



## **Willis Point Volunteer Fire Department Report**

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June, 2013

Fire Chief Aran Puritch

Hello Willis Point residents,

We've had a busy spring with the continuation of capital projects, out of town training weekends, and several First Responder incidents. Practices and calls have been well attended and the crew has been doing an amazing job in helping with the various projects. What a vibrant and committed group!

### Capital Projects Update

We have two capital projects underway: the construction of an apparatus bay to replace the old rescue truck shed and the installation of a new water cistern for firefighting and emergency water purposes.

The old rescue shed has been removed and a hole is ready for the new foundation. Brenton Construction will be erecting a new metal building over the coming months. In the meantime, our rescue truck is parked at the residence of captain Al Campbell.

The large green water cistern is to be removed as it has been deemed unsuitable for continued use. This is not surprising considering it is a 50+ year-old re-purposed fuel tank of rivet construction; kind of like the Titanic. It's served Willis Point well but its time has come. What might surprise you however, is just how important this is to our fire department in that it represents one of the three vital components of: water sources, personnel, and equipment. A deficiency in any one of the three would severely compromise our ability to control a structure fire and result in the loss our recognition for the purposes of fire insurance. Some background to this follows.

### Home Fire Insurance and the Fire Department

In Willis Point, we are able to purchase fire insurance for our homes at the semi-protected rating which saves us approximately 50% on annual premiums. This is accomplished by having a fire department that conforms to standards set by the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). FUS tracks most fire departments, including ours, and publishes a grade to the insurance industry. In our case, we uphold something known as Dwelling Grade 3B. The three major requirements in keeping this grade are water sources, personnel (including training), and equipment.

Currently, the green cistern (or reservoir) is the only water source recognized by FUS for our area. The lake is too far away and the ocean is too difficult and time consuming to utilize by FUS standards. The current cistern contains roughly 20,000 gallons water, which is just enough water to control a fully involved structure fire with exposures (other nearby homes). Before we tear down the old cistern, we will install a new one that conforms to FUS and NFPA guidelines. This new cistern will be similar to some of the ones in the Highlands and be installed near the roadside about 20 meters from the tennis courts. We did consider other sites such as the logistically ideal area at Thunderbird Lane (at the foot of Willis Point Road) but settled on the one near the field, as it will be easier to install and have less visual impact. The new installation will also ensure we satisfy key requirements for accessibility, freeze resistant design, ease of use, water transport turn around time, and capacity.

### Training

Wednesday night practices have been well attended with 15 to 25 members each week. In preparation for the coming high fire risk season, the current focus is on alternative water sources (swamps, lakes, and the ocean) and portable pumps. In addition to the Wednesday night practice sessions, several of our members attended training conferences in Mill Bay, Salmon Arm and Penticton.

- Sharon and Gord visited the nearby Mill Bay fire department for training in the use of foam for fire suppression.
- Gord, James, and Brendan trained in several disciplines at the BC Firefighters Association Spring training weekend in Salmon Arm. They joined about 500 firefighters from around the province.
- Art and Matt attended the BC Training Officers Association conference in Penticton where they took courses in wildland fires, leadership, and others.
- Darren and I spent a week in Penticton for the Fire Chiefs Association of BC annual conference. This conference is attended by chief officers from most of the 400+ fire departments in the province and includes an industry trade show, leadership seminars, and training courses not to mention a fantastic opportunity to network with most of the key players in the fire service. This was a very valuable and informative conference and we're excited about attending again next year when it will be held in Victoria.

### First Responder Incidents

We had several medical calls this spring and at each incident our volunteers were able to respond within minutes, even during the weekday when most of the crew is out of the area. This underscores the importance of having a large number of members in addressing firefighter availability during that challenging time frame. Keep in mind; the ambulance usually arrives about fifteen minutes after we do. If you are interested in joining, we're always looking for new recruits.

### Keeping Safe

We're entering the high fire risk time of year so please be extra careful with outdoor barbecues or other sources of open flame. Open fires will not be permitted until after the summer. Be safe and check your smoke alarms.

Have a great summer,

Fire Chief Aran Puritch  
[www.willispoint.ca/fire](http://www.willispoint.ca/fire)