

Sparta VFD operational after 4-year absence

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After months spent planning and preparing for the day they would be operational Monday was "The Day" for Sparta Volunteer Fire Department, back after a four-year absence.

Fire Chief David Kirk sat in the engine borrowed from Southwest Bell VFD, testing the lights, sirens and pump, making sure everything was perfect for that first run they'll make, since things have been quiet so far.

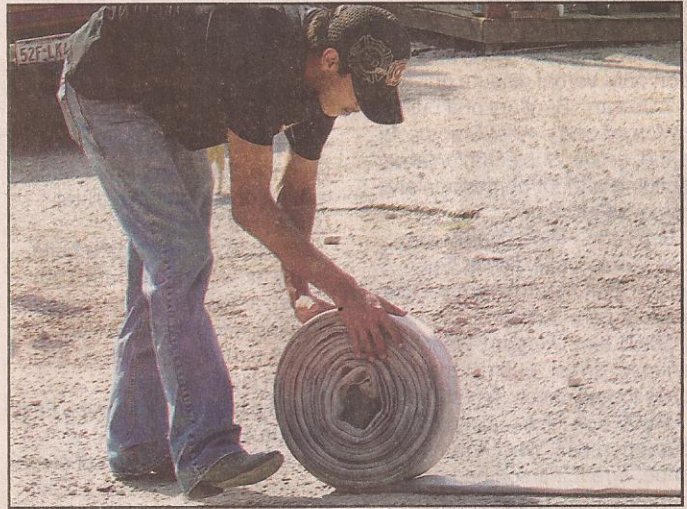
The department is ready for any and all fire calls and motor vehicle accidents and,

in a week or 10 days, will finally have its EMS certification, Kirk said. He made a trip to Austin on Tuesday with one last form that was needed before they are fully certified.

"When that first tone goes out, I'll feel like a child waking up on Christmas Day because my excitement and adrenalin will kick in," Kirk said with a big grin.

He said it will be exciting to lead the 14 firefighters who respond to save property and lives.

"We'll always have one or two people at the station that



Deborah McKeon/Telegram

Tyler Bailey, a Sparta VFD firefighter, rolls up the hoses to prepare for their first fire call.

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can respond 24 hours a day, but I've told the firefighters that their job is their first priority because they are volunteering here," Kirk said.

Kirk learned the department will be on standby to help cover areas when task forces are called out on major fires.

Tyler Bailey, 18, was at the station Tuesday rolling hoses. He is a new firefighter who has trained and worked really hard to learn the skills necessary to do the job, Kirk said.

Bailey said, "I've wanted to be a firefighter all of my life. I would always watch the engines going down the road and wanted to be there with them. I was too young when Sparta Valley VFD was organized, but I'm old enough now."

He said the hardest skill for him to learn was how to work the pump, but it also was diffi-

cult at first for him to get used to the weight of the bunker gear they have to carry — but Kirk said Bailey worked right through that.

"All of us have a little fear of fire because we know what it can do and respect that. I think we all look at the flames of that first big structure we work and think, 'Do I really want to go into that?'" Kirk said.

Kirk said he has a 5-year and 10-year plan for the department, so there will be a lot to keep him busy.

"If I had to name a 'dream' list for the department, I'd ask

for a new set of Jaws of Life, a new and updated engine, an updated booster truck, new safety equipment and tools. Oh yeah, and a new fire department building with a community center," he said.

The department has applied for grants for new bunker gear, and they will be putting in a grant for a booster truck, Kirk said.

He said anyone wanting to volunteer as a firefighter, engineer or auxiliary member can contact them on their website, SpartaVFD.com.

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