

## Fire Department Battling Fires During a Very Dry Spring

### Multiple woods fires putting demands on our team

**Rene Lefebvre, AFD chief**

This month has seen a very high level of fire activity. The dry weather has made fire conditions in the woods very unsafe. As of the middle of May, the rainfall has helped to green the woods, but the material on the ground is tinder dry.

It is very uncommon for Andover to respond to multiple-alarm fires more than once or twice in a spring fire season. This year, we have responded to five, and the season is not over. This level of activity places a tremendous burden on our volunteer team. The small Forestry pay does not make up for lost wages.

The woods fires have been displaying an unusual and unsafe trait this year. The fires line is burning high and spreading at a very fast rate.

The usual safety precautions have shown their limits. The practice of staying in the black (the area that has been consumed by the fire) and working to the edge of the unburned material has been challenged by the heat and depth that the material is burning underground. Fires have sprung up in areas considered in the safe zone, requiring fire crews to use escape routes that were located in the early stages of the fire.

The command staffs assigned to the command center trailer in the Tilton/Belmont fire were required to man hose lines in order to save the trailer. In one instance, fire engines used to supply hose lines needed to be moved in a hurry as the fire changed course and rapidly spread to the water supply area.

Fires in the woods are under the joint command of the local fire chief and forest fire rangers from the State. Many times, sawyers and other specialized crews are used. The State and the mutual aid systems have pre-planned strike crews.

The resources are available, and the local crews have been trained to handle this seasonal emergency. This year, all involved were well tested. In the end, the injuries were slight, some hose was lost to the fire, and we all lost a little weight

from good exercise.

The reports received from the wild land commanders spoke of the skill and willingness to take on tough assignments by the Andover crew. We know our team is good at firefighting; hearing it from others who see many firefighting teams is very nice.

The people of Andover have always been very responsible with outside burning. We do on occasion respond to extinguish an illegal burn or a permitted

fire that has gotten out of hand, but that is why we are your firefighting team. We ask only that everyone be more vigilant this spring. I have no crystal ball, but we could have a dry summer.

Your firefighters have faced hardships this spring, true, but today is a new day. The trucks are washed and fueled, and the water tanks are full. The crew has been fed and even gained a little weight. Should the need arise, we are ready to go.



Carter Atwood, Steve Barton, Peter Smith, and Alex Green of the Andover Fire Department were among those who assisted the Franklin Fire Department at a four-acre fire on May 9, AFD's fourth that week.

Photo: Chuck Ellis

### ASC from page 18

come and browse, and then to purchase an item – or more – for yourself, a family member, or as a gift for someone you know. Clothing for the entire family is top notch, prices are very affordable, and you will be supporting the mission of ASC “to be of service to the community and the state.”

Summer vacations are ahead of us, and the ASC bakers will get a rest from the hot ovens which bake pies, cakes, cookies, breads, and rolls for our bake sales, and birthday cakes for Proctor students. However, we will be baking pies for Slices for Scholarships on the Fourth of July. The ladies invite everyone to stop at the ASC table on the Village Green to purchase a slice, or two,

or more, of their very delicious pies. Taste and see why the ladies have been called the “best pie bakers in Andover!”

If you are a woman who would like to serve your community and meet new friends, why not become a member of the ASC? ASC members reside not only in Andover, but also in New London, Wilmot, Danbury, Springfield, Franklin, Hill, and Tilton.

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### TOO GOOD NOT TO REPEAT

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

- Marjorie Moore

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