

## Setting Lake Fire Brigade December 11, 2021 “Meet and Greet” Minutes

Thirty firefighters, fire support volunteers, and emergency medical services providers, which all provided proof they were fully vaccinated, attended the meeting.

Jeff called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. He informed the group of the following:

1. The fire brigade has acquired several new assets.
  - a. Emergency medical equipment
    - i. Large first aid kits – donated by Blanche Parsons on behalf of Vale.
  - b. Kitchen appliances
    - i. Refrigerator – donated by Joe Correia.
    - ii. Range – donated by Rick Leger.
    - iii. 32-cup coffee percolator – donated by Jeff Henry.
  - c. Communications equipment
    - i. Cellphone signal booster – purchased by SLCOA.
    - ii. 60-foot tower to mount the booster on – donated by Rick Leger.

Luke Robinson and Walter Costa have volunteered to help install the booster on the tower.

The new booster in combination with Jeff’s mobile Wi-Fi hotspot enabled the brigade administrator to attend this meeting virtually via Zoom.

### 2. Immediate priorities:

- a) Setting up functional fire reporting and dispatch systems.

Setting Lake’s Emergency and Medical Services brochure directs cabin owners to report structural fires to Wabowden’s 911 number or Thompson Fire and Emergency Services at 204-677-7911. In practice, neither number works.

Those who call 911 on a landline phone will get a message saying “911 service is not available in this community”. Those who use a cellphone to call 911 will reach a call centre in Quebec City (Bell), Brandon, Calgary or Vancouver.

Callers who dial the Thompson number will be told that Thompson does not provide service to Setting Lake. The caller will be referred to the local service provider, Setting Lake Fire Brigade, for which there is no single number to report fires.

Instead Setting Lake relies on a cumbersome and time-consuming phone tree system; the first person who becomes aware of a fire is instructed to personally call each firefighter listed in the brochure or designate someone else to do so.

Before switching to *Dispatchme*, an automated call-out system, Paint Lake Fire Department tested the effectiveness of their phone tree system. It took 45 minutes to contact all the firefighters.

#### Reporting/Dispatch Solutions

Jeff is working with the company that provides the dispatch service and fire chiefs in Thompson, Paint Lake and Wabowden on a centralized number for reporting fires.

*Dispatchme* notifies every firefighter that a fire has broken out in less than 90 seconds. Everyone receives the message at the same time. The system works on all cellphones and landlines.

Fire fighters use their phone key pads by pressing a 1, 2 or 3:

- 1 - Responding to fire hall.
- 2 - Responding to fire scene.
- 3 - Unable to attend.

*Dispatchme* immediately informs the fire chief (or fire control) which firefighters are responding and where.

- b) Taking inventory of equipment and supplies.
- c) Assessing training needs and delivering firefighting, CPR & first aid training.

Jeff has contacted the MB Fire College to discuss training at the Fire College site in Thompson.

The group discussed how the new booster will allow firefighters to train on-line at the firehall.

The group also discussed holding CPR and first aid training at the firehall.

- d) Improving fire protection.

The brigade needs to have the capacity to fight both structural and wildfires. If a wildfire were to break out in the subdivision, it would take some time for the provincial wildfire team to get here. Local firefighters would be the first to respond.

Fire protection will be improved by expanding the brigade to include fire support volunteers, and emergency medical responders; by improving communication systems, enhancing brigade training, by acquiring appropriate firefighting equipment, and through public education.

e) Establishing on-call firefighting and emergency medical schedules.

The group discussed how a 24/7 system might work. Several people identified the need for on-call firefighters to inform fire control of the location they are travelling from and their estimated time of arrival at the fire scene. On-call firefighters also need to inform fire control if they are not available, even for a few hours, for call-out i.e. gone fishing or gone to Arizona for 3 months.

f) Improving communication with firefighters, fire support and emergency medical volunteers.

The cellphone signal booster will be mounted on the tower in the spring. The brigade will purchase a mobile booster that will double as a radio system. That will enable firefighters who have cell phones at the scene of a fire to communicate with the firehall and with each other.

MailChimp, a comprehensive email platform, will allow the fire chief to correspond quickly and easily with the brigade's entire membership, or with specific groups of members i.e. all firefighters, all fire support, all medical emergency responders.

g) Creating a co-response firefighting plan with Paint Lake and Wabowden fire departments. There are several advantages.

- For fires that grow too large for the brigade to fight alone, there's back-up close by.
- More practical experience for Setting Lake firefighters who will respond to callouts from the other communities.
- Co-training

h) Acquiring standard firefighting personal protective equipment.

Firefighters discussed their experiences at previous fires and agreed that there is a pressing need for proper turnout gear – including coats, pants, boots, helmets, gloves, hoods, and self-contained breathing apparatus or respirators that will protect them from breathing toxic smoke and fumes.

i) Acquiring standard firefighting equipment.

Firefighters noted that the brigade's equipment is not suitable for fighting fires in winter when water in tanks, pumps and hoses freezes rapidly. At the last fire, firefighters used snowblowers to contain the fire.

Jeff will investigate acquiring a pumper truck with heated plates that prevent the water tank from freezing.

j) Fundraising for new equipment.

The group discussed grants and gaming. It was noted that when an organization is just beginning to fundraise, 50/50 draws are the simplest.

k) Establishing a standard organizational structure for the brigade.

The Setting Lake Fire Brigade, like other fire departments, will operate on an established chain of command. It will create several new positions - deputy chief, captain, lieutenant, etc. Each firefighter will report to and receive orders from one person. This will prevent confusion/danger that occurs when a person receives conflicting orders.

l) Developing a risk management plan.

The group agreed there is a need to reducing the amount available fuel by brushing certain sites, including road allowances, and by removing deadwood.

Donna Henry reported that she's asked SLCOA's executive to apply for a \$500 *FireStart* Community Wildfire Protection Day grant that could be used for this purpose.

The group also discussed the managing the risk of overheated propane tanks exploding during structural or wildfires. (BLEVEs or boiling liquid expanding vapor explosions). The brigade will identify and map the location of propane tanks for each property.

The meeting adjourned at 2 PM. The next brigade meeting will be on Sunday, January 30, 2022. The focus will be to take inventory of equipment and supplies.