

Our May meeting took place on Wednesday, May 1, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our June meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 5, at 6:30 pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend. We have been busy getting our vehicles ready for wildland fires. Our 6X6 now carries a 65 gallon water tank, some hoses, and a pump. Our backpack water packs have been filled. The water tanks on Rescue 3 and Rescue 4 are filled, and their pumps have been checked and run. All responding members have their wildland helmets, goggles, jackets, pants, and boots ready. As of this writing, our township has not suffered any wildland fires. Yet, the potential is always there, and we are ready!

We are also getting our equipment ready for summer emergencies. The skis have been taken off of our rescue sled and replaced with wheels. The boat has been filled with air, and lifejackets and paddles are in it. Our snowmobile has been moved to Jason Stenberg's house. Jason is going to check it over, make some repairs, and summarize it. Thank you so much, Jason, for your help. I have taken the quilted liner out of my responder jacket, but I have not packed it away yet. The highway, at night, can still be a chilly place.

Our Freightliner has returned from being painted. Thank-you, Armory Shell, for the beautiful job you did! We appreciate your attention to the little details. There was a work night for this vehicle because it needed mud flaps, a heat shield, arm rests, mirrors, and airlines. Now it is ready to be driven to Moorhead, in western Minnesota, where it will be fitted with a 2400 gallon water tank. When it returns, it will be ready to be put into service. You will know that Ellsburg VFD is coming when you see that big, red truck on the move!

Along with responding to emergencies, there is always vehicle maintenance, equipment updates, and training that keeps the members of our department busy. Several of our EMR's sat for a sixteen hour recertification class. Our EMR license has to be renewed every two years by this recertification class. We are tested on our medical knowledge and ability to perform the skills needed to render emergency care. I am proud to say that we all passed. A big thank-you to Deb Feth, Arrlette Krog, Laurie Mesedahl, and Ray Privett for providing meals and desserts for those in the class. We really appreciated it!

Some of our department members were able to attend Railroad Emergency training. We have trains that run through our township several times a day. There are also trains that run along Highway 7 to our west, which is in the area that we would provide mutual aid to. We learned a lot of interesting things at this training. The BNSF rail system has 32,500 miles of track in the 28 states and three Canadian provinces that it operates in. It moves many commodities, but the ones that are of most concern to us are the hazardous materials. The average number of hazmat shipments is 1,500,000 each year. This is less than 6% of the total volume of goods being transported by BNSF. There are less than 12 hazmat shipments each year involved in accidents or derailments, which translates into a 99.99% success rate of transportation. In contrast, hazmat materials transported by trucks on the highway are involved in 16 times more accidents. Historically, oil and whiskey were the first things shipped by rail and still are today. There are certain classes of hazardous materials commonly shipped by rail and many of these travel through our township. These include explosives, gases, flammable liquids, combustible liquids, flammable solids, reactive solids or liquids, oxidizers, organic peroxides, and materials which are poisonous, radioactive, or corrosive. The next time you are stopped at a railway crossing, look at the cars and see how many are labelled with hazardous placards, or are labelled as carrying petroleum crude oil, liquid petroleum gas, chlorine, or anhydrous ammonia.

Our department will respond if there is an accident or derailment on the tracks. Vapor clouds can be released from tank cars, intermodal containers, trailers, and box cars, and indicate that there has been a leak of a substance. If a frosted line is seen on a pressure tank car, it means that a compressed gas is leaking. If a fire occurs near a pressurized container, that container can rupture and cause large pieces of the container to be blown around. A massive fire can result if the contents of that container are flammable. Our immediate actions focus on prevention of injury or loss of life,

prevention of property loss, and environmental concerns. Is an evacuation of the area necessary or an evacuation of the township? Are people on board that train? Most of the trains in this area have 2 people on board in the locomotive. However, some locomotives are operated by remote control, which means no one is in the locomotive.

There are several safety issues that must be considered when in the area of railroad tracks. Trains or rail equipment can move on any track from either direction at any time. You must always watch both ways for trains and you never know when one is coming. Never step on a rail. Gravel and other material can get on the rail and cause a derailment. It is too easy to slip, trip, or fall on a rail and then get incapacitated when a train is coming. Teach your children to never play "chicken" with a train. Of course, there are those who plan their suicide by purposely getting hit by a train. It takes a train over a mile to be able to stop. If there is a curve in the track, the crew won't be able to see you until it is too late. Also, if it is a remote controlled locomotive, there won't be anyone there to see you either. Imagine the psychological trauma suffered by a train crew that can see a vehicle or person on the tracks, maybe even make eye contact with them, yet be unable to stop in time. Trains can be up to 2 miles long. Those in the locomotive cannot see what is happening two miles behind them. There are detectors along the tracks which sense temperature, loose or dragging equipment, wobbly wheels... There are also sensors and cameras that extend from the sides of rail cars to monitor problems with the wheels, rails, shifting loads...If you are within 4 feet of the rail when a train goes by, you will get hit by something. Keep at least 25 feet away from a train track. Keep back from the railroad crossing gates also. If the train derails in front of you, or something falls off of it, are you out of reach? If another vehicle fails to stop, and crashes into the back of your vehicle, will you be pushed into the train? Don't drive around the crossing gates. Always stop to check for trains when crossing, even if there are crossing gates. They can malfunction. Never stand or drive between the rails. Playing around or hanging out on the rails is considered trespassing. Refrain from taking selfies, or prom, wedding or kid's pictures on the rails. Besides the risk of being hit, think of all of those substances, many hazardous, that travel over those tracks. These substances can get spilled on the outside of cars during filling and then drip off while being transported. A car can develop a leak. Do you really want to sit in that, get it on your hands, or have it get on your shoes and then bring it into your house? Don't let your pets walk around the tracks either. They can get stuff on their feet and then lick it off. This could be fatal. Stay away from locomotives. Their fuel tank capacity is up to 5,300 gallons of diesel. They have generating plants onboard which produce up to 4400 horsepower and operate in the 600 volt range. This could produce quite an electrical shock! At every crossing, there is a sign which tells you whose railroad it is, a number to call in an emergency or if you note something wrong with a train, the DOT crossing number, and the railroad mile post number. If you see a potential hazard as a train goes by, or someone is stuck on the tracks, call this number or 911 and use the information on the sign to determine the location so that the train can be stopped. In any emergency, call 911. We will be there to help!