

100 Mile Free Press PRINT THIS

Dry hydrants improve water access



By 100 Mile House Free Press

Published: **October 09, 2014 01:00 PM**

Updated: **October 09, 2014 07:477 AM**

By Roy Allan

For the past 41 years, the members of the Watch Lake-North Green Lake community have worked together to create a fire department of which they are justifiably very proud.

Combining their many talents and assisted by donations of equipment and materials, both fire halls were completely re-built in 2009. This provided all-season training areas and larger storage facilities to accommodate the increased size of newer vehicles.

Through the careful juggling of finances, the aging fleet of trucks was slowly replaced. To optimize the efficiency of this fleet, some of the vehicles serve two purposes.

The two one-ton pickups are used for rapid transport to an emergency scene by the first responders. In summer both vehicles also carry a tote containing 250 gallons of water for the rapid suppression of spot fires in hard to reach areas. One of the trucks can also be affixed with a snow plough to clear the parking lots and to clear a path into fire or medical aid areas during the winter months.

One of the tenders has rear-mounted pumps that can be used for firefighting thus turning the unit into a pumper for short-term use.

Even though the community is on the shores of two lakes, the rapid access to water can be a major problem. In total, the trucks carry a total of 7,250 gallons of water and an emergency tank holding another 8,000 gallons of water was installed in the water system at Hall #1.

This supply could be quickly exhausted in the event of a major fire and another supply must be available.

The pumper trailer can fill the largest of the tenders in slightly more than three minutes, but the lakes are inaccessible in early and late winter when the ice is unsafe. Furthermore, WorkSafeBC regulations will soon preclude entering the water or working on the ice surface to place the suction lines for the pumps.

To solve this problem, the department has been working on the installation of two dry hydrants for the past year. Dry hydrants are pipe lines that are dug into the lakeshore and run out into the lake at a depth sufficient to lie below the thickness of ice in the winter providing a year-round source of water.

This system has been successfully installed in other local areas, so research began to find suitable locations here. Level road access and adequate water depth were important criteria in determining the appropriate locations.

The permit applications with various government departments take far longer than the simple digging of a hole in which to lay a pipe. Careful attention also had to be paid to past research in order to avoid known sites with an archaeological significance.

In the end, Accesses #20 near 83 Mile Road and #14 just east of the Y intersection turned out to be the most suitable.

With the paperwork done and materials purchased both hydrants were built by Brian Beherrall in one day at each location. Screens were floated in the lake on either side of the excavation to keep the disturbance of the lake bed to a minimum and the units were completely assembled on location then carefully placed in the excavation.

Subsequent testing has shown that the two four inch lines can be used simultaneously allowing for the filling of two tenders at the same time if necessary. To guard against vehicles accidentally hitting the hydrants, short pieces of culvert filled with gravel will be placed to surround the units.

It took a lot of work by a lot of people, but this community has created the best possible fire/emergency service for a community of this size on a very modest budget.

Roy Allan is the president of the Watch Lake-North Green Lake Volunteer Fire Department.

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