

## Annual Report 2007

### Operations

#### Callouts and activities

The Department recorded the following summary of time for regular training and call outs for 2007. This summary doesn't account for informal time in unrecorded training, building maintenance days and home study:

	<u>Practices(hrs)</u>	<u>Call outs(hrs)</u>	<u>Courses(hrs)</u>	<u>Total(hrs)</u>	<u>Call out #</u>
2007	1920	720	380	3,020	91
2006	1858	634	248	2,740	98
2005	1887	632	208	2,727	93
2004	2448	664	680	3,792	111
2003	2025	786	520	3,875	118
2002	2280	731	690	3,701	97

#### The call out breakdown

- 61 medical
- 4 Duty Officer
- 9 false alarms
- 3 brush Fires
- 1 Community Event
- 1 vehicle fires
- 1 beach Fires
- 3 MVA
- 1 abandoned 911 call
- 1 search for missing person
- 4 structure fires
- 2 hydro wire calls

The ratio of Medical Calls to other calls has gone up to 67%. The Fire Department volunteers respond to all categories of medical emergencies (unlike most Departments) due to our isolation and need for rapid medical response. The closest BC Ambulance station is on Denman Island and it would take between 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours for them to respond to a call. The time to hospital is significantly reduced by the HIFD transporting patients to the ferry or to Denman Island, particularly after normal sailing hours.

The Department ended 2007 with a roster of 12 trained fire fighters and 8 recruits.

#### Training

The focus of training is the response to structural fires. This is despite the fact that these, as shown in the statistics for 2007, represent just 4% of the calls. Structural fire fighting requires a high degree of skill, sufficient personnel and adequate equipment.

Weekly training is just enough to maintain skills already learned. Extra training nights, days and weekends are necessary to learn new skills and re-certify in challenging technical skills.

Two recruits from the Fall of 2006 class completed their initial training in the Spring and four new recruits joined in the Fall of 2007. These new recruits will complete their initial training in the Spring of 2007 and continue developing their basic skills in preparation for live fire training and First Responder medical training.

## Annual Report 2007

The Department Training Program uses in house trainers to teach new skills to the other members as well as sending members off Island for advanced training, instructor training and live fire re-certification training. This year, members attended the following off Island courses:

Live Fire certification – 3 members  
 Justice Institute Fire Evaluator course – 1 member  
 Fire Chiefs' conference – 1 member  
 Training Officers' conference – 3 members  
 Fire Prevention Officers' conference – 1 member  
 Fire Service Instructor Level 1 – 1 member  
 Advanced Trauma Life Support course – 1 member (observer status)  
 Survival Training and Rescue Techniques – 6 members

The regular practice nights included training in:

- |                              |                                |                     |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| - pump operations            | - hose stream and maneuvers    | - foam application  |
| - interior search and rescue | - exterior attack              | - ladder operations |
| - ventilation techniques     | - water tender shuttle         | - portable pump use |
| - hydraulic tool use         | - motor vehicle accident scene | - high angle rescue |
| for auto-extrication         | stabilization                  | - medical response  |
| - wildfire fighting          | - ground search and rescue     | - defibrillator use |
| - patient transport          | - new CPR techniques           |                     |

In addition to the growing complexity of structural fire training, the Department maintains competency in high angle rescue in the event of incidents occurring on the Mt. Geoffrey trails.

The Department members are enrolled in the BC Fire Fighter Program with the Justice Institute and train to NFPA 1001 standards. To-date, there are only two members who have certified to Fire Fighter Level 1 status, with quite a few other members requiring just a few more courses to complete their certification. The First Responder training (which comprises the final module of BC Fire Fighter Program) is administered by the JIBC with licensing through the Paramedic Academy. All fire fighters are offered the training although it is not compulsory as some volunteers choose not to respond to medical calls.

### Fire Prevention

The Department has been trying to establish a complete program which covers Fire Code inspections, public education and awareness. This is an on-going effort which relies heavily on the time of busy volunteers. There have been successful initiatives such as the smoke alarm program, school visits and public information flyers.

The topic of Fire Prevention includes not only issues surrounding house fires but wildfires and campfires. The Summer Fire Patrol has been the most successful program, raising public awareness of burning and outdoor fire issues. This program benefits greatly by being tax funded and has grown over the years into an essential part of our community program.

## **Annual Report 2007**

The HIFD started a Junior Fire Cadet Camp for 10-12 year old boys and girls as an introduction to the Fire Service and safety awareness. The first camp was a great success with 15 participants and will be scheduled again in 2008.

### Finance

The Operations budget for 2007 was \$140,192 and a Protective Gear and Equipment budget of \$20,000. The Department ended the year with a small deficit of \$91.00

The only items to vary greatly from the budgeted figures, were Vehicle Maintenance and Building Maintenance. Spending on both items was up due to unavoidable needs which arose during the year. The Fire Hall is in growing need of more maintenance which will be recognized in future budget planning.

Vehicle maintenance has been underestimated for a couple of years. Costs for repairs are often high due to the nature of emergency vehicles and the requirement for service technicians to come over for servicing and inspections. The budget amount will be increased to a more realistic figure in the future.

The Department members had proposed the introduction of a benefits package following discussions on the question of volunteer recruitment and retention. A proposal for extended medical and dental coverage had been approved by HIRRA and included as a late addition to the budget. The Regional District declined the request and opted to provide a \$5,000 payment toward recruitment and retention.

The Regional District had undertaken a provincially sponsored review of Fire Services in the District under a program called Fire Innovations. One of the items being reviewed was the issue of recruitment/retention and possible benefit package options and it was decided to receive the recommendations before committing to any single benefit program.

The total Fire Department budget of \$245,000, which includes vehicle payments, reserve contributions and Operations, represents \$0.5724 per \$1,000 assessed value.

### **Strategic Planning**

#### Fire Hall Planning

The Fire Department and Fire Committee of HIRRA had completed preliminary reports on the status of the existing fire hall and options for repair/replacement. It had been anticipated that a series of community information sessions and discussions would be held in 2007 to explore these options. This did not occur.

The Regional District undertook a Core Services Review which included a review of the Fire Hall building. The preliminary report was presented at a public meeting on Hornby Island and

## **Annual Report 2007**

comments were invited for submission to the District before further community meetings would be organized.

### Fire Underwriters Survey – Audit

The Fire Department last had an audit of Fire Services on Hornby Island in 1982. These audits should be done at lesser intervals as a way of confirming training standards, equipment levels and service levels of the Fire Department. The audit is also seen as a planning tool for future directions of the Department.

A request had been made of the Regional District to have an audit done in 2006, however this was delayed in order to co-ordinate audits of all the other Fire Departments in the District.

It is anticipated that the audit will take place in 2008.

### Community Water Tank Program

In 2006, the Fire Department bought seven large steel storage tanks to increase the available supply network for fire fighting demands.

The addition of these new tanks was seen as a necessity to increasing the supply of water for fire fighting and reducing the delivery of that water to fire scenes. The delivery of water is completed by tanker shuttle from the storage tank to the fire scene, using the single tanker truck in the Department.

In the early stages of planning for more storage locations, the Department became aware of the Superior Shuttle Accreditation program introduced by the insurance industry. This program was aimed at rural areas which relied on tanker trucks providing water to fire scenes, rather than a network of fire hydrants. Accreditation of a service area would qualify that area for reduced fire insurance premiums equivalent to fire hydrant service.

The Department will be working toward Accreditation with the first step being the installation of the steel tanks in strategic locations around the Island. The audit will identify further steps required to meet the criteria. These could include:

- purchase of a second tanker or replacement of the existing tanker with two larger ones;
- another truck bay to accommodate a second tanker;
- a second attack vehicle or combination if required.

The purpose of the program is to reduce fire insurance premiums. The Department will be working with the Regional District to review the costs associated with the program to ensure there is a net benefit from the decrease in insurance premiums and increase in tax requisition.

## **Annual Report 2007**

### Emergency Planning

The Fire Department undertook a training exercise at the Fire Hall with the Provincial Emergency Program coordinator from Courtenay, Emergency Social Services, the Regional District, Ministry of Forests, Vancouver Island Health Authority, HIRRA and the RCMP.

The purpose of the exercise was to use the Emergency Plan developed by the HIFD and Comox Valley PEP using the Incident Command System and involving people who would be there if we were to have an emergency. The exercise used a wildfire as the emergency.

The event worked very well and everyone came away with a better understanding of how to work together in an emergency and also where improvements could be made.

The Fire Hall is the natural location for a local Emergency Operation Centre and the Fire Department identified several improvements which were needed to make the facility work effectively. One such item was a better emergency generator capable of providing heat and water during power outages. An application was made to JEPP for a grant to assist in purchasing a large generator for the Fire Hall.

One other important item identified for the emergency centre was a building that would survive an earthquake. This was identified in the Fire Hall Planning Report produced by the Department and in the Core Services Review report completed by CH2M Hill for the Regional District.

### Wildfire Protection Planning

The Fire Department has long realized the importance of prevention of wildfires by public education and raising the awareness of the community members and visitors. Public posters have been placed around the Island to help in this campaign. A survey was made available for homeowners to carry out an assessment of their own property vulnerability, with suggestions for mitigation measures.

The Department commissioned a Community Wildfire Protection Plan in 2006 and was released to the public and the Regional District in 2007. The Plan examined public property interface issues and provided recommendations for mitigation of the risks in various areas.

The CWPP did not look into private properties as this is the responsibility of the individual owner. Private properties are a large threat to wildfire due to the rural nature of the Island.

The recommendations of the CWPP are well know and the HIFD has attempted to raise public awareness of the growing potential for wildfires on public lands on Mt. Geoffrey. Little community discussion, if any, has occurred on this subject.

The HIFD is also actively planning for a wildfire by providing a public training evening in July of each year and ensuring a certain level of equipment and stores are available in the summer.

Submitted by Giff La Rose, Fire Chief