



A Message from AFBS Fire Chief

Mike Polywkan:

Hi Everyone

Welcome back! The snow is falling and things are shaping up for a good ski season. You may not have heard but Apex Matters has had to take the season off due to a lack of commitments and funding. This was a sad news for me as I felt that Myleen had done a fantastic job in keeping the community informed and I am convinced that my articles published in Apex Matters prevented disastrous fires through knowledge and education. I would like to personally thank Myleen for all of her hard work in the past and can take a lot of the credit for the fire prevention in the community as well. Thank You Myleen and let's hope that we see this publication back for next season. This is the article that would have appeared in the First issue of the season and the APOA has kindly offered to get it out to as many people as they can, as they also see the value in fire prevention and protection for the community. Thank You! We have supported each other for a long time now and together we make a strong team.

We had a call out this summer for a person who had a serious ATV accident. This call out involved your Apex Fire Brigade, BC Ambulance Services, Penticton Search and Rescue, and Helicopter evacuation Services. This sort of call was not on anyone's radar when we formed the Society as it was supposed to be fire only. The men and women on our brigade are there because they will not stand by when someone needs help, be it a fire or a medical situation. I knew that we would eventually get a call like this and have tried to slip in some training outside of firefighting to help deal with such a situation. Your Brigade stepped up to the plate during this call and were praised by the other emergency services involved with the call. We still do not have all of the equipment or training to deal with a call like this on our own and some day we will get there, but to be able to coordinate and work with other agencies is critical and we have done this. Many times during a debrief it is found that when it comes to what could have been done better, it usually involves better communication and coordination with other agencies. I guess that because our brigade has no other choice we learned this first. Remember also, that through any donation you may have made to the brigade is directly responsible for saving lives as we would not be a brigade without the funding from the community (Thank you, and those that have received our assistance thank you). This spring your department sent firefighters, to Oliver for the volunteer fire fighters spring training seminar. We were also a part of a training session at Oliver's training grounds and burn room in November. I have to credit the level of firefighting training for our crew to the Oliver department. If it was not for the Oliver department, we would not be trained to the level we are at. This training is very expensive and we cannot afford it but Oliver trains us at no cost to our department because they still recognize what is at the heart of being a firefighter and that is to selflessly help because some day you may be in need of help.



Kyle Parker at this year's Volunteer Spring Training Seminar in Oliver BC getting ready to extinguish a fire from a broken underground gas main.



Chief Mike (red helmet) ready to extinguish the fire.



Looks like they got it but the gas is still bubbling up through the sand and they must be cautious that it doesn't reignite around behind them.

Many may not know that Apex Fire Brigade is dispatched through a 911 call center in Kelowna. The communication system that we use is what other departments use as a backup system. We use VHF radios modulated from a phone signal at a base station. We do not have a repeater so the range at which our radios receive this signal is not large and we have many blind spots due to the terrain. Communication is critical but this is what we could afford so we make do with what we have. During the summer many of our members reside in the valley where the radios would be too far away to receive a dispatch call, but it is not too far away to respond if our members are needed. We have recently entered into a contract with IamResponding. This service is also used by virtually every department in the regional district and is activated directly through the 911 call center in Kelowna. This system uses cell phone technology, so for our members that have a cell phone set up with the system, and are in a service area, now receive a notification on their phones of a call out. With this system, members can respond with the push of a button on their phone so that my phone will tell me who is responding and their estimated time of arrival to the scene. The service also has a mapping function directing us to the scene and location of all of the hydrants. I can also use the system to notify my loved ones that I am responding to a call. The service is not hugely expensive but still requires funding but it was the most cost effective way to fill in some of the gaps.

During the beginning of the ski season, as more people return to their winter-get-away, we will hold our AGM and Elections. If anyone is interested in joining to help protect our community, this would be a good time to come out and see what we do. We hold monthly meetings all winter and biweekly training practices in the summer. This is not all work and hard-core training; it's a fun social event as much as anything else. This is a volunteer organization and no one is required to do anything that they don't want to. Helping out in any capacity that you feel comfortable doing is ok with us. That said you will have the opportunity to participate in ways that you may not have ever seen yourself doing before. This can be lots of fun and very rewarding. There are members who have joined under these pretenses and can tell you about their experiences. Come join our AGM to hear their stories. We also have a new Facebook page! Search it up and

like our page. There are a lot of good photos and video from the training seminars, as well as incident reports from any call outs. This is also a good way to see some of the equipment that we require and make donations to help us acquire it.

As always the most critical part about firefighting is prevention. No one gets hurt if the fire doesn't start in the first place. The attached photo was taken at Apex this summer. A very similar situation caused a fire at Whistler that destroyed an entire condo complex a couple of years ago, and we are just lucky that this did not do the same. Always dispose of fireplace coals and ash in a **METAL** container and never just put them out on a deck. Put them out in a snow bank well away from anything that could ignite. Hot coals and embers can retain enough heat to rekindle when buried in ash for weeks. Forest fires have reignited in the spring after being buried in the snow for an entire winter.



Definitely the wrong way to dispose of ash and coals from a fire place.

Till next issue!

Chief Mike