

FORT FRANCES FIRE RESCUE SERVICE

Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service **Annual Report for 2014 and Biannual** **Report for the First Half of 2015**

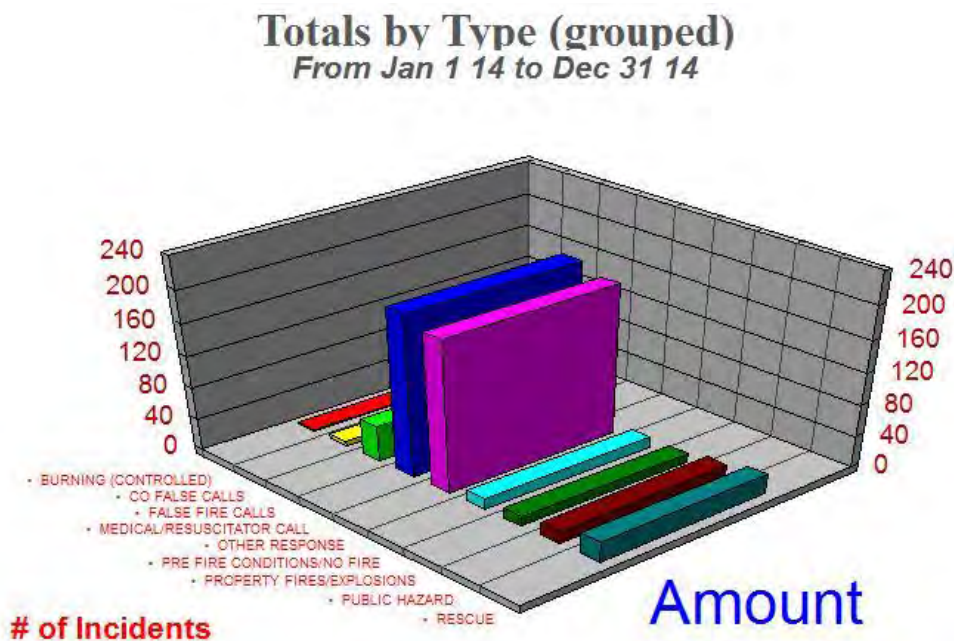


Presented by: Fire Chief Frank Sheppard

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Fire Chief's Report for 2014 to June 30th, 2015

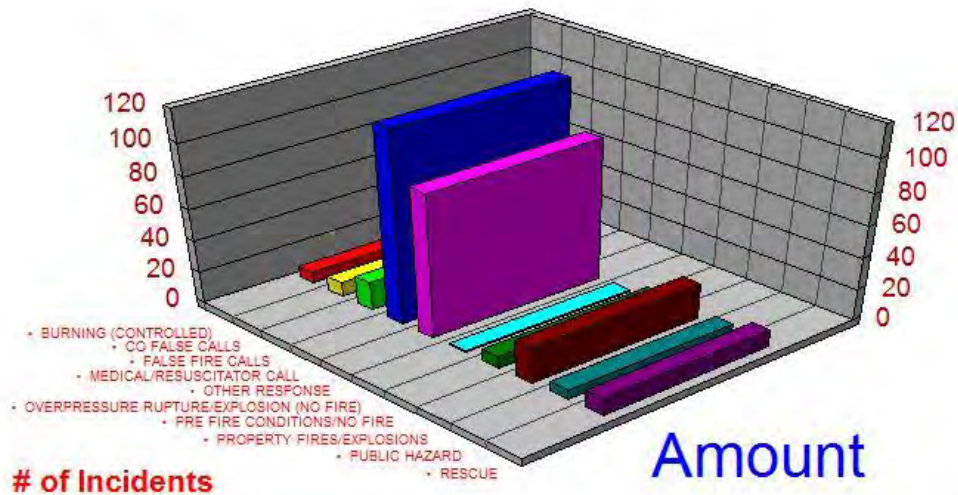
Your worship and members of Council, I would like to present the Fort Frances Fire and Rescue Service annual report for 2014 and the first half of 2015. To date we have had a positive period related to fire safety as there have been no fire deaths and the approximate fire loss for 2014 is \$465,000. The fire department responded to 514 calls for service in 2014. This is consistent with historical call numbers, however in 2014 we noticed a reduction in the number of calls related to fire, and an increase in calls related to other components of our establishing and regulating bylaw.



The first half of 2015 has been much busier from an active fire perspective and the call volume reflects that, as we have had 284 calls for service to the end of June 2015. Eight of these were active fires, and the approximate dollar loss to date is \$340,000.00.

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Totals by Type (grouped)
From Jan 1 15 to Jun 30 15



Public Education

Public education has been a mainstay of our system for over twenty years, and continues to be an emphasis of our operation. The Captain of Prevention will include a supplemental report to outline the specifics of our activities, however general activities for 2014 include public displays, school programming, hall tours, senior visits, and media campaigns. There are a number of public private relationships that can be built to support the interest of fire safety public education, and these opportunities are critical to the development of a fire safe community.

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Staff Training for Hospital and Rainycrest Staff

Fire Prevention

Fire prevention within the community is a mixture of programs, which include routine in-service inspections, and inspections on request and complaint. We have adopted a stance of the use of Inspection Orders to obtain compliance wherever possible, with charge be applied in circumstance of non-compliance and repeat offence. The use of Inspection Orders is very effective and avoids costly court time, as well as the risk of violation of individual Charter rights.

I have two new initiatives related to the prevention part of our portfolio, the first is a preplanning regimen, which will allow us to have a sound knowledge of the building stock in the community. The second is a promotional incentive program, which will promote the installation of monitored alarm systems in all occupancies in the community. This will allow for early intervention in the case of a fire in a property, while generating an insurance reduction for the owner, which allows the project to be revenue neutral. The

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community gains a strong value by maintaining properties that generate tax revenues.

Included along with this report, the appendix report by Wayne Riches will provide a more detailed explanation of our fire protection activities in 2014.

Emergency management

The Fort Frances fire rescue Service had a busy year related to emergency management activities in 2014. We started our year in early May by preparing to accept evacuees from Kasheshewan First Nation. While these evacuees were eventually routed to Thunder Bay, we had to reactivate the following week for evacuees from Attiwapiskat. With this activation we accepted approximately 150 evacuees from the first nation community after their community was threatened by flooding following an ice jam on the Attiwapiskat River. These evacuees stayed with us for eight days before being repatriated after the ice jam broke and allowed the backed up water to flow into James Bay.

The most dramatic emergency management activity of 2014 for Fort Frances was the flood that occurred in early June. This event was a significant threat to the community and it provided us with the opportunity to realistically test how effective our emergency management process has been developed. After careful analysis of the emergency management activities that took place in 2014, I am quite confident that our system is going in the correct direction. Two items for consideration for 2015 will be to update our HIRA to determine new threats, such as the movement of crude oil and chemicals through the community, and the reduction of the threat from the paper mill. Credit has to be given to the efforts of Doug Brown and Public Works, as much of the planning that took place related to protecting the sewer system in the community paid significant dividends related to damage mitigation. Following the floods in 2002 we had over 2600

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insurance claims, in comparison to less than 50 in 2014. The other credit following last year's flooding has to be given to the citizens of this community, as the volunteer effort to protect the community was truly humbling.



The water was very close to inundating parts of the community



Vulnerable area at Point Park

So far in the first half of 2015, emergency management activities have been limited to recovery from the effects of the flooding in 2014. I am hopeful that all items

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will be reconciled by the fall of 2015. As a footnote to the 2015 season so far, we would have been activated for Kasheshewan this year, however it conflicted with the Dudley Hewitt cup and we did not have accommodations during their evacuation. Planning and training will continue through 2015 with an exercise occurring in November.

Fire Analysis

As mentioned earlier we have had no fire deaths to date, and only two fires that would be considered working structure fires in 2014. These were dealt with effectively by the efforts of our personnel. The first fire was the result of incendiary activities by one of the occupants. This fire was at the Voyageur hotel and involved the live rescue of two of the occupants. The first, the owner was assisted in a self-rescue, when the building was laddered by a bystander, and the individual was able to make his way to safety with some assistance from a career fire fighter. The other occupant was rendered unconscious by heavy smoke and certainly would have perished had he not been brought to safety by the actions of a career firefighter and a volunteer firefighter. This was the first live rescue of a human from an active burning fire, in a position of risk, in the nearly thirty years that I have been with this organization. We should be proud of this action, and it speaks very well of the team concept that has been developed here.



Fire Still Occurs, Regardless of Prevention Activities

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We have initiated some new fire suppression methodologies, which have been promising in the early applications. The use of positive pressure attack and transitional attack allow us to engage a property in an effective manner even though we may have less human resource then in the past. These methods assist in our activities to mitigate some of our limitations, however there are still gaps in our service provision that generate risk for our personnel and the community. These gaps will be addressed within the SWOT analysis portion of the report.

Training

The Province of Ontario made a significant change in 2014 related to training expectations with the adoption of the National Fire Protection Standard (NFPA) professional qualification standard. Section 9. (2) (b) of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act tasks the Fire Marshal with the duty of developing training programs and evaluation systems for persons involved in the provision of fire protection services in Ontario. Council then defines our training responsibility through the E&R bylaw.



Active call, however the type of Incidents that we train for

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In April of 2014, the Fire Marshal adopted the NFPA standard as the mechanism for fulfilling that obligation. Although certification is optional, this is the performance standard that the Ministry of Labour will use to evaluate operational performance and competency. Fortunately we have been proactive in the development of a modernized training scheme for the department. To date we have completed over 100 tests for certification, which will provide us with a very defendable training record through the third party vetting. In addition to the testing process, we have developed an internal training program including the construction of a training site that will support all of the training required to meet the expectations of the E&R bylaw.

The training program is now being managed by Firefighter Dokuchie under the supervision of Captain Armstrong. This position needs further development with all of the program management and training to occur under a single position, the Captain of Training. I hope to be able to achieve that goal with the retirement of Captain Armstrong.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths of the Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service include a strong organizational design, which integrates suppression activities, along with prevention and public education activities. In addition to the design process we are well equipped, and while some of our fleet is aging we have been able to upgrade within acceptable parameters. Personnel has always been a mainstay of our strength and that continues. We have career personnel that make good decisions, and their application of risk management principles has resulted in significant cost mitigation related to emergency call-back.

Weaknesses of the Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service include an internal value system that is reluctant to fully embrace concepts of the first two pillars of fire protection,

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being public education and prevention. The systemic view of a significant percentage of our staffing fundamentally believes that high staffing levels will translate to a lower fire loss. There is without question a level of balance that must be maintained, however it is clear that our activities related to public education and inspection will have a much more significant impact on the positive outcome of fire safety in the community.

A second weakness of our organization is based on staffing numbers related to the functional requirement of service delivery. With five staff covering a 24/7 365, service expectation, the Captain of Prevention is limited to half of his shifts on night shift, which reduces organizational efficiency and opportunity. While other fire fighters are available during the days shifts they lack the technical expertise to meet all of the job requirements at the higher level of fire prevention, which leaves all of the performance expectations for that material on the Captain of Prevention and the Fire Chief. To effectively address this issue we need one additional person to allow the Captain of Prevention to be moved back to day shift.

A third weakness that occurs within our system is the limited number of personnel that are available for daytime response. The simple nature of the volunteer system is that many of these people have lives and jobs. Their ability to respond is often limited by their availability and willingness to respond, as well as their employer's willingness to make them available during working hours. We have begun a project to establish some data driven analysis to determine how much of a weakness this is and how great the risk to the community is. We need three primary commitments from our volunteer fire fighters. The first is to tell us when they are available, the second is to show up when they tell us that they are available, and the third is to complete the necessary training to ensure they are

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not a risk to themselves, or a liability to the organization. We are fortunate in that we have a very strong core group of volunteers, and ensuring that we can maintain that concept will be critical given the added expectations. Addressing this weakness will be a priority for the next year.

Opportunities for the Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service are varied and dependent on the direction of Council. Due to the current economic situation we are clearly in a holding pattern related to service delivery. We cannot provide any additional service without additional resources, and we cannot maintain our current service level with less resource. Without an effective planning process for the future is unlikely that small Municipalities will have the capacity to maintain service. Our greatest opportunity will be supported by the concept of amalgamation both internally and externally. Some of these service options could include a synergy model with District Municipalities, which would allow for the sharing of prevention, training, capital purchases, personnel, and administrative functions. This concept can be extended to develop a fire/medic model, which truly extends the concept of synergy to its fullest potential.

Unfortunately there are a number of threats, which could adversely affect the Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service. Provincial expectations for health and safety are placing much higher requirements on both career and volunteer fire fighters. I am not confident that our current application of expectations related to volunteers will be acceptable in the future, and we will need to address this issue in the near future. The simple reality is that we are asking a lot from these individuals, and even though they are compensated for their time, it appears that we may lose some due to the criteria that is applied. There is a pervasive view that any shortage of career personnel can be offset by increasing

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volunteer numbers. As mentioned in the weakness section, the lack of volunteers for daytime response may be a threat, and while I can only provide anecdotal evidence at this time, my suspicion is that we may not have adequate resources to provide a reasoned daytime response. I will ensure that there is adequate quantitative data provided by September to allow Council to make some decisions.

Cost to maintain services is another threat to our operations, and unless we are able to control costs in the future, Council will have to make decisions related to service provision and what level of service can be provided to the community.

Summary

In closing I would like to thank Council for their ongoing support of the Fort Frances Fire & Rescue Service, the firefighters for their dedication and commitment to fire and life safety, and to the residents and businesses in Fort Frances for practicing fire safety, and working cooperatively toward the goal of making this a fire safe community. I am committed to providing reports related to any of the gap identification that exists within this document, and I trust that they will be received with the same level of consideration and good judgement as past reports have obtained from Council. Ultimately Council is charged with the responsibility to set the level of protection based on local needs and circumstances. My commitment to Council will be to ensure that all information necessary to make good decisions is provided in a timely and concise manner.

Thank you



Frank Sheppard BSc MB
Fire Chief/CEMC
Fort Frances Fire Rescue Service