

DATE: May 8, 2018

FILE: 7200-01

TO: Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee

Supported by James Warren
Acting Chief Administrative
Officer

FROM: James Warren
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

J. Warren

RE: Fire Department Road Rescue Service- Outside of Service Area

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update and provide the Chair and Directors with information and background regarding road rescue services provided by the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) fire departments, outside of their local service area.

Recommendation from the Acting Chief Administrative Officer:

This staff report is provided for information only

Executive Summary

Early in 2018, the Fire Chiefs Association of BC (FCABC) received funding from Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to research and develop a proposed framework providing governance for the provision of road rescue within the Province, and more specifically; road rescue provided outside of fire protection Local Service Areas (LSA). Firewise Consulting was engaged by FCABC for this effort.

On March 5, 2018, the Chair of the CVRD Board received a letter (attached as Appendix A) from Firewise Consulting seeking comment.

Current Road-Rescue Delivery Model

Currently road rescue services provided outside of a fire protection LSA are provided by a responding fire department that is registered with EMBC to receive Task Numbers. The Task Number is confirmation that the responding fire department members have liability insurance and Workers Compensation coverage through EMBC while providing road rescue outside of their LSA. These protections are not otherwise available to the fire department members outside of the LSA. Further, fire departments that are registered with EMBC are eligible for operational cost recovery.

The current practice for road rescue response outside of an LSA includes:

- Dispatch receives a request from RCMP or BC Ambulance Service, that road-rescue is required outside of a fire protection LSA.
- Based on the location of the incident, Dispatch contacts the responding fire department, and initiates the road rescue response.
- While the fire department is on route, Dispatch contacts EMBC and secures a Task Number for that response, on behalf of the fire department.
- With a Task Number secured, the fire department provides the road rescue service.
- Following the incident, the fire department submits a claim for operational cost recovery, based on established Provincial rates.

Of the CVRD fire services, currently only the Oyster River Fire Rescue department provides road rescue service outside of their LSA. Section 6(2)(a) of the Black Creek-Oyster Bay Fire Services Administration Bylaw, Bylaw No. 293, 2014 authorizes the fire department to respond outside of the LSA if authorized by EMBC or any other provincial emergency agency. Hornby Island Fire Rescue and Denman Island Fire Rescue also provide road rescue services but do not leave their respective LSA.

Of note; within the regional district, road rescue is also provided by:

- Courtenay Fire;
- Comox Fire;
- Cumberland Fire/Rescue; and
- Union Bay Fire Rescue.

Staff discussions with the fire chiefs of each of the above, confirms that without the benefit of the protections provided by a Task Number, they will not be able to provide road rescue outside of their jurisdictions.

Fire Department protections

The Oyster River Fire Chief and the Manager of Fire Services concur that the current road rescue delivery model is suitable in that it provides the necessary protections for the firefighters, which are not otherwise available outside of the LSA.

For the regional district and the Oyster River Fire Rescue department, the Task Number and its protections are a crucial element in the provision of the service outside of the LSA. Without those protections, the regional district would have to either; reconsider provision of road rescue outside of the LSA, or seek alternative authority to secure those protections.

Due to the consultant's timeframe for submissions staff has responded to the consultant's letter expressing the importance of the liability and Workers Compensation protections provided by the Task Number.

Prepared by:

J. Bast

James Bast
Manager of Fire Services

Concurrence:

T. Ian Smith

T. Ian Smith, MCE
General Manager of Community Services

Attachments: Appendix A – “Firewise Consulting Letter Dated March 5, 2018”



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March 5, 2018

Chair Bruce Joliffe
Comox Valley Regional District
600 Comox Road
Courtenay, BC V9N 3P6

Comox Valley Regional District

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T. DIRECTOR SITE

cc: RDYSON, JWARREN

Addressing the need for a concerted approach to the oversight of road rescue services, Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) has provided funding to the Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia (FCABC) to research and develop a proposed framework providing governance for the provision of road rescue within the province.

The proposed framework will assist EMBC in ensuring an acceptable and sustainable level of service is provided by road rescue service providers in British Columbia.

Many local governments are stakeholders in the provision of road rescue outside their municipal boundaries. Local Governments are encouraged to actively participate in the information gathering segment of the project to ensure all issues, service delivery models, reimbursement process, rates of reimbursement, plus safety, WorkSafeBC compliance, and other concerns for the provision of road rescue service will be included. The stakeholder groups will include, but not be limited to, provincial and local government agencies, existing service providers, fire departments, police agencies the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) and EMBC.

The Road Rescue Equipment and Governance Framework information gathering process is not intended to intimidate, criticize or reduce the service but rather the intention is to gather information on how the current service is structured and provided so improvements can be implemented.

The desired outcome of increased Public Safety will be attained through patience, respect, accountability, and the sharing of information between all current and future participants striving to achieve continuous improvement of road rescue services within British Columbia.

Information from concerned parties is solicited, and participants offering information will have their opinions valued, and respected, along with appreciation of their time as they contribute information or provide comments.

BACKGROUND

In British Columbia, there is no legislated requirement to have a fire department. It is purely a local government decision to establish and support a fire department. Likewise, there is no legislated requirement for road rescue in support of the BCAS, the Coroner Service, and the RCMP who, do have a provincial mandate to provide services.

EMBC created the Road Rescue Safety Program Guide¹ in 2009 and has policy 2.07 Road and Medical Rescue² in place for out-of-district response where no local government service coverage is available. EMBC is very strict in its interpretation of this policy and assumes no responsibility for establishing road rescue services under the **Emergency Program Act**³. EMBC does, however, provide some operational cost recovery to road rescue service providers who are registered with them and have the appropriate equipment and maintain a training and skills maintenance program to a recognized standard.

Many municipalities, regional districts, and improvement districts have chosen to provide road rescue inside their established fire department service areas (in-district) and fund the service through local taxation. Often these fire departments respond to accidents out of their district when requested by the RCMP or the BCAS. In some areas of the Province road, rescue services are provided by other agencies even if there is an established fire department. These other providers include Rescue Societies, and Search and Rescue Groups.

As an elected official responsible for setting policy for the fire department in your community, you may have an interest in this matter. If you have comments on the oversight, administration, and provision of road rescue in the rural areas of the Province outside of your jurisdiction, we would like to hear from you.

Please send your comments to glen@firewiseconsulting.com or davelferguson@shaw.ca or by fax to 250-929-7334.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Glen Sanders
President

¹Source: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/volunteers/road_rescue_safety_program_guide.pdf

² Source: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/policies/207_road_and_medical_rescue_policy_aug_2016.pdf

³ http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96111_01