

NEWS FROM THE ELLSBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT 20200205

Our February meeting was held on Wednesday, February 5, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall on Mink Road. Our March meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 4, at 6:30pm at the Bass Lake Firehall. All are welcome to attend. Please consider joining our department! Sit in on a meeting and see if what we do interests you. We are always looking for new members!

We currently have 20 members in our department. There are 15 members that respond to emergency calls. Five members are support people who clean, do maintenance and secretarial work, help with grants and community activities, and other essential tasks. All of our members are volunteers. This means that no one is sitting at the firehall waiting for an emergency to respond to. The dispatchers at the 911 center work in teams. While one dispatcher gets the information from the caller, the other dispatcher determines which departments need to respond. If it is a medical emergency, an ambulance is always dispatched at the same time as our responders. If the emergency is on Melrude Road, or the roads that branch off of Melrude Road, Virginia Ambulance Service will respond. The rest of our township is serviced by the Meadowlands Ambulance Service. Obviously, these ambulance services have a distance to travel to get to emergencies in our township. This is why it is so important to have residents in our area that are prepared and trained to respond.

We have 15 trained members who can respond to emergencies IF they are in the area. 11 of these 15 work full time. That leaves 4 of us - and I am one of these- that are available more during the day than the others. But what if I go to Virginia to get groceries? Or to Duluth to see the grandchildren? What if someone goes away on vacation, or gets sick? More of us are available at night or on weekends, but emergencies do occur at other times also. Last year, we responded to 15 emergencies between the hours of 8am-4pm, with the most common time between 2pm-4pm. We had 7 emergencies between 5pm and midnight, with the most common time between 7pm-9pm. We responded to 6 emergencies between the hours of midnight and 7am, with 5am being the most common time. The more members that we have, the greater the chance that someone is available to respond to an emergency. Literature shows that the number of EMS and Fire volunteers in rural areas is diminishing throughout our country. It is estimated that about 60 million Americans live in areas where there is no quick response to medical or fire emergencies.

Our department was paged for 28 emergencies last year, and we responded to each call. When our pagers went off, it took an average of 10-15 minutes for one of us to arrive on the emergency scene. If the emergency occurs close to a firehall or to where a responder lives, that response time can be cut in half. While this might seem like a long time to you, think of what must happen in those 10-15 minutes. Remember, the firehalls are not staffed. This is Volunteer. If the emergency is at night, the responders must get dressed, grab their radios and gear, and drive either to the scene or to a firehall. If the emergency occurs during the day, the responders might be in the woods or on the lake. Or maybe they have to turn off the oven first, or get out of the shower. Then they have to get to the scene or the firehall. At the firehall, they must park their cars, unlock the man door, open the bay doors, unplug the vehicle, wait for the glow plugs, and then go to the scene. The fact that we actually get there within 15 minutes shows how we hustle. Technically, we are supposed to drive the speed limit. But, adrenaline kicks in, and...

Most of our responders live on the eastern end of our township. An emergency on the highway or in the Melrude Road area can be up to 15 miles away, and it takes time for them to get there. Lee and I are the only two responders who live in the Melrude Road area. It takes us longer to get to emergencies in the Bass Lake Firehall area, but we are first on scene on the highway or in the Melrude Road area. IF we are home and available! We really need more responders who live on or near Melrude Road. If you live in this area, please consider joining our department. We need you! Your family and your neighbors need you! Actually, if you live anywhere in our township, we need you! Please join!

At the end of January, someone attempted to break into the Melrude Firehall. They were

unsuccessful, but we must ask-why? Are they looking for drugs? We carry Epinephrine, Glucose, and Narcan. They can get the Narcan for free and the others are definitely not what they are looking for. Are they looking to steal a vehicle? They would be pretty obvious driving away. Hoses? Nozzles? Tools? Security cameras have been installed. It used to be that no one in Melrude locked their doors, but the increase in break-ins has changed that. Many homeowners now have security systems or trail cameras which has become necessary. We apparently have a few bad apples in our township. Let's catch them!

Our department was present at the Melrude Winter Frolic on February 15. It was a beautiful day with temperatures in the 20's. No frozen ketchup this year! The hill was great for sliding, the brats were grilled to perfection, the fire was warm, and the s'mores were delicious. Seven winners left with money from the money raffle, and ten children left with new sleds. It is always a fun opportunity to visit with the people who come. I am happy to report that our services were not needed. Another fun Frolic!

Several members attended the Emergency Medical Services annual conference which took place at the DECC in Duluth. There were great classes on trauma, drug use, pediatric emergencies, heart attacks, strokes... One class taught us things to consider when extricating a victim from an unusual place, such as an outhouse, sewer drain, or another confined space. That was quite interesting! Other classes taught about emergencies occurring on farms with silos and farming vehicles. A well-attended class taught about ATV emergencies. ATV's are the second leading cause of recreational accidents. About 700 people die each year and 135,000 are injured in ATV accidents. One third of the victims are less than 18 years old. ATV's are very popular in our area. The two most common causes of accidents are speed and the fact that these machines are top heavy. Trails are generally loose dirt or mud, with obstacles such as trees and rocks. Victims are usually flung forward over the handlebars, or flip over backwards. Either way, the victim risks getting run over by their own machine or having their ATV flip on top of them. An ATV can weigh between 400-1200 pounds. That weight can crush a victim and kill him. Handlebars, brakes, clutch levers... can entangle and puncture a victim. Most ATV accidents result in the victim being flung forward over the handlebars because of a sudden stop that results from hitting an obstacle such as a tree or another ATV. Head injuries occur from hitting the obstacle-especially if no helmet is worn. These accidents commonly result in broken arms, wrists, and shoulders from hitting a tree. The feet and ankles are caught under the handlebars as the body is flung forward, and they can break also. The femurs (upper leg bones) can fracture from being bent forward over the handlebars. A fractured femur can cause a blood loss of 1-2 liters. This can be fatal. The injuries suffered by a victim in an ATV accident can result in permanent disabilities. Traumatic brain injuries can result in vegetative states, coma, and mental handicaps. Neck and spinal cord injuries can result in paralysis. Chest and abdominal injuries can result in organ damage. Serious bone fractures may leave a victim crippled. Our department responded to 2 ATV accidents last year. Please wear helmets, slow down, know the trail conditions, make good decisions, and enjoy your ride! Some injuries, like head and broken bones, don't look bad at first. However, these injuries can quickly become fatal. You cannot see internal swelling or blood loss. Call 911 immediately for any accident involving an ATV. We will be there to help!