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Fire Departments Identify Alternative Water Sources in Training Exercise Held at Arnold

Fire department pumpers and tankers arrived at Old Mill Park in Arnold in force last Saturday morning for a training exercise that involved all communities in the Custer County Mutual Aid Agreement. The focus of the exercise was what steps fire departments should take in case of a large fire and a limited water supply - the culmination of a class the volunteers are taking free of charge through the State Fire Marshal's office titled "Rural Water Supply." It was the first exercise of its kind for Custer County departments involved in Mutual Aid.

About 25 firemen from the towns of Arnold, Callaway, Merna, Broken Bow, Oconto, Sargent, Ansley and Mason City were involved, using 12 pumper and tankers. Broken Bow brought its 75' ladder truck.

Eric Nelson, who serves as the training officer for the Arnold Volunteer Fire Department, and who organized the class, said he took the class about 10 years ago at State Fire School and felt it was important for the fire departments to practice.

"It's a very real scenario that could happen any time," he said.

The exercise was started in "real-time," with department



Custer County fire department volunteers fill dump tanks that supply pumper trucks in a training exercise held Saturday morning at Old Mill Park. In the background, Broken Bow's 75' ladder truck sprays water into the South Loup River as part of a relay exercise that involved pumping from a tanker through a supply line. In just three hours, the volunteers transported and pumped 118,000 gallons of water, which averaged 665 gallons per minute. (Janet Larreau photo)

members arriving at 8:00 a.m., and beginning the training at around 9:00 a.m.

"If it were a real situation, it would take about that long for mutual aid to arrive at the

scene," said Nelson.

Two training officers from the State Fire Marshal's office provided instruction. Volunteers learned how to use alternative water sources, such as the

Arnold lake, irrigation wells, cooperatives and community companies for large rural fires and to identify alternatives in the event of stressing the water system in town. All Points Co-

operative supplied 20,000-plus gallons of water in storage for the exercise.

Four water supply sites and two dump sites for water were used during the exercise. Drafting, which refers to the use of suction to move water from a vessel or body of water below the intake of a suction pump, was emphasized. Water supply relays were also practiced, pumping from trucks through a supply line to the Broken Bow ladder truck. During the exercise, volunteers went to the Arnold lake, to practice using a floating pump to fill tankers.

"We're getting so many more big buildings in the rural areas than in the past that require a lot more water. We need to be prepared for it," said Arnold Fire Department spokesman Dell Cerny. "We're learning what we can do. It's not to show our weaknesses in our water supply, but where we can get stronger."

The exercise lasted about three hours, and with two previous classes already held, volunteers logged in a total of 12 training hours.

"This was an important exercise. We're doing it to better our fire department and the communities we serve," said Nelson.



Arnold over-the-road trucker Dusty Mills displays a melted CB antenna off his brand new Peterbilt - the result of a direct lightning strike to his rig while traveling the interstate in August. (Kendra Veirs photo)

Local Trucker Experiences Direct Lightning Strike While Rollin' Down the Road

A typical lightning bolt moves at 224,000 mph or about 3,700 miles per second, and the light you see from the lightning travels at the speed of light, roughly 670 million mph or 186,000 miles per second. Arnold native Dusty Mills was traveling eastbound on Interstate 80 by Overton at about 8:00 a.m. on Monday, August 25, in a typical Nebraska thunderstorm. He was bobtailing his brand new 2014 Peterbilt, with only 1,700 miles on the new truck, to the dealership to have a visor and horns installed.

More worried about the possibility of running into hail, lightning was never a thought until a loud crash and in his passenger side mirror sparks were flying in the ditch at a distance of about 40 feet.

"I knew immediately I was hit by lightning," he said.

Dusty's wife, Becky, was about a car-link behind in a pickup and because of the rain, couldn't see the truck, but saw

the lightning bolt hit the ground right in front of her.

"Everything went dead - the engine, all electronics, the lights," Dusty said. "I rolled to a stop on the edge of the interstate and eventually used the pickup to tow it farther in the ditch."

It wasn't until the truck was towed to the shop that they found where the lightning bolt hit.

"It hit above the passenger mirror on the CB antenna," Dusty commented. "Then it exited through four of the tires and on the rims there are small arching marks that look like a welder tapped each rim."

Dusty's new truck had to have six ESU and ESM computers replaced, along with 10 different switches in the dash.

"The repair shop said there is no way to know what all is damaged. By driving the truck, more stuff will be found," he said. "On the way home from the repair shop, I found that the blower motor is not func-

tioning correctly, along with the transmission temperature gauge. It will take a while to get all the bugs worked out."

Dusty said the weirdest part of the experience was that nothing worked in the truck after the incident except the CB radio.

"I find it to be really weird since it was the CB antenna it directly hit that the CB still worked," he said.

Of interest, a common myth is that the rubber soles of shoes or rubber tires on a car will protect you from a lightning strike. When in fact, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning, but most vehicles with metal tops and sides do provide adequate shelter from lightning because the charge travels through the metal frame and eventually into the ground. Individuals are reminded to avoid contact with anything inside the vehicle that conducts elec-

Continued on page 2.

AHS Grad Travels Country Pulling "X-Factor"

From a young age, Arnold native and APS 2008 graduate, Edward Walker knew he liked lawnmower races and tractor pulls, bringing both to Arnold while he was still in school. With any tractor pull, there has to be a "sled" and when Edward brought the tractor pull competition to Arnold, he rented a sled known as "X-Factor" from Bungart Motorsports.

A few years ago, Edward attended the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Kentucky. It was at that show, he ran into the Bungarts that he had known for a long time and after talking, he accepted a job at their shop helping to build two new brightly colored "X-Factor" sleds.

He stuck with them and now he is completing his first full season traveling the country pulling the "X-Factor" sled via semi truck to various competitions.

"Basically, if you are going to have a tractor pull, you have to rent a sled," he said. "We are one of four sled renting companies across the United States."

When a tractor pull rents a sled, the operator for the sled is part of the deal. As a result, Edward not only pulls the sleds to places such as Texas, North Dakota, Illinois and Colorado, he operates the sled during



Edward Walker stopped in Arnold last week to visit his parents, pulling an "X-Factor" sled. Edward pulls the sled via semi truck to tractor pulls all across the country for Bungart Motorsports, and says he gets questions about the bright orange, yellow and black sled everywhere he goes. (Kendra Veirs photo)

each pull.

"During the peak of the season in July, I have to be at three or four pulls a week," Edward said, who stopped in Arnold in between pulls in North Dakota and Colorado. "Now that it is dying down, we only have one or two a week."

Edward said about half the town noticed his orange sled parked in front of his parents'

house, Ben and Sue Walker, and everyone asked a lot of questions.

"I get questions all across the country," he commented. "People come up to me and say, 'What is that behind your truck?' and I first ask if they have ever been to a tractor pull and then explain."

Along the way, Edward said he has made a lot of friends, in-

cluding people from as far away as Texas and Canada.

"I like to see every competitor succeed," he said. "It's a big adrenaline rush! When you are hooked up to a 3,000 horsepower tractor and they are pulling you at 30 mph and you come to a sudden stop, there is a pretty big thunk in the cab!"

The sled roughly weighs 34,000 lbs., but different

weights are added according to the class of tractors pulling, Edward explained. In the six motor mod class, the sled uses 12 weights total for a 64,000 to 66,000 lb. pull.

Edward sits in the cab, which is a New Holland tractor cab imported from Europe, the tractor hitches on and the weight box and trigger mechanism makes the pull get increasingly harder as the pull goes on.

"You go from a roll to a drag," he said. "And let me tell you, it took me six months to be comfortable running the sled. Pulls are really nerve racking. It's all up to you to have everything set right and if you break you have to fix it so the competition can go on."

Edward's sled is a 2013 model and he was headed east after a short stay in Arnold. He holds a Class A CDL and carries the sled and 7.5 weights for a total of about 80,000 lbs. going down the road all the time.

Edward says they will finish the season and work in the shop building new sleds this winter (right now Bungart Motorsports run eight sleds), as everything is built in the shop except the tractor cab. Early next year he will get his schedule for the tractor pulls across the country the next season.