

Understanding Parksville's Fire Service *Calls for Service*



Each year, the Parksville Volunteer Fire Department responds to a variety of fire and emergency related calls for service. The major types of calls include alarms, motor vehicle incidents, medical calls (first response and ambulance assistance) and burning complaints. Most calls received by the department are received through the North Island 911 emergency dispatch system.

ALARMS - PVFD responds to all reported residential and commercial alarm calls, treats all alarm calls as potential fires and responds by dispatching a duty officer and a fire engine. However, all available volunteers report to the fire hall when calls are received; if more resources are necessary, the duty officer will immediately request additional fire crews, apparatus or other support.

Commercial alarms may receive additional resources depending on the situation. Certain facilities (such as care homes or large hotels) will trigger an automatic aid response from surrounding departments, including Qualicum Beach and Errington, due to the large number of individuals requiring assistance.

MOTOR VEHICLE INCIDENTS - A duty officer will respond to motor vehicle incidents where there is no indication of the need for extrication or fire. The duty officer will assess the situation for hazards such as leaking fluids or potential for fire and provide assistance with site safety. If other resources are required, the duty officer requests support in the form of appropriate equipment and personnel.

The PVFD also provides rescue and extrication services in Errington and by request from neighbouring departments via mutual aid agreement. When automobile extrication is provided outside the boundaries of the area, the PVFD receives some reimbursement from the province.

MEDICAL CALLS - The PVFD responds to select medical calls to supplement and support the ambulance service. Although BC Ambulance receives more than 2000 calls per year in the Parksville fire service area, the department only responds to those medical calls which meet certain criteria as laid out by department operational guidelines. The PVFD responds to calls in which:

- Individuals involved are in imminent danger of death or there has been extreme trauma.
- Additional personnel can improve the quality of medical care.
- Ambulance response time is greater than fifteen minutes.
- When the ambulance service requests assistance.

For example, the PVFD responds to medical calls involving cardiac arrest. This is a situation in which the individual involved is at great risk of serious injury or death. Moreover, because performing CPR is a physically strenuous activity, trained fire department personnel on the scene may relieve paramedics, ensuring consistent effective administration of CPR. If ambulance response time will be greater than 15 minutes, the PVFD will respond to medical calls to stabilize the patient and provide first response medical care.



BURNING COMPLAINTS - Burning in Parksville is regulated by "Outdoor Burning Bylaw, 2007, No. 1428". All bylaws are implemented at the municipal government level by Council and are generally enforced by City bylaw compliance officers. The PVFD works closely with the bylaw compliance department in responding to burning complaints. PVFD often responds to burning complaints in the evenings and on weekends when bylaw compliance may not be on duty. Generally the fire department responds to first-time complaints

with the goal of educating residents. If multiple burning complaints are received from the same property, bylaw compliance will assume responsibility and may take additional steps, including the issuance of fines, to gain compliance.

OTHER TYPES OF EMERGENCIES - In addition to the emergencies mentioned in this article, the PVFD also responds to a wide variety of other emergencies such as brush fires, natural gas and propane incidents, hazardous materials incidents, structure fires, technical rescue incidents such as confined space, and many varied and different types other public service requests.

The term "fire department" is a traditional term - in reality, the PVFD is an emergency services department with a wide-ranging mandate.