

Vernon Fire Rescue Services

Vernon Volunteer Firefighters Association

Okanagan Landing Volunteer Firefighters Association

International Association of Firefighters Local 1517



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2009 Year in Review: Vernon Fire – Rescue Services

VFRS Administration Highlights

Vernon Fire – Rescue Services completed a number of projects in 2009, and continues to strive towards updating operations and other components of our public safety and emergency services.

Highlights from 2009 include:

- Completion of the Vernon – Fire Rescue Service Review and Business Plan 2009-2014.
- Hiring of a Training Officer and Fire Inspector.
- Inclusion of Emergency Preparedness and ESS under the Fire – Rescue organizational structure and the hiring of a new Emergency Program Coordinator.
- Interim agreement in place for EM/ESS for Armstrong, Enderby Spallumcheen, and RDNO
- Completed the relocation of the Emergency Operations Center to the Telus Building.
- Initiated an online firefighter training program and daily task and drill schedule.
- Completed the development of a new North Okanagan Mutual Aid Agreement.
- Completed a Fee for Service Agreement with RNDO /BX Swan Lake Fire Department response to the Foothills. RDNO deferred the agreement until they complete a Fire Service Review.
- Conceptual plan for Predator Ridge Volunteer fire service completed and submitted to Wesbild and Sparkling Hill for consideration and feedback.
- Conceptual Plan for Bella Vista Station completed and submitted to Council for consideration.
- Negotiated a new contract and lease agreement with OKLVFA.
- Fire Prevention Bylaw review completed with amendments for Council approval scheduled for early 2010.
- Fire Dispatch working group and business plan analysis completed. Funding model submitted to area CAOs for consideration.
- ESS and Reception Centre support for Terrace Mountain Fire

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VFRS Operations

Goals and Objectives

- To reduce the amount of property loss to fires and minimize its damaging effects.
- To arrive at the scene of an incident in a safe and timely manner.
- Provide the first response to all medical emergencies.
- Provide quick and professional response to rescue and hazmat incidents.
- To continue to partner with the public and expand on community service projects.
- To use the incident command management system on all emergency calls.
- To maintain Fire Department facilities, apparatus, equipment and resources in a high state of readiness and cleanliness at all times
- To provide effective management that encourages and promotes "teamwork" throughout the Vernon Fire Service.
- To encourage and assist our members to conduct themselves in a professional manner that shows respect toward our community, other members of the Department and members of other agencies
- To promote interagency cooperation and mutual respect among all other interacting organizations and their members
- Strive to be a leader in the Fire Community

Organization Profile

The Fire Department operates under the direction of the Fire Chief who is responsible to the Mayor and Council through the Chief Administrative Officer.

In order to deliver the services needed to accomplish our mission, the Department is organized into four major sections: Administration, Operations, Fire Prevention/Training, and Emergency Preparedness.

Operations – The operations section is responsible for the delivery of emergency services for fire and rescue, first medical response, hazardous materials, operation of the regional fire dispatch and the day to day operations of the fire department. In 2009 Vernon Fire-Rescue Services responded to over 2600 emergency calls, ranging from structure fires to grass fires, from rescues and auto extrication to backup for the B.C. Ambulance.

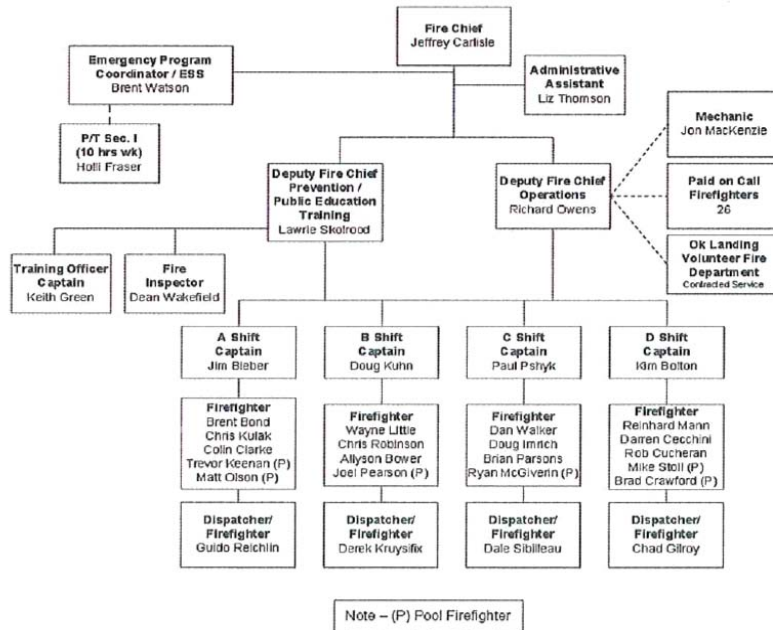
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Career Firefighters

VFRS has thirty-three (33) Career staff with 26 working shift work. These individuals not only respond while on duty, but are called back to work on numerous occasions over the year when additional help is needed by the on duty career staff. Being a career firefighter in smaller communities as Vernon requires a serious commitment and special thanks goes out to their families for their support and understanding when these individuals are called out at any time of the day or night on a moment's notice.



City of Vernon Organizational Chart Fire - Rescue Services



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Paid on Call Firefighters

VFRS has two volunteer firefighting associations. VVFA has twenty-six (26) Paid on Call members who respond from home or work 24 hours a day/seven days a week to fire and emergency calls. Service as a paid-call member in our community requires a serious commitment as members attend up to thirty-six (36) fire drills/practices, optional training, as well as being called out to emergencies throughout the year.



Vernon Volunteer Firefighters Association

The second volunteer association is the OKLVFD. They maintain approximately 30 active members who are all on call 24/7, practice 3 sessions per month and participate or instruct in optional training programs. The membership also manage the business of running the fire department including maintenance of lands, building and vehicles as well as accounting, personnel, reporting and PR. In 2009 they responded to 73 incidents including 4 Structure fires, 17 other fires, 11 motor vehicle accidents, 4 fireboat calls, 3 natural gas and hydro and 2 structure fire mutual aid calls. A crew and vehicle responded to mutual aid in Lillooet and the fireboat and crew responded to Kal Lake for forestry mutual aid. 2009 was the 34th year of community service for OKLVFD.



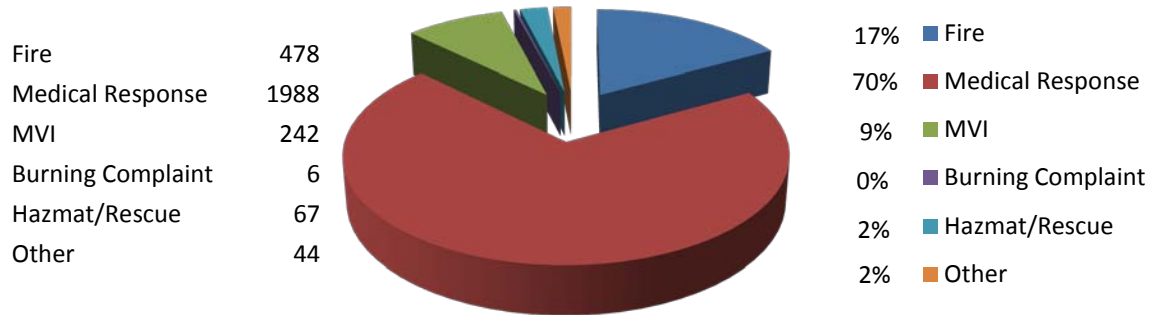
Okanagan Landing Volunteer Firefighters

Special thanks goes to the families and employers of VVFA and OKLVFA members. These individuals are called out at any time of the day or night on a moment's notice and VFRS passes on our thanks!

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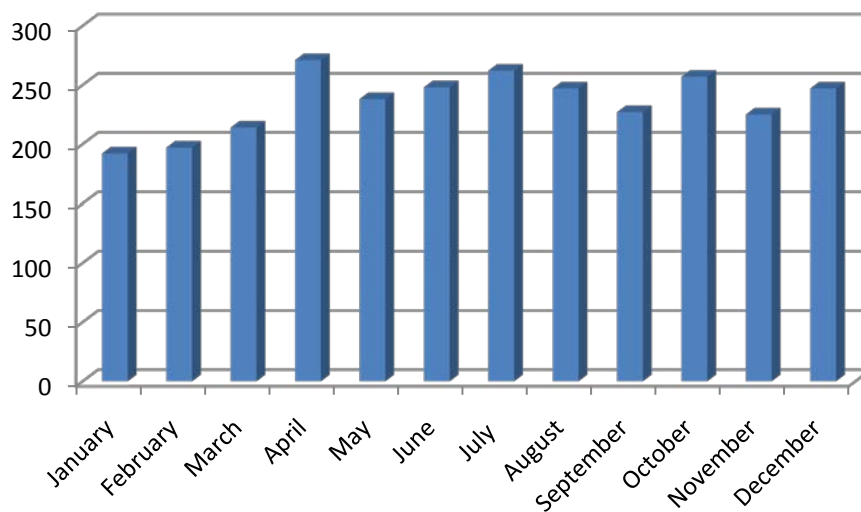
Emergency Responses

2009 EMERGENCY RESPONSE, BY INCIDENT, (INC. CODE 2), BOTH STATIONS



2009 CALLS BY MONTH, BOTH STATIONS

April was the busiest month in 2009 responding to 271 calls of which 184 were first responder calls.



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RESPONSE TYPE/YEAR COMPARITIVE, BY STATION

Response Type/Year	2005	2008	2009
<u>Downtown Station</u>			
Fire	383	416	371
FMR	81	1847	1962
MVI	305	354	231
Burning Complaint	100	22	2
Hazmat/Rescue	79	44	27
Other (inc. code 2)	49	100	183
Sub-Total	957	2783	2776
<u>Landing Station</u>			
Fire	32	63	36
Medical Assist	1	0	0
MVI	29	20	5
Rescue	2	5	3 (fireboat)
Other	7	9	5
Sub-Total	71	97	49
Total Calls	1028	2880	2825
Dual Response			71 (55 DTN, 16 OKL) <i>Dual response calls (2.4%)</i>

RESPONSE TIMES URBAN/SUB-URBAN, DOWNTOWN STATION ONLY

2616 TOTAL CALLS (CODE 3, EMERGENCY)

2258 6 MIN OR UNDER (86%)

254 BETWEEN 6 AND 9 MIN (9.7%)

104 OVER 9 MIN (4.3%)

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EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE

The Emergency Dispatch Centre dispatches 911 fire, road rescue, and first responder calls to seven (7) other fire departments in the RDNO as well as the two stations serving the City of Vernon. Dispatch centers of our size handle some 8000 phone calls per year of which over 2800 require emergency response.

The dispatch centre also monitors various alarms throughout the city and the RDNO. The dispatch centre also handles the City's after hour's telephone service when city facilities are closed.

We will continue to work towards modernizing the dispatch center to enhance service to our customers in a cost efficient and effective manner.



Apparatus Maintenance Support

VFRS has one part-time mechanic who has proven to be an expert in emergency vehicle apparatus and equipment repair and is a valued member of our team. Internally he reports/works with the Deputy Chief Operations, and is directly under the COV Manager of Fleet Services.

Building Maintenance

The day to day maintenance of the fire station is shared by career staff and the COV building maintenance staff. An example of this is the career staff painted all bays and the shop area this year, while building maintenance built a new office and upgraded a portion of the rooms this year and looks after regular maintenance of mechanical and electrical systems. We are looking to finish off our renovation this year with budget approval.

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Operational Highlights

Vernon Fire-Rescue Services had many significant achievements and the highlights are as follows;

- In 2009 we have confirmed two lives have been saved after using the AED's donated by Kalamalka Rotary.
- After the fires of 2003 VFRS/OKLFD and the regional fire departments as well as BC Forestry Protection Branch and other emergency services have held a number of table top and field exercises. These skills have been put to the test on a number of occasions in the past two years. Some examples are; the fire near the Coldstream/Vernon border near the Forest Research Center and the interface fire near the Out Back. In all instances the Incident Command System was implemented and all involved worked in harmony with very positive results. All local fires were contained within a couple of hours, with mop up being completed within a few days.



- In the summer of 2009 with the interface fire knocking on our door steps, we took the opportunity to meeting with responders on the Terrace mountain fire. We planned a response utilizing regional resources so we would be prepared if called upon to fight from the North Flank. We also used this opportunity to talk to and witness the sprinkler protection crews and equipment being deployed in high farms area to protect structures. This was a great opportunity to enhance current expertise.



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- Deputy Chief Owens was seconded by the Province on two occasions and assigned as unified command with forestry on the Brookmere fire (200+ Firefighters) and as the structure branch director on the largest interface fire on the year, the Lava Canyon Fire. (300 + Firefighters)



- A new combination Engine/Rescue truck was researched and tendered with the contract being awarded to a B.C. company, Hub Fire Engines of Abbotsford with an estimated deliver date of June 2010. This versatile truck will respond to vehicle accidents, first responder calls and fire calls.
- Rescue 87 was put back into service after repairs from December 2008 accident.
- VFRS operational guidelines were reviewed and updated in 2009. This was a participatory process with all officers working as a team to make the necessary changes to ensure we keep a safe and consistent approach to emergency incidents and every day duties.
- Completion of the Instruction component of 2008/09 Fire Officer II course was finished in the spring with this program now being transferred from operations to Deputy Chief Skolrood's portfolio.
- Paging system had some upgrades to make paging more efficient.
- Continue to liaison with regional emergency service personnel.
- Continue to work/liaison with regional partners on service agreements, 911 dispatch, mutual aid, and confined space rescue.

Fire Prevention & Training Highlights



Fire Prevention, Public Education and Training initiatives have been ongoing throughout 2009. A new Fire Training Officer and Fire Inspector were hired and required to hit the ground running in order to meet the challenges 2009 presented them. A 3 year contract for fire investigation and inspections was agreed upon with the Village of Lumby and the fire investigation contract with the District of Coldstream was updated to match. Vernon Fire Rescue Services partnered with Vernon Community Policing and delivered the training for CUPE's City Watch program. A Tri-City tour allowed for a comparison of methodology in both prevention and training and provided a starting point as to the direction VFRS needed to go. A "Sell don't tell!" attitude supported with a fine system for enforcement was adopted as a compliance strategy for prevention. The strategy has been applied to targeted problem occupancies and has resulted in a number of significant successes. A training overview and goals and objectives were created as well as discussions started with College of the Rockies and the B.C. Justice Institute with intent of bringing VFRS training in line with the NFPA 1001 Standard and setting the stage for the development of a strong training program framework for both VFRS's career and volunteer firefighters.



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Inspections

Routine inspections, re-inspections and pre-planning activities indicated a good general level of compliance in the City of Vernon for Fire Code requirements in 2009. The Captains and crews completed the bulk of the Vernon inspections while the new Fire Inspector was able to deal more effectively with higher level inspections and problem occupancies as well as performing 97 inspections for the Village of Lumby.



Fire Investigations

In 2009 VFRS performed 20 structure, 9 vehicle and 14 outdoor fire investigations in the City of Vernon. VFRS did 7 structure, 2 vehicle and 6 outdoor fire investigations in the District of Coldstream as well as 4 structures and 1 vehicle fire investigation for the Village of Lumby. The ability of VFRS to perform these investigations was further increased by members attending the International Association of Arson Investigator 3 day training convention in Chilliwack and Dr. John DeHann's Advanced Fire Investigation 2 day workshop in Langley



Public Education

Public Education opportunities continue on a request basis, and visiting the fire station for fire and life safety education continues to be popular amongst day cares, pre-school and regular school classes. VFRS assisted with the fire safety planning for Sparkling Hills, Predator Ridge, Creekside Landing, Heron Grove, Canadian Lake Estates and Community Futures. VFRS had an active presence at several community events such as the Sunshine Festival, DND career day, Winter Carnival, Silver Star Rotary's Mass CPR and the Christmas Light Up. Fire Prevention week saw crews doing presentations in the elementary schools and running a coloring contest where 2 successful contestants became Fire Chief for

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a day. VFRS's Juvenile Fire Setter program dealt with 2 children fascinated with fire play as well as 3 cases from the Restorative Justice Program. The Canada Day Fireworks were a great success mostly as a result of the purchase of a new firing system and a lot of hard work by VFRS and surrounding department personnel. Once again VFRS will be delivering the popular car seat installation program as funding has been secured for training early in the New Year.



Training

Training re-certifications for First Medical Responder, HazMat, Traffic Control and Confined Space, and regular task and drill activities along with Driver Training have been completed. In addition VFRS has purchased Action Training's new interactive fire training software, and all of VFRS career and volunteer firefighters are completing the modules. Further, in preparation for the wildland fire season, the Forestry S100A re-certification course was completed on site at Predator Ridge. The threat of pandemic required specific training in h1n1 awareness for both career and volunteer firefighters. A Fire Officer 2 course was completed successfully by 6 VFRS firefighters and Fire Officer 1 has been undertaken by 2 more, insuring strong leadership in the future. 14 members took the prevue assessment which has been the start of a program in succession training. Train the trainer opportunities such as Emergency Driving Legal Liabilities; Gas and Electrical Safety were attended by VFRS officers in order to effectively and economically distribute this important information to the crews. Several VFRS personnel were able to attend major events such as the World Police and Fire Games in Vancouver, The Fire Department Instructor Conference in Indianapolis and The Redmond Health and Fitness Symposium in Los Angeles bringing back world class information pertinent to the safety and the success of Vernon Fire Rescue Services. Lastly but most significantly, the addition of the new Training Officer has accelerated the adoption of validated and meaningful training specific to the needs of the department as well as inspiring a level of confidence and excitement towards training amongst the fire fighters.

Emergency Management Highlights

Emergency Management experienced an unprecedented operational tempo in 2009, with three EOC/Emergency Program activations in response to the following incidents:

- Kal Lake fuel spill
- Terrace Mountain interface fire
- Kal Park fire

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In addition, with the emergence of H1N1 in the spring, Emergency Management coordinated City pandemic preparedness, including preparation of a comprehensive Pandemic Response/Business Continuity Plan. Emergency Management continues to work closely with the Interior Health Authority to monitor the impact of the virus on the local community and to prepare for a possible third wave of infections.



Terrace Mountain Interface Fire 2009



Vernon, Wesbild Centre, group lodging ESS response

In recognition of their outstanding service during the lengthy Terrace Mountain evacuee reception operation, Vernon/Coldstream ESS was officially recognized during the First Session of the 2009 BC Legislature, and awarded the

Justice Institute Foundation Heroes and Rescue Award

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Emergency Preparedness

Significant progress was made in Emergency Preparedness in 2009, including the following projects:

- Development of a Regional Emergency Program Model and Interim Service Agreement for provision of Emergency Management services to Enderby, Lumby, Armstrong, Spallumcheen and RDNO (ESS only)
- EOC readiness and move to new facility
- Staff Orientation of new EOC
- Water Evacuation planning
- Farmed Animal Mass Carcass Disposal planning
- Pandemic stockpiling and preparedness
- Division business continuity action planning
- Recovery planning
- Animal emergency planning
- Interface fire preparedness and evacuation planning (CLE, Coldstream and Predator)
- New website and 24 hour, pre-recorded hazard information line
- Two EOC tabletop exercises
- Two Regional hazard symposiums (Wildfire and Pandemic Influenza)
- Community flood preparations
- Emergency Preparedness week
- Public preparedness messaging and education
- JIBC Accredited Emergency Management training for city staff, stakeholders and first responders
- Acquisition and deployment of emergency satellite phone
- Meetings/liaison with over two dozen local stakeholder agencies and charitable organizations
- Extensive media coverage (television, print and radio)

ESS

Due to ongoing recruitment efforts and community awareness generated by extensive media coverage, the team experienced moderate – yet highly qualitative – growth through the year. Vernon/Coldstream ESS now consists of 21 highly trained and dedicated “core” members (including five municipal staff), divided into four Level 1 duty teams.

As part of the broader volunteer recruitment and retention strategy, Vernon/Coldstream ESS embarked upon a re-branding process to build *esprit de corps* amongst the volunteers. To this end, a new logo was adopted that replaced the generic Provincial version on all t-shirts, signs, awards, etc. Volunteers were also recognized through one dinner and six luncheons during the year.

Table-top exercises and ESS drills were held on a bi-monthly basis at either VFRS or the Recreation Centre, and the team participated in a joint live-fire exercise with VFRS suppression personnel. In addition, the team hosted several accredited Justice Institute of BC courses, including the following:

- Registration & Referrals

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- Documentation Unit
- Site Management
- Search, Inquiry & Reply
- Managing Walk-In Volunteers

In terms of calls, 2009 was the busiest year on record for Vernon/Coldstream ESS:¹

Incident Type	Number of Incidents	Activation Level	Number of Clients Assisted
House Fire	11	Level 1	Approx. 29 (+ referrals to other Agencies)
Multi-Unit Residential Fire	1	Level 2	11 (+ referrals to RCMP/VA)
Water Main Break/Flooding	3	Level 1	8
Evacuation (Wildfire -- minor)	1	Level 1	6 (incl. re-referrals)
Evacuation (Wildfire -- major)	1	Level 3	Approx. 1,500 (incl. re-referrals)
Other	1	Level 1	6
Totals	18	All Levels	1,560

¹ To situate VC/ESS' call volume in context, in 2008 Vancouver ESS (service population 578,041), responded to a record 35 calls and assisted 265 evacuees.