

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The drought in California has really impacted this year's fire season. The seriousness of the number and size of the wild fires has drawn fire fighters from all over the nation. Coupled with Oregon, Washington and Idaho, the demand for fire fighters has exceeded the availability. I would like to add my thanks to these brave men and women who have been putting their lives on the line each day for months now. The nations firefighting budget for this season is about exhausted but you can't just stop because you run out of money. No one knows yet how much the fires will cost in total but the figures will be staggering. You read and hear about how many structures have been destroyed if you follow the state and federal fire reports. What you don't hear is how many structures and human lives were saved through the efforts of fire service members. You can't put a dollar value on a life and it is difficult to place a dollar value on someone's home and belongings. It was fortunate that extra help was available to avert a worse structure fire in down town Willow Creek this past Monday. The Willow Creek and Salyer Fire Department Volunteers were aided by five fire engines and their crews who were staged in the area to fight local wild fires. I realize that the drought over the past few years has parched California and it doesn't take much to kindle a fire but there is still a factor that, I believe, has made matters worse. That has been the lack of controlled burns over the years. It seems that controlled burns are a thing of the past, thus building up the amount of brush and debris on the forest floor. To manually clear the undergrowth is a tremendous expense for the responsible owner. Over the years, controlled burns have been quite successful; ask any old time rancher or timber owner. I was pleased to see the article published in the Times/Standard remembering our fifteen Coast Guardsmen who have been lost locally over the years. They paid with their lives while attempting to rescue their fellow man. Remember them while thanking those who are following in their footsteps, carrying on the tradition of the Coast Guard Life Saving Service. The United States Coast Guard has been an integral part of our local community for many years. For those who complain about the noisy sounds of a rescue helicopter, don't you have something else in your life that needs more attention? I live fairly close to Humboldt Bay and when I hear the rotors whirring during one of their evening rescue drills over the bay, I feel a certain sense of pride, knowing that what they are rehearsing out there may lead to a life saved in the future.

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