



**Fire Team Four
Volunteer Fire Association
PO Box 41
Skull Valley, AZ 86338**

It has been a while since your Fire Team Four published an annual newsletter. While many valid reasons could be used, I want to look forward as we enter a new era for the volunteer fire department. Emerging from Covid while dealing with high inflation and higher interest rates, Skull Valley has weathered these storms and remains a vibrant, proud community. There are strong indicators of community spirit all around.

Fire Team Four has opportunities for volunteers in all areas including dispatching, responders, EMTs, and board member positions. There are many new faces who have volunteered as we emerge into this new era. If you would like to give back to the Skull Valley community, please consider joining Fire Team Four. Here are the names and positions of those currently in official Fire Team Four positions but know that many others help support your volunteer fire department and we thank everyone for their continued support.

Board Members:

Eph Balow – President
Mark Wood – Vice President
Donny Rodenkirk – Secretary, acting (position is available)
Mike Haberern – Treasurer, acting (position is available)
Fred Wiese – Director at large
George Schaffer – Director at large
Oscar Acedo – Director at large

Dispatchers:

Dennis Dryer
Jolene Schaffer
Lanora Schaffer
Rafael De Grenade
Sarah Wright

Responders:

Wesley Schaffer
Caleb Schaffer
Gareth Schaffer
Morgan Floyd
Shane Floyd
Willy Pleitgen (Chief)
Jon Sheskey (Asst Chief)
Russ Dryer (Certified EMT)
John Bergin (Qualified EMT)
Sierra Fortner (Certified EMT)
Nick Colombo (Certified EMT)

In the last year, Fire Team Four has focused resources on responding to emergency calls, performing routine and other needed maintenance on equipment, and replacing consumable items. A big project was commissioning the new-to-the-department 4000-gallon water tender. It required new tires, fixing leaks, and crucially, modifying and adapting the pump system to allow for firefighting systems. As of June 30th, Fire Team Four has attended 21 calls. Most of these responses were medical emergencies, but that is likely to change as we move into fire season. We are already under county-wide and National Forest fire restrictions. Meanwhile, traffic on Iron Springs Road through Skull Valley continues to increase, which statistically would indicate, unfortunately, an increase in vehicle related accidents.

Major items of equipment in Fire Team Four's inventory are listed below:

- 2000 Ford F450 Type 6 Wildland/medical engine, 250 gallons
- 1995 ENGINE-ONE Type 1 Structure engine, 500 gallons, (with up-to-date vehicle extrication and medical equipment)
- 1990s Chevrolet Kodiak 2000-gallon support tender
- 1990s 4000-gallon support tender
- 8+ sets of full fire-fighting personal protective equipment (PPE)
- 6 Motorola XTS 5000 radios (recently donated by Surprise FD)
- 15 Motorola XTS 2500 radios (donated by Yavapai County)

As we move forward into the coming 12 months, Fire Team Four will focus its resources on purchasing and installing a larger water storage tank (21,000 gallons) at the rear of the fire station. To support this, a 500-gallon per minute electric powered pump with generator back-up is required. This significant infrastructure upgrade will allow rapid fire tender filling, and crucially, refilling to support any firefighting response. Upgrades of responder PPE, such as helmets and shields, are another area of focus and will include deployment shelters for wildland incidents. Newer "Jaws of Life" and a small engine foam pump upgrade are also on the list of near-term expenditures.

It should be noted that while member dues provide most of the funding for your volunteer fire team, there are also grants available. To that end, Fire Team Four is working with a seasoned grant writer to maximize our funding opportunities. The Fire Chief and Board are working to enable reimbursement from insurance companies for auto-related incidents attended by Fire Team Four responders. In addition, discussions with railroad operator BNSF are underway to identify funding available for attending to fire incidents on railroad property throughout the Skull Valley region. Fire Team Four is also in regular contact with other fire departments to look for opportunities to upgrade equipment from their surplus inventory. Quite often these items are donated by those fire departments.

Skull Valley Fire Team Four serves quite a large area, larger than many people think. The response area is bounded to the south of Skull Valley by County Road 15 from mile marker (MM) 39 at Kirkland Junction to MM 25 at Yava Bridge toward Bagdad. This includes Ruger Ranch on the north side of the railroad tracks. To the north the area includes Rancho Diamante on Contreras Road, and Doce Pit Road to the east of Iron Springs Road at MM 8. The response area also includes Copper Basin Road up to MM 8.

I acknowledge that this calendar year's membership drive has come very late. Despite that, I encourage everyone to support the membership drive as it is vital for the continuity of Fire Team Four. The Board decided to hold the membership dues to \$50, recognizing that almost half the year has elapsed. Note that this amount has remained flat for over 13 years despite costs having increased significantly.

This year, thanks to the efforts of responder Wesley Schaffer, we are evaluating a digital application called *I Am Responding* (IaR). In the modern digital age, this app provides for rapid communication to coordinate available responders. Speaking of the digital age, Skull Valley now has a new website: www.skullvalley.net. It is intended to be a community resource and as such, has most Skull Valley community groups included. You will find the Fire Department tab on the homepage under which things like the membership form and this newsletter are available. Going forward it is anticipated that meeting notifications, bylaws, and meeting minutes will be available there. The feasibility of adding electronic payments is also being investigated. Take a moment to explore the website and if inclined, provide feedback through the website email (info@skullvalley.net).

Finally, save the date for this year's 7th Annual Skull Valley Car Show, being held on Saturday, September 9, 2023. It will be held on the school grounds and proceeds will go to Fire Team Four. With the support of many Skull Valley volunteers and entries from all over Arizona, the 2022 car show netted proceeds to Fire Team Four of just under \$6,000. There were 70 entrants and lots of passing visitors. Indeed, lessons learned from 2022 will be duly implemented this year, not least of which being that we sold out of hot food by noon! As Fire Team Four President, I (Eph Balow) will act as Grand Marshal for this year's event. Go to www.skullvalley.net/car-show to find the flyer and entry form for the 2023 event. Spread the word!

Please feel free to reach out to any board member with questions, or concerns.

Your Fire Team Four President,

Eph Balow





FIRE DEPARTMENT

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