



Beaver Creek Volunteer Fire Department (BCVFD) FAQ

The 2023 Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Financial Plan includes the transition of the Beaver Creek Volunteer Fire Department (BCVFD) Fire Chief from a volunteer to a full-time position. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) have been developed to provide the community with some background on the department itself.

BACKGROUND

- The BCVFD Fire Service Area was established by Bylaw in 1977.
- The area protected is approximately 2,410 ha. (5,955 acres).
- The population of the service area is approximately 2,946.
- Properties protected are approximately 1,328.
- Current number of volunteer firefighters is 26 (ages range from 20-75 and years of service range from 0-45).
- Apparatus - five apparatus consisting of two fire engines, two rescue trucks, and one utility vehicle.

SERVICES PROVIDED

In 2022, how many calls did we respond to?

- ***The Beaver Creek Fire Department responded to 157 incidents (the five-year average is 181 incidents per year)***

In 2022, what was the breakdown of calls that our department responded to?

- BCVFD responded to eight structure fires in 2022.
- BCVFD responded to 83 Medical First Responder calls in 2022.
- BCVFD responded to four alarm calls.
- BCVFD responded to 19 Mutual Aid/Automatic Aid calls.
- The remainder include (not limited to) motor vehicle incidents, backyard burns, fuel spills, gas leaks, and public service.

What is Mutual Aid (MA) and Automatic Mutual Aid (AMA), and what is the value for Beaver Creek?

- **MA** allows BCVFD, once on scene at an incident, to request assistance from a partner department when there is a need for a specific type of equipment, apparatus, or firefighters. Most often used for requesting water tenders during operations away from fire hydrant-supported areas.
- **AMA** is used only for structure fires. The partner departments have agreed to be dispatched to these incidents without waiting for the request of the home department, all departments are dispatched at the same time. Each department responds with a predetermined apparatus and crew.
- BCVFD has MA and AMA agreements with Sproat Lake VFD, Cherry Creek VFD, and Port Alberni FD. Beyond having increased service levels, MA and AMA save residents on insurance costs. This comes from improved Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) insurance grading that is associated with having the benefit of extra equipment, apparatus, and firefighters.

How many MA and AMA incidents did we have? How many did we go to?

- For the five-year period January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2022, there were:
 - We supported four requests for Mutual Aid from BCVFD – two for PAFD, one for CCVFD and one for SLVFD.
 - We received Mutual Aid support three times. BCVFD requested – one for PAFD (ladder truck) and one each for CCVFD and SLVFD (water tenders).
 - We supported AMA 55 times. 86 AMA requests outside of Beaver Creek – 69 for PAFD (BCVFD did not attend 31), 11 for SLVFD and six for CCVFD.
 - We received AMA support 30 times. BCVFD had 30 structure fires with AMA attendance.

Does Beaver Creek receive any financial compensation from the City for MA and AMA callouts?

- No, the mutual benefit of having crews and apparatus respond outweigh the cost. Beaver Creek and its partners, including Port Alberni, have improved FUS insurance grading, with credit given for AMA.



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Are we subsidizing the City when utilizing our fire department in MA and AMA calls so that the City may provide a higher level of fire protection for industry or more development?

- No. MA and AMA result in better service across the entire Alberni Valley.

What are medical response callouts, and what does the fire department provide during these callouts?

- BCVFD, as First Responders, may provide an initial assessment of patients and immediate intervention (CPR/AED, oxygen therapy, epi-pen, Narcan, etc.) as required. They may also extricate patients and assist ambulance attendants.

Do our firefighters receive medical training, i.e. basic paramedic training?

- Yes, BCVFD are trained to the EMA-FR standard (First Responder is optional training for firefighters). Several BCVFD firefighters have progressed to higher levels of paramedic training on their own and have become employed by BCAS.

What 911 callouts does the Beaver Creek Volunteer Fire Department (BCVFD) have to respond to?

- The BCVFD is dispatched for a great variety of emergency incidents. The top callouts received are:
 - Medical First Responder – 52% (assisting ambulance and providing initial life-saving interventions like CPR)
 - Automatic Aid Fires – 12% (assisting partner departments with structure fires)
 - Motor Vehicle Incidents – 7% (scene stabilization and extrication with “Jaws-of-Life”)
 - Alarm calls – 3% (home or business fire alarms systems, both actual fire and accidental activations)
 - Other – 29% Backyard burns, fuel spills, natural gas leaks and public service make up the remainder.

Are there calls that the fire department (BCVFD) does not have to respond to?

- The only callouts where the BCVFD can use discretion on attending are for calls outside of their ACRD defined Fire Service Area boundaries. These callouts require the approval of the CAO or Board of Directors.

FULL-TIME FIRE CHIEF

What is the vision for the BCVFD, and why is this first step of hiring a full-time chief important in achieving that vision?

- The BCVFD has evolved into a modern department with complex regulatory requirements for equipment, training, responding, and reporting—attending to not only fires but medical aid, road rescue, wildland interface, and many other calls. It has been determined that the volunteer chief model does not provide sufficient time resources to support the department in meeting these regulatory requirements.
- The Fire Chief is responsible for ensuring that the BCVFD is always ready to perform its tasks and deliver service to the community. This includes meeting complex regulatory standards for equipment and training, risk management, stricter occupational health, and safety regulations, as well as managing legal risks.
- The Fire Chief manages all department volunteers. This includes hiring, training, and performance management.
- Attracting, training, and retaining volunteers is challenging. Locally, the population is either aging/retiring or they are experiencing fewer stable, local, long-term employment opportunities, fewer affordable housing options and less time to give back to the community. A full-time Fire Chief will have more time to support and retain current and future volunteers.
- In addition to meeting regulatory requirements, the Fire Chief will have time to support improvements in the delivery of regional fire protection services. This will include an exploration of sharing services, such as organizational management, training program management, central bulk purchasing, fire prevention/educational programs, and fire and life safety inspection.
- The BCVFD volunteer Fire Chief has done an excellent job. Still, he cannot devote the required time and energy needed to do everything that must be done to ensure that the department is meeting its fundamental statutory and regulatory requirements. It is no longer realistic to have these requirements addressed in a volunteer capacity.

Has the ACRD reviewed the Fire Department Activities prior to coming to this conclusion?

- Yes. A fire service review was completed in 2021, outreach with BCVFD volunteers took place in 2022, and service options were discussed with the ACRD Board in early 2023.



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FINANCIAL

What is the estimated cost to the average residential homeowner for the Fire Chief Position?

- The average residential assessed value in 2023 in Beaver Creek is \$688,000. The property tax implication for this position based on the average residential property would be approximately \$88 per year.

What is the estimated cost to the average residential homeowner for the Beaver Creek Fire Department operations?

- The average residential assessed value in 2023 in Beaver Creek is \$688,000. The property tax implication for all departmental operations based on the average residential property would be approximately \$377 per year.

What would the impact be on insurance costs for residential property owners if there was no fire protection in Beaver Creek?

- Insurance premiums depend on numerous factors. It is hard to estimate how much insurance costs would increase, however costs would escalate significantly without fire protection. If you would like to know the impact to your insurance costs with no fire protection, we encourage to reach out to your insurance provider.

If you would like more information, or if you would like to provide feedback to us regarding this topic, please contact us at **bcvfdinfo@acrd.bc.ca**