

News From The Ellsburg Volunteer Fire Department 20200701

Our July meeting took place on Wednesday, July 1, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our August meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 5, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend. We have responded to four calls just in the first two weeks of July. Enjoy your summer activities, but please pay attention to safety! Before you venture out on the trails or lakes, ask yourself if you have with you what you might need in an emergency. Do you have helmets and lifejackets? Is your cellphone charged? Do you have protection from the sun and bugs? Do you have fluids to drink and snacks? Will your children be supervised and safe? Do you have a first aid kit with you? Summertime brings fun, family activities. Don't allow them to be ruined by not being prepared.

The National Committee on National Night Out has officially moved the National Night Out celebration date from the first Tuesday in August to the first Tuesday in October. We were sad to hear this because we enjoy having all of our residents and summer visitors at our firehall for a picnic, demonstrations, and games - especially those water balloons! We will have to see what we can come up with for a fun time in October. Probably not water balloons! There are strict regulations about serving food and social distancing. The coronavirus has certainly put a damper on our usual fundraising activities for this year. Yet, we want to keep our residents safe.

Our department used to always have one or two work nights scheduled each month. We would have a list of chores that needed to be done and members would gather and work together to complete the list. This is no more. Now we make a list at our monthly meetings and members volunteer or get assigned (especially if you are not at the meeting) to a job. You have the month to complete your assignment. The work gets done, but we miss hanging out. Monthly trainings used to involve several departments getting together to train. This is how you got to know the members of other departments that you may work with, as well as what equipment other departments have that you may need to share. Now our trainings are for our department only. Many required trainings, like OSHA and pipeline..., have been moved to the computer. It is just not the same. We miss the camaraderie, networking, and the dinners!

We have had a warm summer so far. This means that the lakes have warmed up to a comfortable temperature. The perfect time to go swimming! Our lakes and rivers have currents which can overpower even a strong swimmer and lead to exhaustion and drowning. Waves can cause water to get into the lungs and decrease the amount of oxygen available to the brain. This can lead to fainting and drowning. Drowning is the second most common cause of death in children under the age of 14. Statistics show that someone drowns in our country every 10 minutes. One out of every five of these is a child. For every child that drowns, another five are treated for injuries sustained when they almost drowned. Drowning can occur in less than two minutes after the head goes under water. Contrary to what you see in the movies, drowning is not always accompanied by waving arms, cries for help, and repeated bobbing in and out of the water. Most of the time, the victim slips beneath the surface and just never resurfaces.

Learning to swim, and teaching your children how to swim, is the most important thing to do to prevent becoming a drowning statistic. Even if you know how to swim, it is a good idea to have life jackets, noodles, or other floatable objects close by when swimming. Swimmers can become exhausted, develop a cramp, or suffer a medical emergency while swimming. Rip currents do not occur in the lakes of our township, but they can occur on the bigger lakes of our state, and definitely occur in Lake Superior. A rip current occurs near beaches where there are breaking waves. A strong narrow current of water moves 50 to 100 yards directly away from the shore and can pull even the strongest swimmer with it. It can be recognized by darker water, fewer breaking waves, a rippled surface that is surrounded by smooth water, foamy water out beyond the waves, and objects being pulled out. The best way to survive a rip current is to wear a flotation device, call and wave for help, and float. Don't try to swim back to shore because you will just get tired out. Float on your back until you are out of the rip current.

When swimming in our lakes and rivers, be aware of the possibility of rocks, submerged tree trunks, or lake vegetation that can injure or entangle a swimmer. Do not dive headfirst into a lake, pond, or river. You don't know what is below the surface. Even if nothing was there 5 minutes ago, waves can bring debris in and conditions can change quickly. Do not swim around docks or piers that have electricity. Electrocutation is a possibility. Do not swim around boats that have the motor running. Be aware of boats towing people or jet skis. Do not put lake water into your mouth or swallow it. Too many gastrointestinal risks with all of the creatures in our waters!

If you feel tired or cold, or get a cramp, get out of the water immediately. Drink plenty of fluids so that you don't become dehydrated. Replenish your energy with snacks. Take breaks. Warm up. Always supervise your children and make sure that they also replenish themselves and take breaks. Remember that children have thinner skin than adults, and so they get cold faster. Watch for shivering, goose bumps, chattering teeth, blueish coloration to lips, and sudden tiredness. Wrap them up in warm towels or change into dry clothing. Never swim alone. Never swim in the dark. Get out of the water immediately if you see storm clouds or hear thunder. Remember that lightning can hit the water before you hear the thunder.

If there is a water emergency, remember to reach, throw, row, and go. Reach out to the victim with an oar, pole, or similar object that the victim can grab and be pulled to shore with. If the victim is too far from shore to reach, throw a lifejacket, boat cushion, rope, or similar object that you can pull the victim to shore with or that he can hang onto until help can come. If the victim is too far out to reach or throw something to, row a canoe, kayak, or other small vessel out to the victim. When you get close, reach or throw something to the victim, let him hang onto the boat, or help him get into the boat if possible. As a last resort, swim out to the victim. Remember that victims who are in distress, and think that they are drowning, will panic and try to grab their rescuer. Stay out of reach and use the reach or throw guidelines. Don't become a Good Samaritan victim! If an emergency occurs, or even if you just think there is an emergency or potential for one, call 911 immediately. We will be there to help!