

Our January meeting was held on Wednesday, January 8, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our February meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 5, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend! Our department is doing some organizing. If anyone has a 5 foot long section of bottom kitchen cabinets with countertop that they would be willing to donate to us, we would greatly appreciate it! Call our firehall at 482-3777 or Heidi at 591-9228 and leave a message.

January is also the time when our department holds elections. The new officers for 2020 are President: Heidi Yokel, Vice-President: Bill McKechnie, Secretary: Heidi Yokel, Treasurer: Sharron McKechnie, Safety Officer: Loren Michael Mesedahl, Fire Chief: Loren Dean Mesedahl, Assistant Chief of the Bass Lake Firehall: Bob Skafte, and Assistant Chief of the Melrude Firehall: Lee Voigt. All the officers are committed to maintaining the high standards for organization, training and response to emergencies that EVFD is known for.

In 2019, our department responded to 28 emergency calls. Eight of these were fires, and twenty were medical. Five of these medical calls were accidents on Highway 53 in the area between mile marker 43 and mile marker 44. Beware of this Bermuda Triangle on our highway! Our department responded to 100% of the emergencies that we were paged for. Not every department can boast this response rate! We have a dedicated group of 20 volunteers. We will always welcome more responders if you are thinking about joining. Not everyone on our department responds to emergencies. There is a lot of vehicle maintenance, office work, and janitorial work that needs to be done in a firehall. Come to a meeting and check us out if you are interested. It is a good way to get to know the people and places in our township.

The Melrude Winter Frolic will take place on Saturday, February 15, from 11am-2pm at the public landing on Arizona Road. There is a hill for sliding and a lake for snowmobiling or fishing. The Melrude Community Club will provide brats and drinks, and a roaring fire to warm up at. There will be a sled raffle and 10 lucky kids aged 12 and under will win one. There will be a money raffle at 1pm. Get your raffle ticket at the WhistleStop or at the Frolic. This festival is always a lot of fun! Some years it is so cold that the ketchup freezes, while other years it is warm enough to melt snow off of parts of the hill. What will this year be like? I am pretty sure that there will be plenty of snow for this festival. Our department is always on standby at the Frolic in case there is an injury. There haven't been any serious injuries, but the potential is always there. It is also a chance for us to exhibit some of our equipment, practice driving the four-wheeler, rescue sled, and snowmobile, and visit with the community. Come and visit us at the Frolic! We will have the s'mores ingredients!

A sledding festival like the Frolic is a fun, family activity. However, studies have shown that more than 20,000 children are brought to an emergency room each year with injuries sustained while sledding. The most common cause of injury is a sled hitting a tree. This frequently causes head injuries. Collisions between riders or between riders and walkers are the second most frequent cause of injuries. Common injuries include arm and leg fractures, organ injuries, spinal fractures, and chest traumas. Following some safety tips helps to make sure that only good memories are formed when sledding.

The first thing to look at is the hill. A sledding hill should not be too steep, and should have a long flat area at the bottom where the sled can glide to a stop. The Arizona Road hill is a good hill with a long flat area at the bottom. It is a road, but this road is closed for the Frolic. When choosing a sledding hill, avoid those that end on a road, parking lot, or pond. Look for a hill that is free of trees, fences, jumps, bumps, rocks, or poles. Building jumps is not recommended for sliding. The sleds are not strong enough to protect a rider going over a jump. The Arizona Road hill is free of obstacles unless you go over the side of the road into the trees and rock hazards that lurk there. Every year, there are those that try to sled over the sides of that road. Please think about the rocks, tree stumps, and other hazards that are hidden by the snow. Be safe and don't go there. Another thing to look at when choosing a sledding hill is whether the hill is snow covered or ice covered. Choose a snow covered one. An icy hill can cause the sledder to lose control, spin, and be unable to stop.

The second thing to look at when planning a sledding outing is your clothing. Frostbite and hypothermia are dangers that can, and must, be avoided. Hats, gloves or mittens, snow pants, winter jackets, and snow boots must be worn. Frostbite and hypothermia can result in lifelong consequences. Teach children from a young age how to dress properly for our weather. Remind your teens that it is not cool to be cold. Have a spare set of clothing, especially mittens and socks, available to change into in case you get wet. Don't wear scarves or other loose clothing when sledding. These pose a strangulation risk. Kids should wear helmets when sledding. This is especially true for those under 12 years old. These younger children have proportionately larger heads and higher centers of gravity than those older than 12. This makes them more prone to injury. 30 percent of children admitted to a hospital with a sledding injury suffer a significant head injury. 10 percent of these develop a permanent disability. There are nice winter sports helmets available, but even a bike helmet will provide some protection. Goggles are a good way to protect the eyes from flying snow and dirt, objects such as branches or fingers, and bright sunlight.

Choosing the right kind of sled is another safety factor to consider. Children ages 5 and under should ride with an adult. The sled should be large enough that the rider's arms and legs can be kept inside the sled. Sit face - forward on the sled. Sledding down a hill face- first, backwards, or standing greatly increases the chance of suffering a head injury. Teach children to roll off of a sled if it won't stop or they lose control. If you fall off your sled on the hill, get out of the way of oncoming sledders. Take turns going down a hill. Walk up the side of the hill and leave the middle for those sledding down.

It is a good idea to stop sledding at regular intervals and warm up by a fire, refuel with a snack, and rehydrate by drinking non-caffeinated fluids. If someone gets injured while sledding, carefully assess the degree of injury. Never move the victim. Protect him from further injury by directing oncoming sledders away from the victim. Keep the victim warm by covering him with blankets or extra coats. Some injuries may appear minor at first, but can develop into a serious condition as swelling occurs. Call 911 immediately. We will be there to help!