

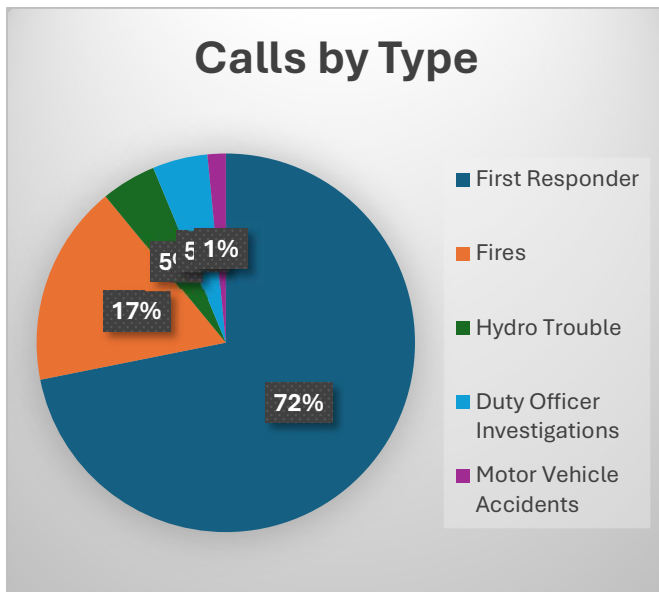


Gillies Bay Volunteer Fire Department

Fire Chief's Report to GBID Annual General Meeting

April 19th, 2026

Calls attended for the period from Jan 1st to Dec 31st, 2025



Medical First Responder	46
Fires	11
Hydro Trouble	3
Duty Officer Investigations	3
Motor Vehicle Accidents	1
Total Calls	64

As you can see the bulk of our call activity was related to Medical First Responder and Ambulance Assist.

We had a total of 11 fires, 10 of which were grass, brush, or wildland, and 1 structure fire.

Severe weather-related calls resulting in Hydro trouble totalled 3 this year.

We received 3 calls for Duty Officer investigations which are typically burning complaints during or outside of the fire ban or investigations of reports of smoke.

Thankfully it was a slow year for motor vehicle incidents as we only had 1 MVI.

Personnel

Recruitment and retention of firefighter's continue to be one of our main challenges. We finished up 2025 with 16 members which included the Chief, Deputy Chief, three Captains, one Lieutenant and 10 Firefighters. These numbers do not reflect the amount of turnover in the department, the median age, or the level of attendance at practice and calls. These things all remain a challenge in our efforts to provide an effective and competent response.

Year in Review

As many of you are aware 2025 was a year of tremendous upheaval for the Gillies Bay Volunteer Fire Department. It started as a year of transition. Our former Chief Rob McWilliam retired after dedicating 20 years to the GBVFD (6 of those as Chief). We were very lucky to find, and welcome our new Chief Michael Corcoran, to lead our department in February of 2025. Mike came with a wealth of experience. He had spent 31 years as a Career Firefighter and Officer with the City of North Vancouver Fire Department.

When Mike assumed command of the department, one of his main priorities was upgrading and focusing our training, to align us with the newly revised BC Government “Structure Firefighter Minimum Training Standards” as set out by the Office of the Fire Commissioner of BC. These standards are mandatory for all fire departments in BC to comply with. The OFC doesn’t cut us any slack just because we are a volunteer department, even though it is a huge challenge to maintain them with volunteers, and with limited funding.

Mike’s second area of focus was on maintaining, upgrading and modification of current equipment and the upgrading of procedures to ensure the safety of our members and ultimately the public.

As I alluded to earlier in this report, one of the challenges with a volunteer department is encouraging members to attend practice on a consistent and regular basis, so that we can ensure that not only are they signed off on the relevant skills, but that they have practiced them recently enough to ensure that they are competent.

Another major challenge faced by volunteer departments is simply having enough members and the right kind of members (preferably young, fit and strong), so that we can effectively respond to any emergency and ensure the safety of our members and the public.

Mike recognized these challenges and set out to address them. In his reports to the board and his subsequent report to the 2025 AGM, he outlined his goals for the Fire Department regarding training, upgrading equipment and upgrading procedures. Mike also emphasized the increased expectations from the province, the increase in time commitments for the Fire Chief and the Deputy Chief, and the Officers and Firefighter’s for training, and administration to maintain compliance to standards.

After Mike’s report at the 2025 AGM the following Motion was made:

That given the increased workload for Volunteer Fire Departments, and the challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers, the Fire Chief should be tasked with developing a costed proposal for an on-call system, and presenting it to the Board of Directors, as part of the Department’s budget proposal for 2026.

The motion was passed and carried.

Our initial research to develop this proposal involved benchmarking other similar volunteer departments in BC. Over 95% of the departments we surveyed had some form of remuneration in the form of benefit programs, paid on call and/or paid for practice, as well as a salary program for the chief officers.

Based on this benchmarking and discussions with our Officers, we came up with a proposal to incentivise member attendance and hopefully attract some new members.

An initial budget proposal was presented to the board at the end of September, that contained a 41% increase over the 2025 budget, which would have translated to a yearly increase of approximately \$125 per property within the Gillies Bay Fire Protection District. This proposal included a payment to members for attending practice. It also contained a part time salary for the Chief and Deputy Chief based them each putting in a minimum of 15 hours per week. The point of this proposal was to pay for attending practice, but not for callouts.

Unfortunately, the board rejected this budget proposal. Although we made ourselves available to discuss the proposal, there was no further communications, negotiation, or consultation with the fire department, on how this proposal could be altered or made to work. In fact, the former Board Chair went so far as to use procedural rules to disallow input from the Fire Chief and Deputy, during subsequent meetings on the budget. On October 21st the board passed a budget for the department that contained a 2.4% increase over the previous year's budget. On a subsequent revised budget document on Nov.12th, the board did add in a new line item to the budget of \$30,240.00, that was earmarked for recruitment and retention support. This amount raised the total increase to approximately 23% for the Fire Protection budget for 2026 over 2025. Unfortunately, again, no-one from the Fire Department was consulted or included in the development of either of these budget documents.

Regretfully as a result of this, Mike made the difficult decision to tender his resignation as Fire Chief, citing his core reason being: **the persistent lack of funding necessary to properly train our firefighters to meet the standards set out by the Province of British Columbia and to equip them with the appropriate, safe, and functional gear required for their duties.**

Mike's resignation was a huge loss for the department, for the morale of the members, and for the safety of the community. In his short time as Chief, Mike left a very positive legacy on the department, and his vision, energy and expertise will be sorely missed.

Upon Mike's resignation, and with the department in turmoil, I reluctantly accepted the role of Acting Fire Chief, stipulating that this was a short-term solution, and that I needed an exit plan.

I recently informed the board on April 14th, that I am willing to continue as Fire Chief until December 31st of this year, and that they should begin the process of recruiting a new chief. This will no doubt need to be a paid position, since the time commitment to properly manage a fire department in these times, as well as the level of expertise required, is prohibitive to expect of a volunteer position.

In January of 2026 a special committee was struck consisting of Lisa Alcos as Chair, representing the GBID Board, myself as GBVFD Fire Chief, and George Franklin representing the Texada Island Firefighter's Association, with the purpose of exploring proposals to enhance recruitment and retention of firefighters. The recommendations of this committee were as follows:

1. Increase Fire Department Recruitment

Recommendation: Support the development of a regular and ongoing promotion and outreach program through various social media platforms.

2. Improve Retention through Non-Monetary Methods

Recommendation: Consider the implementation of an extended benefits package to committed volunteers.

3. Compensation for Volunteer Firefighters

Recommendation: Approve compensation by way of a point-based incentive system based upon participation for a 12-month trial.

At this point these are recommendations only, and a decision has not been made by the Fire Chief and Deputy, on what to implement, and/or the details of each.

Moving forward through 2026 our dedicated group of 14 volunteer firefighter's and officers, are continuing to work hard to provide the best emergency services possible to Gillies Bay and ultimately the whole island. We have a regimented training schedule in place, including weekly practice nights and monthly full day sessions. We also have scheduled outside instructors and agencies to conduct several specialized group trainings. With funds received through our successful CEPF grant application we are purchasing new wildland coveralls, apparatus attack hose and portable scene lighting.

Our primary focus over the coming months is around being prepared to respond to the ever-increasing risk of wildfire. We just completed our annual S-100 Wildfire Firefighting upgrade course yesterday, and we have Structure Protection Unit practice and training, as well as Wildland Initial Response training, with our new Kubota UTV, coming up in May.

Gillies Bay Volunteer Fire Department is proud to serve the communities on Texada Island, and we are committed to continuing to do our best to keep our residents and their properties safe.

Thank you,

I would be happy to answer any questions that you have for the Fire department or about this report.