Sooke Fire Rescue Department



2015 Annual Report



From the Office of the Fire Chief

Once again, members of the Sooke Fire Rescue Department were faced with a variety of extraordinary circumstances and challenges throughout the year. 2015 proved to be a record breaking year in the number of emergency responses attended. With this increase in incident calls came a corresponding increase in requests for mutual aid from other fire departments in the area. Without their cooperation, the outcome of many of these incidents would have been much different. Whether it was dealing with a fully involved fire in an apartment building, freeing trapped occupants from a crushed motor vehicle or providing medical care to residents and visitors on hundreds of occasions, each incident demonstrated in dramatic fashion, the skills, abilities and compassion of each member of the department and our mutual aid partners. Unfortunately, not every call goes as well as one hopes. In seventeen instances this past year, firefighters were faced with a fatality involved call or cardiac arrest incident resulting in a death. While this is part of the job, it is always a difficult one. As such, mental health and counselling services are always available to all members of the department.

Not only did the career and volunteer members of the fire department work together in mitigating these emergency calls, they have also come to rely on other members of our emergency team. From the dedicated Municipal Staff that work in the Emergency Operations Centre during a crisis, to the volunteers of the Emergency Social Services group that assisted displaced residents during a major event to our volunteers in the Emergency Support Services group that assist on a day to day basis, everyone worked together to ensure the safety and well being of everyone that lives, works or visits the District of Sooke.

The annual volunteer emergency services awards banquet was one of the highlight of the year, especially as many of our past honorary firefighters and their spouses were able to attend. Of particular note was handing out the 20 Year Federal Exemplary Service award to Assistant Chief Matt Barney in recognition of his dedication to the department.

As we move into 2016, new challenges will arise and I am sure, be met with the same level of commitment as has been shown in the past. Many thousands of hours of training and emergency call attendance sometimes make the jobs we perform look easy. It is only through the constant hard work and dedication to excellence that keeps the fire department at the top of its game. Sooke should be extremely proud of its fire department and emergency services as they often are our unsung Community Heroes.

Steven Sorensen - Fire Chief - Sooke Fire Rescue Service

Cover photo: Sooke and Metchosin Recruit Firefighters demonstrate their new skills by extinguishing a car fire during their final day of training.

Sooke Fire Department Annual Report

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Sooke and Metchosin Fire Departments Joint Recruit Training Program - 2015/2016 Graduating Class

Fire Department Operations

The Sooke Fire Rescue Service faced another year of extraordinary events and major incidents. Some of the more dramatic events of 2015 included:

- January 10 A fire in a backyard workshop quickly spread, causing significant heat damage to neighbouring properties. Otter Point and Metchosin provided mutual aid.
- While trying to outrun the RCMP in a car, the male driver crashed into the yard of the Fire Chief, resulting in a short but dramatic foot chase and takedown of the offender. (This turned out to be the first of several car crashes in 2015 involving the same driver)
- January 28 A vehicle fire in the driveway of a private residence was stopped by firefighters before it spread.
- Feb 3, Sooke, East Sooke and Metchosin Fire Depts. responded to assist at a well involved structure fire in Otter Point.
- Feb 6, Sooke and Otter Point FDs responded to a structure fire. RCMP broke the patio door to pull the unconscious occupant out of the smoke filled home.
- April 10, Sooke and Metchosin FDs responded to a well involved trailer fire in the 5100 blk of Sooke Rd. The single occupant suffered burns and smoke inhalation. A space heater is the suspected cause.



Workshop fire on West Coast Road as witnessed from Sooke Harbour

- April 19 Sooke firefighters responded to an elevator rescue in a new building. This was to be the first of three similar rescues that occurred in coming weeks. As a strange coincidence, the same man was in the elevator all three times.
- May 6 A late night fire in a home on Banford Place resulted in significant damage to the rear of the structure. An electrical short circuit was the suspected cause.
- June 11 Sooke crews spent 3.5 hours assisting the Metchosin FD with a structure fire in their area.
- June 16 Sooke FD assisted many other agencies with a technical rescue challenge for an injured hiker in East Sooke Park.
- June 17 A fire in a vacant lot in the town core was quickly brought under control before it could spread. This was the first of two fires on this same property.
- June 24 A beach fire spread into the brush, nearly burning down the historic Grouse Nest Lodge. Crews did a great job



Unattended beach fire that spread to surrounding brush

in getting this quickly under control. Fortunately a passerby on the Galloping Goose trail noticed the fire just a dawn was breaking.

• July 2 – A midnight fire in the laundry room of an occupied home was brought under



Gavin receives "Hero" plaque from Chief Sorensen as proud mom looks on.

control by "Dad" after his young son noticed the fire and sounded the alarm, waking everyone up and allowing them to get safely out of the house. Firefighters finished the job. Young Gavin was later presented with a "Hero" award.

July 14 – Careless smoking was the cause of a fire in the Grant Manor apartment building that left about 18 people homeless and resulted in near million dollar loss. Multiple fire departments assisted in bringing this under control. Sooke's Emergency Program ESS volunteers provided aid, comfort and located temporary lodging for all the residents.

- Aug 19 A flash fire in a home under construction resulted in a huge flame and lots of smoke but little damage when a torch set off glue being applied to a vinyl sundeck product.
- Aug 23 Sooke FD along with several other departments provided mutual aid to Otter Point for a significant interface fire on Otter Point Road. Several residents were evacuated to the Sooke Community Hall, once again placed under the temporary care of the Sooke ESS Volunteers. Crews had to return the next day to the neighbour's property when a carelessly discarded cigarette started another fire. This one did not spread as rapidly as much of the area was already burnt from the day before.
- September had the fire department responding to many calls including 12 motor vehicle crashes. Crews were also called out Sept 21 to assist Metchosin FD with a fully involved mobile home fire.
- Dec 20 A pot of hot oil left on the stove caused significant burns to the homeowner when he tried to move the pot and spilt hot oil everywhere.
- Dec 22 Sooke assisted East Sooke FD at a well involved basement fire at a home in their area. Fortunately the young boy that was home alone safely escaped with all his pets.
- Dec 23, another forgotten pot on the stove damaged a townhouse on Grant Road
- Dec 31 The last day of the year proved a challenge for the department as they raced back and forth across town attending to two motor vehicle crashes, two medical calls and a significant chimney fire all in the space of two hours.

Fire Department Personnel

For a variety of reasons, the volunteer staffing of the fire department is one in perpetual flux. Membership in the department for 2015 was at its lowest number of suppression firefighters that have been seen in over 40 years. This coupled with the highest call volume of record certainly made for some challenging moments. As a means of bolstering the ranks, the fire department teamed up with Metchosin Fire Department and mounted an aggressive joint recruiting campaign which attracted several applicants. A total of six new candidates were taken on by each department at the end of the year and will begin their basic training in January. We are pleased to be working with Metchosin in sharing the workload of this intensive training program. A new firefighter today can expect to put in at least 200 hours of training just to receive their basic certification. It is hoped that the bond and fellowship of working with Metchosin firefighters from their first day on the job will provide many benefits in the years to come considering the close working relationship we have with our fellow firefighters just over the Sooke border.

Often times, a fire department is encouraged to simply take on more volunteer firefighters to bolster the ranks, with the common misconception that as a volunteer firefighter, there is very little cost involved. This is a lot further from fact than most people think. Many believe that a fire department can simply take on anyone that shows up at the door and is willing to help their community. While the cost of a volunteer firefighter is certainly much more economical than a career firefighter, they do not come without a price. An average volunteer firefighter in Sooke stays with the department for about three years. Those that are really keen and move on to an officer position will typically provide about ten years service. The initial first year cost to get a single volunteer firefighter recruited, trained, equipped and outfitted with safety gear to handle the job is now around \$10,000.00 per member. To maintain this firefighter each subsequent year is about \$3000. If you calculate a three year term for a typical firefighter, the cost to the District of Sooke for each firefighter is nearly \$20,000.00. When this volunteer leaves, the entire process and associated costs start all over again. This means that a typical budget for an annual recruit class of six new volunteer firefighters will cost between \$40,000.00 and \$50,000.00 depending on the condition of some of the safety gear that can be passed on to the new member.

As of December 31, 2015, the Sooke Fire Rescue Service had the following membership:

Career Staff	5.6 persons: Fire Chief, Deputy Chief (Prevention), Assistant Chief (Training), 2 firefighters and a clerical support person.
Volunteer Firefighters:	24 Members: 1 Captain, 4 Lieutenants, 18 Firefighters distributed as follows: 16 @ Station 1, 3 @ Station 2 and 5 @ the Sunriver Muster Station
Volunteer Support Services:	9 Members: 1 Assistant Chief, 6 fire and life safety educators, 1 fire inspector, and 1 radio operator.

Fire Prevention, Public Education and Support Services

Approximately 900 hours was devoted to community fire and life safety prevention programs and community events in 2015. This was accomplished with school and businesses programs, station tours, and displays at events such as the Rotary Auction and Canada Day as well as many training sessions. One of the more satisfying experiences occurred when a group of fire department members offered to decontaminate a few possessions for each of the victims of the Grant Manor Apartment fire. While each person only got a few items, they were extremely grateful for what they did receive and for the compassion shown by the firefighters in ensuring that these personal treasures were properly cleaned so they could go home again.

Members of the fire department again volunteered at many community events and spearheaded a major fundraising event for the Sooke Food Bank. The fire department formed an integral part in organizing the annual Christmas Food Drive at which firefighters and friends collected in excess of \$100,000.00 in cash, food and toys for the Sooke Christmas Bureau. This again goes to show the incredible generosity of the residents and the dedication of this fire department to the community.

Activity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Fire Investigations	16	15	16	26	34	30	27	30	51	26	67
Daycare/ School	9	20	8	19	13	19	13	13	13	12	8
Multi-Family	12	16	8	8	6	6	25	21	22	29	26
Business	83	106	87	50	103	126	144	160	161	156	164
Public Assembly	17	35	34	35	19	39	38	48	49	41	58
Small Home Based Business					34	49	38	56	54	40	33
Miscellaneous	1	6	0	0	8	7	8	22	12	9	3
Re-Inspection	6	10	2	7	10	31	53	79	75	62	62
Oil Furnace or Oil Tank	45	32	39	31	10	26	12	8	13	22	6
Class A Burning Permit Inspection	7	12	12	N/A	1	18	23	16	12	13	5
Construction Site Inspection	9	9	43	27	15	27	44	12	28	20	18
Total Inspections	189	246	233	177	219	348	398	435	439	404	383
Plan Reviews	3	22	27	13	8	15	8	7	7	8	4
Subdivision / Rezoning Referrals	30	39	29	62	31	33	51	36	58	47	25
Fire Safety Plan Reviews							3	6	4	5	7
TOTAL ALL	194	231	297	322	221	260	417	448	504	498	454

Fire Investigation:

A requirement of the BC Fire Services Act is to ensure that all fires are investigated to determine their cause and origin. Not only does this assist in finding out if the fire was set on purpose or through accidental causes, the information gathered can often be used as the basis to determine product and consumer safety. This information is then put into a national data bank to assist researchers in preventing future fires.

Ten people were injured in the 67 reportable fires investigated this year. In addition, 2 firefighters suffered injuries that required transport to hospital. 2015 recorded about \$1,200,000.00 in property losses, however many more millions were saved by the actions of the fire department. The largest dollar loss for 2015 involved the fire at the Grant Manor apartment building in May. Within the District of Sooke, the following fire investigations were completed and reported to the BC Office of the Fire Commissioner:

Туре	Human caused	Arson	Equipment Failure	Undetermined	Natural or Weather related	TOTAL
Residential Structure Fire	3	2	2	2	0	9
Commercial Structure Fire	2	0	0	0	0	2
Outdoor Fire	16	3	5	2	0	26
Vehicle Fire	1	4	4	2	0	11
Appliance Fire	13	1	5	0	0	19
Number of Re	eportable Fi	ires for 2	015 (67)	Table 2		

Туре	Minor Injury No Hospital Stay	Serious Injury 1-3 days hospital	Significant Injury 4 days + hospital	Fire related fatality				
Residential Fire	3	3	1	0				
Commercial Fire	1	2	0	0				
Outdoor Fire	0	0	0	0				
Vehicle Fire	0	0	0	0				
Appliance Fire	0	0	0	0				
Firefighter Injury		2	0	0				
Causality Report for 2015 (10) Table 3								

Firefighters from Sooke and Metchosin Fire Departments attended a multi-vehicle fire incident in December



Fire Department Training

Thirty three volunteer members of the Sooke Fire Rescue Department, both suppression crews and support service members participated in excess of 6000 hours of training and course instruction in 2015. Of the members, three of the volunteer firefighters contributed over 300 hours each, another eight members exceeded 200 hours each and fifteen members exceeded 100 hours. Another 1600 hours was completed by the five career members. Despite having fewer members in 2015 than in 2014, this exceeds last years total. What an amazing accomplishment and great indicator of the quality of the training programs as well as the support and participation of such a dedicated crew of firefighters and support staff.

The year, only four of the volunteer firefighters did not qualify for the \$500.00 training stipend incentive program. Of the four, one was a new member that joined the department late in the year; two were on extended leave of absence due to work commitments, leaving only one that did not meet the minimum standard set. As part of the incentive program, each member was also entitled to a payout for each emergency call attended. This year, each firefighter was eligible to receive \$1.57 per general page call attended.

Sooke Firefighters are trained to the NFPA 1001 requirements for Firefighter Level 1 and Level 2. This is in keeping with the newly introduced Provincial Firefighter Training Competency Playbook. All officers are also trained or working towards the qualifications that the Playbook mandates as the minimum requirement for these positions.

Hazardous Materials: There are currently two career members and one volunteer member on the CRD Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Team, all trained to the Technician Level. While a few other members are also Technicians, they are currently not part of the CRD program due to the time commitments involved in maintaining their qualifications for the team. As part of the NFPA 1001 curriculum, all active, level 2 firefighters as members of Sooke Fire Rescue are certified at the Operations Level. New, first year members of the department receive training to the Awareness or entry Level requirements.

Technical Rescue covers tasks such as rope rescue and confined space rescue. Rope rescue can involve high angle and low slope type situations and confined space involves anything, (usually underground) in which there is limited access situations. This could be a sewer lift station, an underground hydro vault or below deck on a boat. Worksafe BC has stringent requirements in dealing with these types of situations and training for this usually takes place on weekends due the complex nature of the tasks involved. At least one refresher course is offered each calendar year to ensure certification is maintained.

The planned hosting of what would have been the third annual Juan de Fuca Regional Fire Training



Six firefighters from Sooke travelled to Panama to train local firefighters in auto extrication skills. This was the second such trip made by Sooke FD. While there, crews assisted at a large warehouse fire.

Weekend did not take place due to complications with the Justice Institute of BC. This was a huge disappointment to all the departments involved

Apparatus and Equipment:

The Sooke Fire Rescue Departments current fleet consists of the following:

Engine 1	2006 E-One Pumper	Station 1			
Engine 2	2003 Freightliner – ALF Pumper	Station 2			
Engine 3 (Reserve)	1999 Freightliner – Hub Pumper	Station 1			
Ladder 1	2006 Rosenbauer Ladder Truck	Station 1			
Tender 1	2002 Freightliner with 1985 body work	Station 1			
Brush 2	2002 Freightliner Forest Fire Unit	Station 2			
Average Age of Heavy Apparatus Fleet is 13 Years with 10 years being the newest and 17					

years being the oldest in duty.

Car 1	2009 Chevrolet pickup truck	Fire Chief
Battalion 1	2011 Chevrolet pickup truck	Duty officer/Inspector
Squad 1	2003 Chevrolet utility vehicle	Station 1/duty crew
Squad 2	1998 Chevrolet van	Sunriver
Utility 1	2001 Chevrolet pickup	Station 1

While the overall fleet is in relatively good shape, increased call volume and age of vehicles is starting to show in some of the apparatus. Maintenance costs have increased substantially this year and parts are getting difficult to find on some of the older units. The water tank on the tender truck is now over 30 years old and once again is beginning to crack and leak. By the year 2018, the pumper fleet will no longer meet Fire Underwriters Survey requirements as the two Freightliner Pumpers (1999 and 2003 models) will no longer qualify for front line service, leaving Station 2 without a front line engine. Squad 1 is due for replacement in 2016 with a new heavy duty pick up truck. The current proposed apparatus replacement plan calls for the purchase of a new larger water tender in 2017 to replace Tender 1. A new Engine is needed in 2019 to replace Engine 3 and maintain the current Fire Underwriters Survey recommendation that Sooke maintain a fleet consisting of 2 front line engines, 1 second line engine and 1 reserve engine.

While most of the day to day maintenance is done by the career staff, the overall mechanical work is done by one of our volunteer firefighters acting as an in house mechanic, providing this service at a very reasonable hourly fee. Major mechanical work such as transmissions, pumps, brakes etc. is contracted out with the majority of this work being done by Victoria Fire Departments certified fire apparatus mechanic.

Upcoming items will be replacement of all of the fire department breathing apparatus as these will all expire over the next two years. The compressor to fill the air bottles is also at the end of its life. Additionally all of the radios and pagers will need to be replaced by 2018 due to changes and upgrades to the CREST radio system.

The newest (and oldest) addition to the Sooke Fire Department fleet was the acquisition of this 1998 Van from the Langford FD. Staffed by volunteers operating from the Sunriver Muster Station, it was used to replace the old converted BC Ambulance that was previously stationed here.



February 2015

Emergency Incidents and Response

The year 2015 was one with many challenges. From a major fire emergency in an occupied apartment block, to dozens of motor vehicle crashes and rescues, to an increase in medical calls all put members of the department to the test. A long hot summer drought certainly added to the concerns in the community with several incidents being contained just in time before they became significant wildland/interface fire emergencies. With all of this, also came a remarkable increase in emergency and non-emergency calls with the department now nearing 1000 incidents per year. Interestingly enough, when averaged over a 25 year period, this increase works out to a constant 10% upward movement in call volume. This can likely be attributed to increases in population, density and expectations of the citizens for its emergency services.

There are several factors that help determine how an emergency service is operating. Included in an analysis would be: are the number of calls increasing or decreasing, what types of calls are being received, how many firefighters are responding and what time of day are most of the incidents occurring? These are all considerations that can be used in long term planning. The following charts and graphs demonstrate some of these statistics that could be helpful in this decision making processes.

Ten Year Fire Department Response Comparison

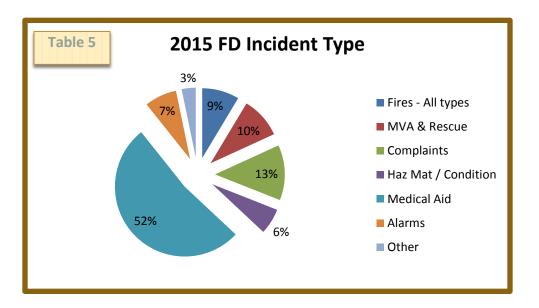
Table 4

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
44	33	38	47	57	42	66	52	78	57	82	Fires - All types
79	80	74	71	65	78	75	60	67	81	91	MVA & Rescue
99	133	225	221	292	213	170	134	106	102	122	Complaints
34	60	23	23	47	32	45	42	46	33	57	Hazardous Condition
266	306	310	313	315	232	398	360	441	380	498	Medical Aid
58	78	79	56	43	63	79	69	73	43	71	Alarms
28	24	32	21	32	33	34	48	16	19	31	Other
608	714	781	752	851	695	873	771	827	715	952	Total

Those numbers indicated in **RED** are the highest numbers recorded for each category.

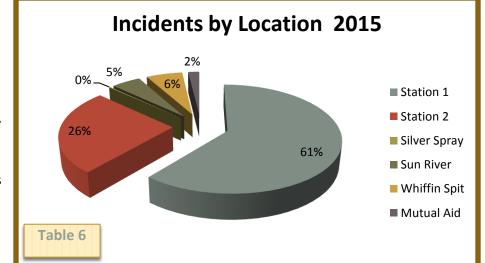
Incident Response Graphs

Medical calls still account for the majority of emergency responses within the fire service, and the Sooke Fire Rescue Department is no exception with approximately ½ the annual call volume attributed to first response type calls. Of the medical calls responded to, 16 incidents, or 3% of these had crews dealing with a sudden death situation. The department has an active crtical incident stress team to assist members in dealing with these types of traumatic events. MVA's & Rescue took 10% of all calls while fire accounted for9% of the 2015 total. 13% of calls were complaints with most of those tied to matters related to the outdoor burning bylaw.



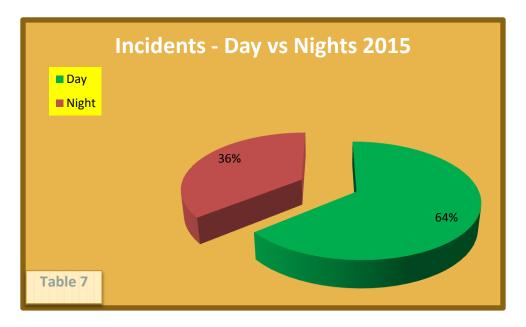
As expected, the majority of emergency incidents (61%) occur within Station 1's primary response zone as most of the population and density are in this area. Station 2's response zone received 26% of the calls in 2015 however any day time calls are generally handled from Station 1 due to the lack of daytime staffing. The majority of the motor vehicle collisions that occur are within the Station 2 coverage area. 6% of calls came from the Whiffin Spit area and 5% from the

Sunriver area. Only, 2% of the total calls were for mutual aid and there were only 2 calls occurring in the Silver Spray neighbourhood. Again, these numbers have been fairly consistent over the past few years

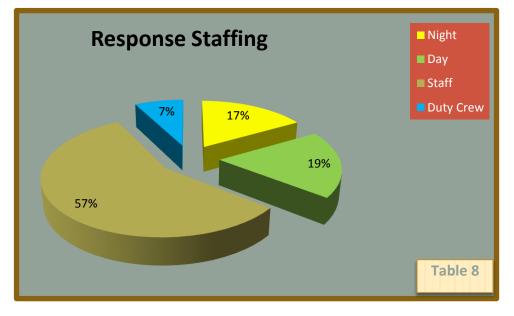


Incident Response Graphs

64% of all calls attended by the Sooke Fire Rescue Department in 2015 occurred between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, with the remaining 36% between the hours of 6:00 pm and 6:00 am. This split of about 2/3 of calls in the daytime and 1/3 of calls at night has been fairly consistent over the past several years. (Table 7)

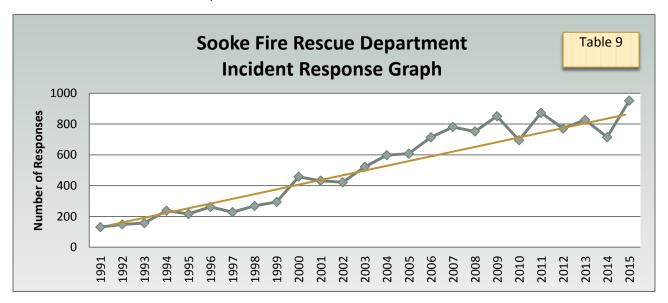


As for incident attendance, 57% of all calls are handled by just the career staff or the assigned duty officer. 7% of calls are attended to by the night time duty crew and duty officer. Of the calls received between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, 19% of these incidents required a full general page out of all fire department members. Of the calls between 6:00 pm and 6:00 am, 17% of these incidents required a full fire department response. Therefore, one could say that an average of about 1 in 5 calls results in a full fire department page out, with the remainder handled by whoever may be on an assigned work or duty shift. (Table 8)



Incident Response Graphs

Table 9 shows a graph depicting the Sooke Fire Rescue Departments total incident response numbers over a 25 year period. Beginning with less than 200 calls in 1991, the department is now closing in on 1000 responses in a year. While there are clearly some peaks and valleys demonstrated here, what is clearly evident is that over the long term, an annual increase of about 10% in calls can be expected.



Over the past ten years, statistical analysis indicates that actual fires are the fastest rising type of call faced by the department. While there are definite highs and lows each year, mostly due to weather conditions in the summer, fire calls have been increasing at an average rate of 11%.

Medical first responder calls are increasing at the next highest rate. This likely can be attributed to a number of factors including an aging and growing population, and higher expectations for service by the public. From an average of about 300 calls per year in 2006, this number is now nearing 500 calls annually or an average increase of 6% on a ten year average.

While it may seem that motor vehicle crashes are a common and increasing problem in Sooke, data shows only a slight increase in this category over the past ten years. However when compared to twenty years ago, the numbers do jump dramatically showing a 300% increase from 1995 to 2015.

Fuel spills, downed power lines and other hazardous condition calls has shown an increase as well. From only a handful in the 1990's the department now handles an average of 40 to 60 of these calls per year. Community growth and more concerns for environmental protection are the most likely reasons for increases in this category.

Enforcement of the DoS burning regulations shows some interesting data. In the most recent years, a sharp drop in the number of complaints has been noted. From a peak of nearly 300 complaints in 2009, the numbers have decreased and leveled off to about 125 annually.

Sooke Emergency Program – Emergency Social Services (ESS) Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

The Sooke Emergency Program continues to move forward in preparing the community as well as municipal staff and volunteers in being prepared to deal with major emergencies. During 2015, the Sooke Emergency Program had two activations. The first was to deal with the 19 displaced residents of the Grant Manor apartment fire. A large contingent of ESS volunteers arrived in the middle of night to assist the traumatized residents with rides to the Emergency Reception Centre and then working to secure temporary lodgings for anyone needing a place to stay. The Prestige Hotel provided great support in finding rooms for everyone involved. Due to the complexities of this incident and the issues involved, members of the Emergency Program were involved in this situation for many weeks following the actual event.

A second activation occurred when the Sooke team was requested to assist the Otter Point Fire Department and the JdF Emergency Program in setting up another Emergency Reception Centre to look after residents evacuated during a large interface fire in their area. Under a current agreement, the Sooke Community Hall will be used as a reception centre for the entire region during any wildfire emergency. Once again staff and volunteers stepped up to the plate to assist those in need.

Currently the Sooke Emergency Social Services group consists of 24 active volunteers along with 2 dedicated emergency radio operators. The Sooke EOC is equipped with a complete back up radio system including HAM radios that can be utilized should regular means of communication fail during a catastrophic event. Much of this equipment has also been installed in the EOC Mobile Command Unit that was donated to Sooke by the Langford Fire Department last year.

A highlight of the year had to be the extremely successful Vancouver Island Emergency Preparedness Conference that was hosted here in Sooke. Well over 200 participants attended the weekend event with a host of speakers providing insight into all types of emergency preparedness. A trade show on the Friday night of the conference was filled all of the conference rooms of the hotel. As an added bonus, the conference earned sufficient profit that a 40 foot shipping container was purchased and delivered to Sooke's public works yard. This container will gradually be filled with emergency supplies to take care of any residents in need that may affect those living on the east side of Sooke River. This container will compliment the



one already in operation and stored at the District of Sooke offices.

View of the interface fire on Otter Point Rd that resulted in the evacuation of residents in the area along with the activation of the Sooke Emergency Program.