

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 2018.04.05

Our April meeting took place on Thursday, April 5, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. Sharron McKechnie, our treasurer, had taken our financial records to an accountant to be audited. She was happy to report that all of our financial records are in order. Sharron works very hard every month to keep the books current and the bills paid. Sharron is not a firefighter, nor does she respond to medical calls. However, she volunteers to be our treasurer. This is very important work for our organization. Thank-you, Sharron, for all of your hard work! We really appreciate all that you do! You do not need to be a firefighter or medic to join our department. If you want to join, there is sure to be something that you could do!

Winter is ending, and wildfire season is here. We have been getting our gear together. Our engines and tankers are ready for all seasons with several thousand gallons of water. But they cannot always access remote areas where a wildfire can break out. For this, we have our 6X6 side by side that has a water tank and pump installed in the bed, and our brush trucks. Pumps have been tested and water tanks filled. We also have backpacks that are filled with water and have a hose and nozzle. These can be carried into remote areas and then refilled as needed from the vehicles. Responders do not wear the same firefighting gear for wildfires as they do for structure fires. Well, I guess you could, but walking a distance in that heavy gear would be tiring and uncomfortable. Still, one needs to wear protective clothing. This includes a lightweight helmet and goggles to protect against flying embers or falling wood. Fireproof gloves are necessary. Bright yellow fire resistant shirts have been issued to our responders. There are fire resistant pants available, but jeans work well in most instances. The key thing is that your clothing should be made out of natural materials like cotton or wool and not synthetic fabrics. Synthetic fabrics tend to melt at lower temperatures than cotton or wool, and they could melt onto your skin causing a burn. For this reason, it is also recommended that cotton socks be worn. Leather boots are recommended for footwear. They offer protection because leather is a natural material, and they are not as heavy as firefighter's boots. Steel-toed boots are not recommended because the steel will get hot from walking on hot ground. These clothing tips are good to remember when sitting around a campfire. Protect yourself and family members from burning embers and melting clothing by wearing natural fabrics. Be especially careful when wearing fleece around a fire. I have seen it melt!

Several of our members attended a training class sponsored by LifeLink III at the Mountain Iron Community Center. LifeLink III is the air medical service that is based at the Hibbing airport and responds to our area when needed. This service was established in 1985 and is owned by a consortium of 10 medical systems. They operate six bases in Minnesota. We are also fortunate to have North Memorial air medical service that responds to our area. This service began operating out of the Eveleth airport within the past year. Both of these services offer helicopter transport for patients in our area. There are many medical conditions that warrant the use of a helicopter transfer. The most common need in our area is to transport trauma, heart attack, and stroke victims. Our township is about 45 miles away from the trauma centers in Duluth. Receiving lifesaving care in that first hour after suffering an event can make the difference between survival and death. There has been much research done on that "golden hour". These helicopters, with their specially trained crews and equipment, can get a victim to a hospital quickly. They can fly at a speed of up to 180 miles per hour. They cannot fly in all weather conditions. Although the helicopters are housed in their hangars to keep them out of the ice and snow, there is no way to de-ice them after they have landed at the scene. The FAA has strict rules for flying in different weather conditions. The crew is trained to perform many lifesaving procedures, administer medications and blood products, and use advanced monitoring systems, ultrasounds and blood testing equipment in the helicopter while enroute to the hospital. This saves critical time.

Our responders are trained to recognize when air transport is necessary as well as how to set up a landing area. The site chosen for a landing can be on a road, in a field or parking lot, or even on the roof of a hospital. They cannot land on a frozen lake because the loaded helicopter weighs around 4000 pounds, and there is no guarantee of sufficient ice depth to support it. The landing site must be on a firm, level surface that is 100 x 100 feet. It must be marked with cones and blinking

lights and be illuminated at night. One responder on the ground must be in constant radio contact with the helicopter crew to point out hazards such as wires and rocks. The helicopter rotors produce a strong wind when the chopper lands or takes off. Responders must beware of flying debris at these times! Ellsburg has two designated landing zones in the township. One landing zone is on the parking lot of our Bass Lake Firehall. The other landing zone is on Cemetery Road where the old Melrude Church used to be. Our department has landed a helicopter in a gravel pit and on Highway 53 for motor vehicle accident victims. Of course, when a helicopter is landing, all traffic must stop on both sides of the highway. This is very important for the safety of responders, helicopter crew, and the drivers on the highway. Yet, there is always that one vehicle that thinks that they can squeeze through the barricades and continue on their way. Don't be that person!

The fishing opener is coming this month. The most common injury incurred while fishing is impaling yourself or someone else with a fishhook. Used fishhooks, as well as fish teeth, are teeming with bacteria that can cause infection. Make sure that you carry a first aid kit that includes a disinfectant so that you can clean the wound immediately. Minor impalements of a hook on a finger or leg can usually be removed. A fishhook that is imbedded deeper, or that is in a muscle, anywhere on the head, or in a sensitive area should be removed by trained medical personnel to avoid serious or permanent damage. The second most common injury incurred while fishing is drowning. Please make sure that you have the right size life jacket for each person on your boat. Examine the lifejackets and replace them if you find any tears, fraying, broken buckles, or fading. Teach children how to move safely while in a boat. Avoid alcohol if you are the one driving the boat. Protect yourself from the sun. Remember that the skin of young children is much thinner than that of an adult and so will burn faster. Children also become dehydrated sooner than an adult so be sure to bring drinks and snacks for them. Carry a charged cellphone and call 911 if you need our help!

