



Gillies Bay Volunteer Fire Department

Fire Chief's report to the Gillies Bay Improvement District Annual General Meeting – May 7, 2023

Total calls since last AGM on May 28th, 2022

- 4 Structure fires. One was a mutual aid request from Van Anda; second was request from Forestry for assistance at Kirk Lake, also had two chimney fires. One chimney fire had spread into the structure by the time we arrived.
- 34 medical first responder calls.
- 6 BCAS calls for assistance. These are different from First Responder since ambulance is already on scene and needs help (lift assist, a driver or more hands for tasks like CPR).
- 4 Duty Officer calls. Only one was for open burning during burning ban, which was gratifying. Others were minor, like opening the airport gate for ambulance crew from Powell River.
- 3 Motor Vehicle Accidents.
- 2 for power issues. Trees down on power lines during windstorms.
- 3 requests to broadcast a boil water advisory.
- 3 medical evacuations. We don't get as many as we used to since helicopters now have night vision, but we are getting calls to control traffic for daylight landings at RCMP field as well.
- 2 commercial alarm activations at RCMP.
- 6 requests to provide traffic control for Covid clinics. Someone on the Island provided a Thank you dinner this spring for the clinic volunteers which was much appreciated.

Total = 67

Our membership remains stable at 18 plus the Chief. We have had some turnover, but the good news is that the new members are younger. One of the members who retired from the Department was Deputy Chief Rairie. It's not easy to replace a 22-year veteran, but Dave Beech has stepped up to be our new Deputy. Ken Becotte becomes our new Truck Captain. We have revised our Officers duties to reflect our new Organization.

Maintained our system of having fire practices on most Monday evenings at 1830 hrs, with one full day practice per month that permits more in-depth training. Members are positive about the weekend practices.

This past year specialized training has included:

- Members participated in Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation workshops provided by the Regional District.
- An OFA 1 course was provided for all members who didn't have basic first aid. All of our members now have at least OFA1.
- 2 members attended Air Brakes course.
- An additional First Responder course (40 hours of training) was arranged for Gillies Bay and Van Anda. We had 4 more members complete the course and successfully pass their exams. We now have 8 members that are fully licensed, which helps to ensure we can maintain coverage.
- Officers attended a helicopter Landing Zone webinar
- Chief and Deputy Chief participated in a Risk Management webinar.
- 3 members attended Live fire training in Comox.

- Chief and Deputy Chief took a Strategy and Tactics course.
- Members participated in additional Structural Protection Unit (SPU) training.
- members who had not previously received traffic control training took the course, and received certification
- 1 member attended a low angle rope rescue course. Other members who have signed up for our new rope rescue team have some prior training through mine rescue or other courses.
- members participated in a wildfire training course (S-100) and have received certification.
- 1 member completed a Wilderness First Responder course (80 hours, equivalent to OFA level 3) for his job, and this training will be very beneficial to the Department as well.

All specialized training sessions were being offered to Van Anda Firefighters as well. The Office of the Fire Commissioner has issued new training standards that have to be implemented in 2024. Chief attended a briefing with a OFY representative. Generally, we are already in compliance, but we will focus our training over the next year on addressing those areas where we need to come up to the new Standards.

Public relations:

As Covid restrictions were reduced we participated in more community events:

- In May we organized a Chipper Day, where residents could bring wood waste to the Fire Hall to be chipped.
- We did a fire extinguisher demonstration for the Aerospace Camp.
- We provided fire protection for the Fly-In.
- We participated in the Sandcastle Parade.
- Held an Open House with BCAS in August that resulted in several new members.
- We provided a fire safety talk and extinguisher demonstration for Nature Kids program during Fire Prevention Week.
- We organized a Christmas truck parade with VAFD and BCAS for a third year.
- We had First Responders monitor the Polar Bear Swim when BCAS were unavailable.

General:

1. Medical First Responder Program: As our statistics indicate our First Responder program is in full operation. As part of implementing the program we acquired the Who's Responding app which has been very helpful. People may forget to carry their pager, but everybody packs their cell phone. We have had a few issues, one is BCAS staffing problems. When they operate with only a single paramedic, they look for Fire Departments to supply a driver. Since they require at least a class 4 license this places a heavy burden on our members who have those licenses. We are hopeful that as they recruit more paramedics that problem will go away. We have also implemented Emergency Services meetings to try to deal with overlapping issues. With the First Responder program our members experience more incidents involving a death. We have implemented automatic critical incident stress debriefings after a fatality and want to get more members the training necessary to lead these sessions. Currently only the Chief and Captain Becotte have received the necessary training.

2. Rope Rescue: We have now identified members who are prepared to participate in a low angle rope rescue team. We have acquired the equipment for a four-person team. Deputy Chief Beech will begin training the new team this spring.

3. Automatic Aid Agreement: After dealing with a number of structure fires where a mutual aid request was required GBID and VAID agreed to establish an Automatic Aid Agreement where NI 911 will call out both Departments for any structure fire. Not long after the Agreement was signed, and the Dispatchers were informed of the new arrangements we have a structure fire on Gillies Bay Road. In addition to our 13 members at the scene, we were joined by 5 VAFD members who provided valuable assistance.

4. Wildfire hazard: We dealt with one structure fire in a forest environment last year. It highlighted just how challenging it can be to deal with a fire in a remote location with very limited road access. So, we are focusing more of our training on dealing with wildfire. We will be implementing the usual Open Burning Ban on May 15th and will be looking for ways to increase public awareness about the hazards of wildfire.

5. Community Emergency Preparedness Grant: we were successful in getting a grant of \$24,426 for training and equipment. Our first priority was the S-100 Wildfire training program. We will also be bringing back Dynamic Rescue to do a Strategy and Tactics course this summer. The Grant also provides \$10,000 for us to begin replacing our SCBA tanks that are almost timed out.

I would usually conclude the Fire Chief's Report by reminding you that if you hear the siren, please shut off any open taps. However, this year I want to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of Doug Paton. He served Gillies Bay as a Firefighter for 40 years, 22 of those as Fire Chief. Even though he had retired he continued to be a valuable source of information and advice. The Fire Department greatly misses him.

Submitted

April 24, 2023

Rob McWilliam

Fire Chief

Gillies Bay Volunteer Fire Department