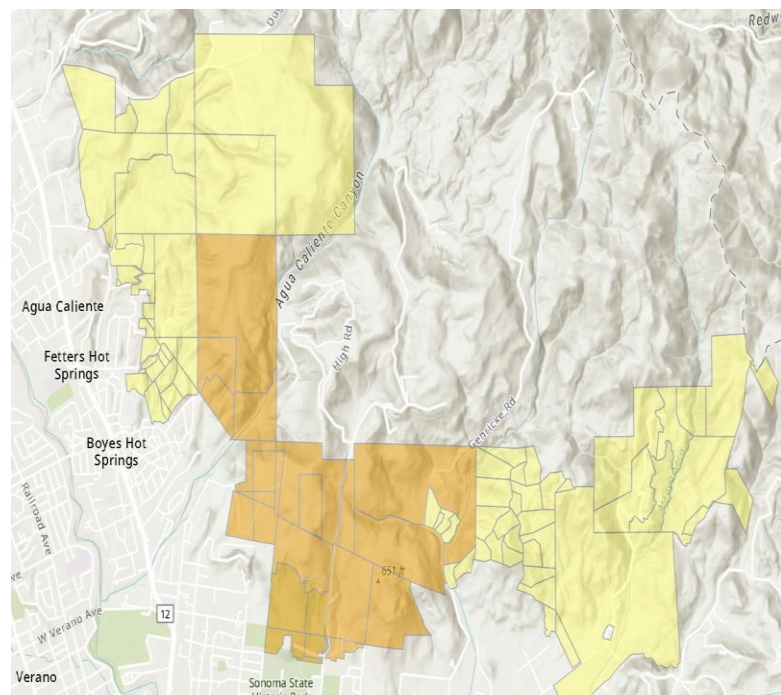
## Vegetation Management Division – Project Update

As we move toward peak wildfire season, the Sonoma Valley Fire District continues to take a proactive approach to reducing wildfire risk across our community. Through strong partnerships with organizations such as the Sonoma Ecology Center and Conservation Corps North Bay, along with support from the Measure H–funded countywide fuels crew, we are making meaningful progress on critical vegetation management projects.

One example is our ongoing work along Grove Street, where crews are finalizing the reduction of hazardous vegetation along a key evacuation route. Projects like this not only improve firefighter access and enhance public safety during emergencies, but also strengthen the resilience of our landscape by reducing fuel loads and slowing potential fire spread. Work will continue along the east side, improving Sonoma Mountain Road down to Adobe Road.

The Sonoma Valley Fire District is also excited to announce that our partner agency, the Sonoma Ecology Center, has been awarded grant funding for the Sonoma Springs Fire Resiliency Area – Western Gravel Project. This project will address 55 acres of critical vegetation adjacent to the Springs community and serves as a catalyst for broader, landscape-scale efforts within the Sonoma Springs area.

Wildfire preparedness is a shared responsibility. We encourage residents to take this time to create defensible space around their homes and stay informed about local projects and available resources. Together, through collaboration and continued investment, we can build a safer and more resilient Sonoma Valley.



# Firehouse Favorites: Recipes Straight from the Crew



TITLE: One Pan Cajun Chicken Pasta By: FF Galen Butts

PREP TIME: 10 min. | COOK TIME: 30-40 minutes | SERVINGS: 4-6

#### INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs. thin chicken breast  
1 can fire roasted tomatoes  
1 clove diced garlic  
1 pint heavy cream  
Cajun spices  
1 lb. pasta of your choice

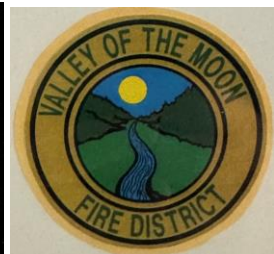
#### DIRECTIONS:

Season chicken with cajun spices. Pan sear the seasoned chicken, do not cook all the way through. Remove from heat and set chicken aside. In same pan, brown garlic for approximately one minute. Add tomatoes and heavy cream slowly. Slice chicken breasts into strips. Add chicken back to the pan once the sauce is simmering. In a separate pot, boil water for pasta. Cook pasta, pull when pasta is al dente. Drain pasta. Add pasta to sauce pan and simmer additional 10-15 minutes until chicken and pasta is cooked through.

## History: Sonoma Valley Fire

Did you know that the City of Sonoma Fire Department (est. 1888) and the Valley of the Moon Fire District (est. 1936) entered into a Joint Powers Agreement in 2002, forming the Sonoma Valley Fire & Rescue Authority? At that time, the City operated one staffed station, while Valley of the Moon Fire District operated two, with a combined total of 10 full-time personnel on duty each day.

Today, under a contract for services within the City of Sonoma and Measure H funding, the newly formed Sonoma Valley Fire District (est. 2021) has grown to five staffed stations, advanced life support apparatus with 22 personnel on duty daily, significantly expanding service capacity and coverage across the City, El Verano, The Springs, Glen Ellen, Kenwood, and the Mayacamas.



# Upcoming Events

**April 4: Easter Egg Hunt– Dunbar School**

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**May 6: Blood Drive- Sonoma Sta. 1**



**May 10: Mother's Day Breakfast- Glen Ellen Sta. 5**

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**May 18: Blood Drive- Kenwood Sta. 6**



**June 21: Father's Day Breakfast- Kenwood Station 6**

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## Thank you!

This year is already off to a strong start, and we remain committed to building on that momentum—enhancing preparedness, expanding outreach, and continuing to work side by side with our community. It is a privilege to serve such a connected and resilient region, and we look forward to what we will accomplish together in the months ahead.



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