



Fire Department Report, August 2016

In July, We responded to 12 calls for service; 7 Medical, 1 Assist Law Enforcement, 1 public assist, 1 unauthorized burn, and 2 Motor Vehicle Accidents. The Department completed 180 training and response hours in July. Additionally, I completed 143 admin hours bringing the departments total hours for July to 323. We are continuing along a trend to once again set a response record in 2016, we are currently 1 month ahead of our busiest year to date.

Fire Chief Hours and availability to respond to calls:

In June, I completed a total of 168 hours. Going into fire season, and the subsequent burn closure has resulted in numerous phone calls that are not reflected in the above hours. As an example, on Fri. July 29, I received my first phone call at 0630hrs, and my last at 2130hrs. I have chosen to only respond to complaints that appear to rise to a Life Safety and or Property conservation level. We will not be responding to nuisance and or smoke complaints until our next scheduled shift or when time permits.

Garibaldi steering committee:

The steering committee met on Tue 8/02. We once again discussed public outreach and education. This is the problem statement that the group is currently working under;

- Problem statement – The Bay City Fire Department, Garibaldi Fire Department and Rockaway Beach Fire Department have been under funded and under staffed for years.
 - 1) Each fire department cannot meet Federal and State mandates regarding safety and training.
 - 2) Each fire department cannot recruit, train and maintain enough volunteers to adequately and safely fight a residential structure fire not to mention a commercial building fire.

Our first priority has been to get the public aware of our problems, mainly that several volunteer chiefs and officers are reaching the end of their careers with no replacements in sight. This particular committee began almost a year ago when the Chief of the Garibaldi Fire Department advised the City of Garibaldi of his intent to retire. The Bay City Fire Department is just a few years away from being in the same circumstance, currently we have no prospect of a replacement within our current staff.

The volunteer departments are also seeing a very limited availability of volunteers at various hours, For Garibaldi their biggest need is weekends. For us our biggest need is week days, during normal business hours. In either case the response to a structure fire will require a mutual automatic aid call even under the best of circumstances.

We expect a press release or letter to the editor explaining the process to date, and trying to impart the dire predicament that the fire service within Bay City, Garibaldi, and Rockaway Beach are in. Once this begins, I will use Facebook, and Our Web pages to try and facilitate public education on this matter.

Burn Complaints:

I have chosen to only respond to complaints that appear to rise to a Life Safety and or Property conservation level. We will not be responding to nuisance and or smoke complaints until our next scheduled shift or when time permits. I am completing citizen comment forms for every complaint that I cover with a response, and have begun asking individuals to go to city hall and complete a complaint form for burn or smoke complaints that appear to be of a nuisance type.

Road side Conditions:

We continue to see lots of fuel growth adjacent to roads and structures. In several areas, this brush can delay our timely response to a structure fire. We have several fire hydrants that are covered in brush, others that are cleared for a couple of feet, but will require firefighters to work their way through brush just to get close to the hydrant. We also have a couple that are clear for about 30", and then surrounded by a wall of berry bushes. Besides the hydrants, we also have several intersections where visibility at the intersections is blocked to the point that cross traffic must drive into the adjacent traffic before being able to see. Roadside trees are also a concern, we have several streets where trees overhang to the point that they are striking pick-ups and SUVs. It's not uncommon to see delivery and service vehicles either striking the tree branches, or changing lanes to avoid them. I do have a concern that these branches will strike our Fire Apparatus as well. This is a difficult situation for myself and our Officers to evaluate while we pre plan responses, and actually respond to incidents. We have to consider all of the risks that our firefighters and the public face, and plan according to the benefits that our actions will lend toward life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation. Besides getting safely to the scene, and establishing a water supply, our Officers and Apparatus operators must safely position our apparatus. Unfortunately, the current road-side brush conditions impact where we even stop to fight a fire.

We must ensure the safety of our personnel and equipment before we can commit to fire suppression operations. And if the fire should extend to the adjoining brush, we may well have to give up on the structure fire, and focus on the extension to the brush to avoid a wildland urban interface fire that will threaten all of the neighboring structures. Once a fire transitions from a single structure, and into a WUI type fire, we have to begin looking at viable escape routes for ourselves and citizens, and the current roadside brush conditions may make these escape routes hard to identify. These conditions influence our decisions under any weather conditions, and especially should we see any prolonged drying this season.

I am aware that this year has seen near record growth, but that cannot be allowed to become an excuse for lack of action with regard to the City's responsibility. Ordinance 666 clearly sets certain conditions as a nuisance. For example, section 10 Trees and brush over hanging sidewalks and streets. Section 11 Grass shrubbery and weeds from becoming a fire hazard. Ordinance 585 Section 17 place or maintain tree, brush etc. within eight feet of a hydrant. I would like to see a plan for some measurable improvement in these conditions. I understand that Public works has lots of responsibilities besides streets, I do believe that this particular situation warrants their attention as I am seeing the above described conditions worsening with each month.

Fire Conditions:

All of the Fire Departments within the County are on a total burn ban, and ODF has declared fire season. The current fire conditions remain at the moderate level for the North Oregon coast.

The attached link shows the current fires in Oregon and Washington. On Wed 8/3, there were 6 active fires in Washington, and 3 active fires in Oregon.

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc/information/firemap.aspx>

Recruiting:

We are once again approaching a critical shortage of volunteers. We are training 3 adult volunteers to become firefighters, their training will require about 200 hours each, and may well take over a year to complete. We started with 5, and it dwindled to 3 in a couple of weeks.

We currently have 18 adult members and 1 cadet. Our Fire qualified staff breaks down as follows; 13 entry level or above firefighters, these are individuals that are qualified with the minimum or above fire training to train in a live fire or fight a fire under direct supervision. This is a critical shortage as a suggested minimum number of firefighters before internal operations are initiated can rise to 20 total responders. Add to this that these individuals also fill the roles of Apparatus Operators and Company Officers, and you can see that we are stretched thin even if every member is able to respond to an incident. We can and do enhance these numbers by the way of the Automatic and Mutual Aide responses of our neighbors. We are in a time and place where an involved structure fire will always require at the least an Automatic aid call, if not a Mutual Aid request via a second or greater alarm. This is not unique to us, as all of the local departments are in the same circumstance with regard to fighting structure fires.

Our biggest opportunity, and the one for which I can see no end in sight is the lack of depth of seasoned volunteers and officers. If I am out of district, I cannot guarantee a response to a medical or rescue call. If there is a fire, one of the Officers will eventually make it to the area, but the two that can respond for large emergencies from work will be responding from the far side of Tillamook.

We are beginning an online training program with action training. We are optimistic that this web based training will allow for all of our members to increase their knowledge via a self-paced program. Hopefully, this will allow us to focus our drill time on more psychomotor and skill training of critical Fire, EMS, and Rescue skills.

As always, if you know of anyone that would possibly be interested in a position within our volunteer staff, please let them know that we are in need of a couple more members.

Respectfully,

Darrell Griffith

Fire Chief

Bay City Fire Department

firedept@ci.bay-city.or.us

503 377-0233