

## NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 2018.03

Our March meeting took place on Friday, March 2, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. Our meeting nights have been changing every month lately because of time conflicts with training programs. Our EMR's will be finishing their training in March. Our members taking firefighter classes will continue their training until May. On our usual meeting night in March, there was training on pipeline emergencies at the Blackwoods Event Center. On what would be our usual meeting night in April, there is firefighter training as well as emergency vehicle driving training. Training is very important for those who must respond to emergencies. We must always be prepared. Our April business meeting will be held on Thursday, April 5, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. Visitors are always welcome - especially if you are interested in joining our department! We did have a visitor at our March meeting who joined our department. Welcome Todd Julin! Todd already is trained as an EMR, so he comes with experience. He has also taken some firefighter classes. Thank-you for your willingness to help the residents of Ellsburg, Todd. We look forward to working with you.

In February, the DNR offered us a 1996 Polaris 500 snowmobile. Ellsburg has many miles of snowmobile trails. Our department needs to be prepared to respond to any emergency which can potentially occur on these trails. We provide mutual aid to our neighboring townships of Cotton, Northland, and Central Lakes who also have miles of snowmobile trails in their area. The EVFD determined that it is necessary for our department to own a snowmobile in order to respond to emergencies on these trails in a timely manner. The DNR was asking \$500 for this snowmobile. We all agreed that this is a good price and a great opportunity for us to acquire a snowmobile. However, our funds are limited due to the multiple unexpected vehicle expenses that we had in 2017. We have also gained several new members over the past 6 months and, therefore, have incurred the expenses of training and purchasing gear for them. We asked the CC Riders Snowmobile Club in Cotton if they could help us. Thankfully, they could! Not only will they donate \$500 for the purchase of the snowmobile, they will also donate up to \$300 towards the purchase of two snowmobile helmets! Words cannot express how thankful we are to the CC Riders for their donation to our department and support of our community. Thank-you CC Riders!

Our snowmobile has already been out on its first call. On February 27, several area departments, including the EVFD, were paged out for a report of a plane crash in the Cotton area. A few residents had reported a small plane flying low over the trees. One caller reported seeing black smoke after the plane flew by the trees. Dewey Johnson, head of Emergency Management, and the St. Louis County Rescue Squad divided the search area into sections. Ellsburg responded with the snowmobile, our ATV, Orion Rescue Sled, and Rescue 4 and 8. The area being searched was between Three Lakes Road and Harris Road on the east side of Hwy 53. Everyone received their assigned search area. The snowmobile and ATV with Rescue Sled searched the snowmobile trails in that area. Our vehicles searched the roads. Other responding departments also searched with their off road vehicles. That is a heavily wooded area. A plane could easily be swallowed by the trees and out of sight. LifeLink had a helicopter searching from the air. The Sheriff's Department and Civil Air Patrol also had aircraft in the air helping to search. We were instructed to look for signs of the crash, listen for someone calling, and sniff for the smell of spilled fuel or burning. The search was called off after five hours of searching and finding nothing. The FAA was aware and would notify us if any pilot was missing. We would resume the search in that case. Though we did not find a plane, this call was an excellent training opportunity. We trained in getting our vehicles on and off trailers, transporting them, and using them in a search and rescue mission. As always after a call, there is clean-up. Our vehicles were caked in mud! We had a work night the next evening to wash and restock our equipment. It was nice that it was a warmer evening, so we could take our vehicles out of the firehall and hose them down. Even Todd's four-year old son Adam came to help man a hose! We always discuss our calls afterwards. What went right? What could we have done better? Did we have the equipment that we needed? We definitely need practice loading and unloading the trailers. We could use some more pairs of binoculars. Anyone have any to donate?

The Spring Equinox came on March 20 this year. This means that we are moving closer to those warm days. There is still ice on the lakes as of this writing. Spring ice can be variable and dangerous. It is hard to tell the strength of the ice, and it is best to stay off of it now. If you will venture on the ice, have an emergency plan that includes a spare set of warm clothes in a waterproof bag, a blanket, a cellphone, and a companion. Remember this "Thick and blue, tried and true; Thin and crispy, way too risky." The strongest ice is clear ice that has a bluish tint. Milky ice, formed by melted and refrozen snow, is very porous and weak. Light gray to dark black ice means that the ice is melting even if it is below 32 degrees. Ice that shows signs of browns from plant tannins, dirt, and other natural materials that are resurfacing from thawing is very unsafe and not suitable for even a footstep. Snow on the ice acts like an insulating blanket and can warm up and melt existing ice. The ice under the snow will be thinner and weaker. Stay off of ice where slush has formed. Slush indicates that the ice is no longer freezing from the bottom. The ice under slush is only half as strong as clear ice. The warm days and cold nights of springtime cause the ice to melt during the day and refreeze at night. This results in a weak, spongy, and honeycombed ice that is very unsafe. The inch thickness guide that we use in winter to determine ice strength is no longer valid in the spring. Do not take a vehicle on the ice anymore. If you are walking on the ice, wear a life jacket and bright colored clothing. Spread out if you are with others. Avoid large cracks and depressions. Make sure someone on land knows where you are going and carry a cellphone and ice picks. If you fall through the ice, try to stay calm. Your winter clothing can trap air to provide warmth and flotation. Leave your clothing on. Turn toward the direction that you came from, since that is probably the stronger ice. Dig your ice picks into the ice, vigorously kick your feet, and pull yourself onto the surface by sliding forward on the ice. Roll away from the weak ice. Get to a sheltered, warm place and change into dry clothes. Be aware of the signs of hypothermia which include disorientation and uncontrollable shivering. Call 911 as soon as you or someone you see gets into trouble on the ice. We will be there with a nice warm vehicle to warm you up!



Searching for a downed plane Feb 27th