

News from the Ellsburg Volunteer Fire Department

Our November meeting took place on November 2, 2017 at the Bass Lake Firehall. Our department was paged out one time in October. It has been a safe time in our township and we are thankful for that. We have had time now to prepare our vehicles for the winter weather. Tires have been changed, pumps drained, antifreeze added, mouse traps set, winter gear placed in the vehicles, ice rescue equipment checked, hemorrhage kits checked..... Congratulations to Loren, Loren, and Shannon who have completed their EMR training and passed their license exams! The township will benefit from three more responders who are available to respond to calls. This is a volunteer organization. Nobody is scheduled for shift coverage. Members have jobs and family responsibilities. Holidays and vacations take responders out of the township. Therefore, there is no guarantee that someone is available to respond to a page on any given day. The more responders we have, the greater the odds that someone will be available. We are proud to boast that our department has responded to 100% of the calls that we were paged for so far this year!

In October, Dewey Johnson from the St. Louis County Sheriff's Department came to the Bass Lake Firehall to do training with our ARMER radios. Every member who responds to calls has one of these radios. This is the way that we can communicate with members of our department, other responding fire departments, 911 dispatch, law enforcement, rescue squad, ambulance services, and medical helicopter services. It is a vital piece of equipment for responders. We learned how to properly care for and charge our units, and how to respond appropriately using proper language and voice volume. We learned code words such as a 10-52 is a motor vehicle accident. This radio can be tuned to about 125 channels to communicate in St. Louis County. There are also channels that can be used to communicate with bordering areas of neighboring counties. STAC channels are used to communicate with and land a helicopter. Common channels are used to communicate with several different services. There are F/E channels that are used for incidents in northern St. Louis County and channels for the southern part of the county. Ellsburg is a border township. We belong to the south and Central Lakes belongs to the north. However, since we mutual aid surrounding areas of the north, and Virginia ambulance responds to our township, we must be able to communicate with the north and south. We also have a channel that is set aside for just our department. This way, we can communicate during training sessions and events such as the 4th of July parade without involving the whole county. Of course, there is always someone at the dispatch center who can monitor radio chatter in case an emergency occurs with a responder such as a mayday with a firefighter down in a burning building, or an EMR being threatened by someone under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The radio is our lifeline. Unfortunately, we also found out that our radios are becoming obsolete. There will be difficulty finding replacement batteries. Newer radios are recommended and are on the market now for prices upwards of \$2500 apiece. We have 12 radio carrying members. This will take a bite out of our budget! Time to look for grants! If anyone in the township is familiar with writing grants, we could sure use your help!

Our area lakes are now frozen. Time for ice fishing and sledding! Winter fun has begun! A few tips can help make these activities safe ones. The most important thing to remember is that ICE IS NEVER 100% SAFE! Ice thickness is never the same over an entire lake. It can be 1 foot thick in one place and 1 inch thick just a few feet away. Ice thickness is determined by air temperature, amount of snow on the ice, the presence of currents and springs under the ice, and fish activity. Always check the thickness of the ice where you plan to be. Use an ice chisel, ice auger, or cordless drill to make a hole. Check the thickness of the ice with a tape measure or an ice fisherman's ice skimmer that has inch markings on the handle. White ice or "snow ice" is only half as strong as clear ice, so take this into consideration when determining the safety of the ice that you are on. Stay off of any ice that is less than 4" thick. 5" - 7" of clear ice may support a snowmobile or ATV. 8" - 12" may support a car or small pickup. 12" - 15" may support a medium truck. These guidelines are for clear ice only. If you are on white ice, double these recommendations. Vehicles should be parked at least 50 feet apart on the ice, and moved at least every 2 hours. It is a good idea

to make a hole next to a vehicle that is parked on the ice. When water starts to come out of the hole, you will know that the ice is sinking and it is time to move.

People drown when they fall through the ice because the broken ice closes off their escape, their wet and heavy clothing pulls them down into the water, and they suffer hypothermia. Hypothermia occurs when the victim's temperature drops because they are wet and cold. Shivering is the first sign of hypothermia, followed by coordination difficulties, slurred speech, tiredness, loss of consciousness, coma and death. Always carry ice picks when traveling on the ice. These can help you pull yourself back up onto the ice. Remember, the ice is stronger in the direction you just came. Pack an extra set of clothes so that you can get out of wet clothing immediately. Have blankets and warm beverages available. If someone nearby falls through the ice, do not go to them or you may break through also. Throw a rope or reach a branch. If you plan for an emergency, you will have what you need. Always call 911 if you or someone else falls through the ice. Just because a victim stops shivering does not mean that all is well. Sometimes, the body is too cold or tired to shiver anymore as hypothermia progresses. Be careful, and be prepared when going on the ice!

Ice is Never 100% Safe!



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