

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 201911

Our November meeting was held on Wednesday, November 6, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our December meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 4, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend! We continue to work on preparing our vehicles and gear for the winter season. Just when we thought that it was safe to drain the pumps and tanks that we use for wildfires, we were paged for a wildfire along the highway. There is always that period between seasons when it is cold enough that the water in the small tanks and pumps could freeze if we were out on a call for a longer period, yet there are dry conditions before which are conducive to wildfires starting. Thankfully, this was a small fire that was probably started by a cigarette or a vehicle. We need a few inches of snow to protect us from wildfires and convince me to take my wildfire gear out of my car for the season. Our other three calls were medical. One of these involved helping an International Falls ambulance crew that ran into trouble on our stretch of the highway while transporting a patient to Duluth. That is the interesting part of this business. You just never know what you will be paged out for next. Yet, we must be prepared for everything and be willing to respond to anything.

One member of our team that has been very willing and available to respond to any emergencies that we are paged for is Ray Privett. Ray has been a member of EVFD for a number of years. He has been our president for the last five years. Ray led us through a difficult departmental reorganization which included financial, policy, and membership reforms. He was the catalyst for updating our bylaws to make them more appropriate for our department in current times. Ray presides over our monthly meetings and ensures that decisions that need to be made are fiscally sound and have been examined from all angles. He enjoys being the "devil's advocate"! Ray planted and takes care of our beautiful flower garden, makes sure that we have enough propane, performs vehicle maintenance and repair, cleans and organizes the hall, represents our department at Town Board meetings, is a computer whiz for all of our governmental forms, sets up for events such as the Frolic, 4th of July, and National Night Out, participates in Big Truck Nights and Community Meals, helped teach fire safety to the ECFE classes at Southridge School, can competently drive all of our vehicles, understands how to get water flowing from point A to point B during a fire, is a wildfire fighter, and he is an Emergency Medical Responder, which means he is a lifesaver. Many of you in the community know Ray as the good neighbor who is always willing to help out. He will come to your house in an emergency and provide comfort and reassurance in his quiet, professional way. If you must leave in an ambulance, Ray will make sure that your spouse and pets are taken care of, that your house gets locked up when we leave the scene, and that you have a ride home from the hospital when you are discharged. A few years ago, we were paged out on Christmas Day. Ray dutifully prepared to leave his family to respond to the call when his grandson said that Ray couldn't possibly be a firefighter because he was too old. Ray is in his 70's and has suffered a heart attack, but we do not consider him "too old". He is always one of the first to respond, and can climb to the top of the tankers like the younger ones. He is a positive role model for everyone on our department. Yet, Ray feels that it is time for him to step back and relinquish his role as president and first responder. He has turned in his pager. You have to admire Ray for recognizing that the time is right for making this difficult decision. We will miss you at the helm, Ray, but we are glad that you are still part of the crew!

Our department has a request for members and visitors to our township. Please stay off of the landing zones that we have created for landing the medevac helicopters. These landing zones are 100 by 100 foot grassy or hard surface areas that are maintained so that these helicopters can land safely to pick up a critically injured patient. We currently have 9 designated landing zones. There are 2 on the northern side of Comstock Lake. One is by the boat launch and the other is by the Johnson property. There is one on the Whiteface Truck Trail, one on Round Lake Spur, one by Rat Lake, one at the old airport at the northern end of East Bass Lake, one by Comstock Lake Road and Water Hen, one at the Bass Lake Firehall, and one on Cemetery Road on the site of the old Melrude Church. I know that it is tempting to rip your recreational vehicles through these areas because the grass is cut

and rocks have been removed. However, the ruts you leave are dangerous. We cannot post these areas because signs and helicopter rotors are not compatible. Please stay off!

As we enter the cold season, frostbite threatens. The most common causes of frostbite are touching something cold, such as ice, or allowing skin to be exposed to the cold without adequate protection. Frostbite begins with a tingling feeling that progresses to numbness. This is followed by ice crystals forming on the skin, and then the skin will start to feel warm even though it is still cold. With continued exposure, the skin will turn red, then pale or blue and look like wax. The exposed area becomes stiff and painful, and then the skin gradually becomes dark blue or black. This means that circulation has been cut off and that gangrene is developing. This usually leads to amputation of the affected parts. Even minor cases of frostbite can result in complications such as increased sensitivity to cold, numbness, and an increased chance of developing frostbite again. These complications can last for the rest of your life. The key is to prevent frostbite in the first place. Cover up all exposed skin. Wear mittens over your gloves. Cover your ears. If your skin gets wet, change your gloves, socks, or clothing immediately. Get medical attention if the area remains numb even after you have come in from the cold and warmed up, or if your skin starts to blister or swell. Do not place the affected part in hot water because tissue damage will result. Certain medications, diabetes, alcohol consumption, and smoking increase your risk of developing frostbite because circulation is compromised. The elderly and the very young are also more susceptible because they have thinner skin. If you are developing frostbite, you are at risk of being hypothermic also. Cover up and stay warm!

The holiday season means a time of Christmas trees, lights, and candles. All of these make beautiful decorations and dispel the darkness of this time of year. The leading cause of fires during the holidays is electrical failure associated with lights. Cracks in lines and dried out wiring result from strands of lights getting rolled up, put away for a year, and then taken out again. Inspect your strands of lights carefully before plugging them in. Do not connect more than 3 strands of minis, or have more than 50 screw-in bulbs on one line. Keep water in your tree bowl at all times. A dry tree will burn faster than newspaper. Always unplug trees and lights and extinguish candles before going to sleep or leaving the house. Keep trees, lights, and candles away from heat sources, wrappings, and curtains. Watch and protect the children. Make sure that your smoke detectors are working. Inspect your holiday display for safety so that you can enjoy the season. If a fire occurs, evacuate the area and call 911 immediately! We will be there to help!

