



## Annual Report 2009

### Operations

#### Callouts and activities

The Department recorded the following summary of volunteer time for regular training and incidents for 2009. This summary doesn't account for informal time in unrecorded training, building maintenance days and home study:

	<u>Practices(hrs)</u>	<u>Incidents(hrs)</u>	<u>Courses(hrs)</u>	<u>Total(hrs)</u>	<u>Incident #</u>
2009	2606	1204	695	4,505	134
2008	2413	840	200	3,453	110
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

#### Our incident breakdown:

- 74 medical
- 15 Duty Officer
- 12 false alarms
- 1 gas spill
- 8 Public Service
- 3 beach fires
- 5 MVA
- 3 chimney fires
- 2 electrical calls
- 4 structural fires
- 2 rubbish/burn pile fires
- 2 unclassified fires
- 1 vehicle fire
- 1 kitchen smoke alarm
- 1 RCMP assist

The ratio of Medical Calls to other incidents actually dropped to 55% (from a typical 65%-75% ratio) 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 HIFR transporting patients to the ferry or to Denman Island, particularly after normal sailing hours. We also transport to meet the helicopter for advanced life support and rapid transport to a hospital.

This year we had an unusual number of structure fires and although there is not much anyone can do when called to a fully involved structure fire, the department did respond to other fire incidents and minimized damage to the houses.

It has been a difficult year for the community and for the department, which had to deal with unusual circumstances and two tragic deaths, in addition to the rest of our responses.

The Department ended 2009 with a roster of 16 trained fire fighters and 3 recruits.

Training

The focus of our training is the response to structural fires. Although structure fires represent a small portion of our overall responses, structural fire fighting requires a high degree of skill, sufficient personnel and adequate equipment to safely respond.

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 new recruits joined in the Fall of 2009 and continue with basic training. One member returned from a long leave of absence.

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 – 4 members
- Fire Fighter Self Rescue course – 4 members
- Training Officers’ conference – 1 member
- Fire Chiefs’ conference – 1 member
- Fire Service Instructor Level 1– 1 member
- Emergency Scene Management Level 1 – 1 member
- Advanced Auto Extrication – 1 member
- Local Assistant to Fire Commissioner introduction – 2 members

It was also busy year with extra courses in our fire hall:

- Air Brake course (our large trucks have air brakes) – 4 members
- First Responder Level 3 – 6 members
- First Responder spinal immobilization course – 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<br>for auto-extrication | - motor vehicle accident scene<br>stabilization | - high angle rescue |
| - wildfire fighting                          | - ground search and rescue                      | - medical response  |
| - patient transport                          | - electrical safety                             | - defibrillator use |
|  |   | - traffic control   |

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 two members who have certified to Fire Fighter Level 1 status and one to Level 2 status. We are working with other members 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

Our Fire Prevention Officer is the primary member undertaking Fire Code inspections of public and commercial buildings and providing public education and awareness of fire safety. This is an on-going effort which relies heavily on the time of busy volunteers and requires specialized off Island training. We continue to provide several successful initiatives such as the free smoke alarm program, school visits and public information flyers.

Fire Prevention includes not only issues surrounding home fire safety but wildfires and campfires. The Summer Fire Patrol has been the single most effective program; raising public awareness of open burning and outdoor fire issues. This program benefits greatly by being tax funded and has grown into an essential part of our community awareness campaign. Individual home Fire Smart measures are encouraged and the department continues to offer basic wildfire fighting training each summer.

The Fire Cadet Camp for 10-14 year old boys and girls was started in 2007 as a way of reaching the pre-teen youth with fire safety, basic first aid and firefighting skills. The third annual event was a great success with twenty youth attending two packed days of fun. We are seeing kids return for their third year and will have to develop a program to suit their increased skill level.

## Finance

The Operations budget for 2009 was \$157,626 and a Protective Gear and Equipment budget of \$17,000. The Department ended the year with a deficit of approximately \$5,315.00

The main items to vary greatly from the budgeted figures, were Building Maintenance, Equipment Maintenance and Training. Spending on the Maintenance items was up due to unavoidable needs which arose during the year.

The Training costs were \$2,500.00 over budget, as the Department made a decision to make First Responder training a high priority this time only (due to need for new responders) and paid for time off work during the course.

The total Fire Department requisition for 2009 was \$350,000, which included vehicle payments, reserve contributions, Regional District administration, new ambulance, water tank installation and Operations. This requisition represented \$0.7135 per \$1,000 assessed value based on a corrected Hornby assessment of \$490,539,590

## Strategic Planning

### Fire Hall Planning

Following on the 2004 Fire Hall Planning report by the Fire Department and the Core Services Review undertaken by the Regional District, the District established The Hornby Island Fire Hall Renewal Project Select Committee late in 2008 to sift through the studies and other information and make a recommendation to the Regional Board on the next course of action. The District also commissioned an Option Analysis study to estimate the costs associated with either rebuilding the existing Hall to code or constructing a new Fire Hall.

The Option Analysis report (available at [www.hifr.org](http://www.hifr.org)) presented the two options with Class D estimates (rough) both in the range of \$2 million and a recommendation to pursue the new construction option.

The Select Committee formally recommended to the Board of Directors of the Comox Valley Regional District, that a new fire hall be constructed on a new parcel of land. The Committee had identified a suitable property located across from the existing fire hall and contained within a parcel of Crown Land operated by the Ministry of Transport as a gravel pit. The Board adopted the recommendation and initiated the application to the Integrated Land Management Bureau for the identified area. The status of an available parcel of land will have to be resolved before the Regional District will continue with developing updated concept plans, cost estimates and public consultation.

### Fire Underwriters Survey – Audit

The Fire Department commissioned an audit of Fire Services on Hornby Island in 2008. Prior to this, the last audit was done in 1982. Audits should be done at more frequent 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.

The audit was completed in the late summer of 2009 and confirmed that Hornby Island had maintained its Public Fire Protection Classification (PFPC) of a 9 and its Dwelling Protection Grade of 3B.

The audit had four main recommendations:

- consider acquiring additional fire apparatus and mobile water supply apparatus
- increase the number of available firefighters
- develop a formal training program for firefighters and officers
- develop and implement a comprehensive Pre-Incident Planning Program

The department will be working with the Regional District to evaluate the recommendations and best method of improving the fire service on Hornby Island. The audit contained other items which were noted as needing improvement and these will be addressed as well.

The full report is available on the department web site at [www.hifd.org](http://www.hifd.org)

### 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 increase the supply of water for fire fighting and reduce the delivery time 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 has been working toward Accreditation with the first step being the installation of the steel tanks in strategic locations around the Island. The remainder of the tanks will be installed in the summer of 2010.

The audit recognized the work completed to-date and planning underway to achieve accreditation. This would help in having an improved fire insurance grading classification of DGB 3B (Superior Shuttle Tanker Accreditation).

We recognize this will also require:

- 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 Accreditation program is dependent on the construction of a suitable new fire hall in which to house the additional apparatus.

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.

Preliminary costing indicates the cost of a new Fire Hall at \$1.8 million (with \$400,000 coming from grants and alternate sources) and new tanker truck at  $\pm$ \$170,000. This would work out to an increase in the Fire Services mil rate of \$0.36/\$1000 assessed value based on 2009 assessment. This would mean an increase of about \$144 per year in tax to pay for the new hall and tanker based on a property valued at \$400,000. The reduction in fire insurance premiums is estimated at approximately 40%: likely more than the increase in taxes.

### Emergency Planning

The Fire Hall is designated as the Island's Local Emergency Operations Centre and would function as a command and control centre in the event of an emergency. Emergencies vary

from the typical personal ones we respond to when someone calls 911, to major events such as large wildfires, earthquake, aircraft crash, etc.

A newly installed generator is large enough to run the entire building, however space is limited for handling additional command personnel, radio desks and other required functions during emergencies. The building is also unsuitable for use during or after an earthquake. This deficiency is being addressed in the planning for the new fire hall.

#### Vehicle Replacement

The Department replaced the old ambulance with a newer model, purchased through BC Assets and refurbished for our specific use. The cost of the replacement came in well under budget, with the balance rolling over into the Capital Reserves.

None of the remaining vehicles are scheduled to be replaced within the next five years, however the audit did recommend that an additional/reserve pumper be acquired. The audit also recommended: *“To improve the reliability of the Hornby Island Volunteer Fire Department to shuttle water for fire protection, consideration of acquiring an additional mobile water supply apparatus.”*

The recommendations contained in the audit will be reviewed and analyzed as to their cost-benefit and a program developed for implementation.

#### Wildfire Protection Planning

The Department commissioned a Community Wildfire Protection Plan in 2006 and this 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 remain a large threat to wildfire due to the rural nature of the Island.

The recommendations of the CWPP are well known and HIFR 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 department continues to hold a public wildfire fighting training evening in July each year and is always available to discuss the safety of Hornby Island.

Submitted by Giff La Rose, Fire Chief