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Tri-Lakes Tribune

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

WINTER 2017

Fire Chief's Report

Wow – what a summer. Please, don't go back and read my report last spring. It could not have been more wrong! We came out of last winter with lots of snow and moisture and then it stopped. There are less than a handful of years in the last 100 drier than 2017. Not the type of record we would like to set or company we would like to keep!

Once again, we spent the summer holding our breath hoping the spark didn't happen here so we could go help somewhere else. And help, we did! Twelve of our volunteers spent time on the Alice Creek Fire with many of them making multiple tours. Our trucks and people made significant contributions allowing volunteer forces



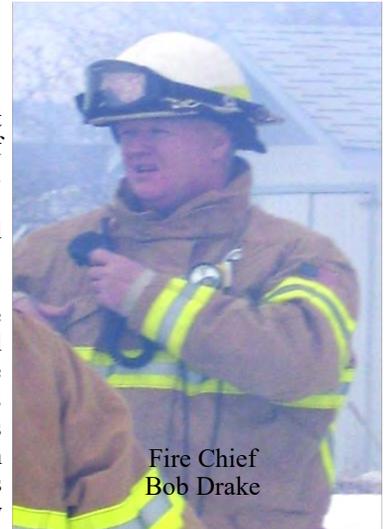
to save the MDOT section house complex, thousands of acres of pasture, many ranch homes and buildings, and kept the fire west of Highway 200. Our four tactical tenders continue to prove their worth time and again with their amazing capabilities.

Several significant fires occurred in our district with the potential of threatening hundreds of homes this last summer. If not for quick, decisive, aggressive, and coordinated attacks, we could have been faced with a catastrophic fire season. The unwavering support, from our mutual aid partners and DNRC, helped us be successful! We owe them many thanks and our unwavering support back when they need it.

Montana MUSSEL RESPONSE



The invasive species issue (I am going to try to be politically correct here!) continues to be a significant challenge. Taking away our water supply points fed from Canyon Ferry Lake makes fighting fires dramatically more challenging. We seldom use water directly from Canyon Ferry Lake due to steep slopes and large variations in water levels. The maximum distance (under ideal conditions) water can be pumped, from a water source at this elevation, is about 15 feet. Canyon Ferry Lake is not a good water source but the canal system it feeds is awesome. The canal system runs right through our district with siphons providing pressurized water supply points and miles of ditches with water we could use in the past. Efforts to contain the mussels have made us like the proverbial Typhoid Mary. Our partners continually asked where our water came from because they did not want us contaminating their equipment with water from Canyon Ferry. To help with our situation, DNRC provided a decontamination spot where our trucks were filled with a highly concentrated bleach solution, held for a predetermined amount of time, and recycled for the next truck to use. We cycled all our trucks through this process and refilled them with only well water. We now use only well water sources or water from Blue River Trout Streams not connected to Canyon Ferry Lake. This issue affected us on the Alice Creek Fire as we could not take water from one side of the Continental Divide to the other. One day we



Fire Chief
Bob Drake



What does it mean to be protected by Volunteers?

Many people are surprised when they find out the first person coming through the door to help them is a volunteer firefighter or a volunteer EMT (emergency medical technician). The majority of the area and population of Montana are served by volunteer firefighter/EMTs. According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, of the total 29,727 fire departments in the United States, 19,762 are all volunteer; 5,421 are mostly volunteer; 1,893 are mostly career; and 2,651 are all career.



The power of volunteers is overwhelming to me. They come and help because they want to. Their can-do attitude is displayed on every call. They just want to help and go back to what they were doing. Not only does a volunteer show up with his or her firefighting skills, they



bring their day job experience with them also. We currently have an engineer, a banker, an investment broker, an electrician, air-frame mechanic, three computer technicians, two building contractors, an insulation contractor, two big truck managers, two nurses, several retired folks that we are not sure what they do, a mine closure specialist, two college students, several business owners, a building maintenance specialist, a radio system specialist, an accountant, and more. There are not many problems that we can't figure out and if we don't know, we probably know someone who does.

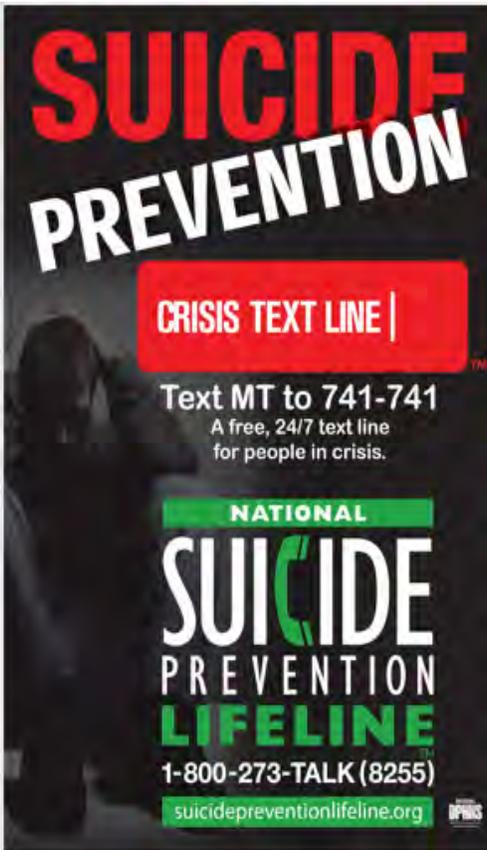
Volunteers are just like you. They live throughout the area and respond very quickly because they live next door, as long as they are home. Their compassion and caring are limitless.

I have watched us stay with a newly widowed person for hours until their closest child could get home to be with them. We have gone to the hospital to be with the spouse while they wait to find out if their loved one is going to live or die while we wait with them for their friends to get there. We have driven to the hospital to give someone a ride home after their CAT scan and stitches because they didn't have anyone to come get them. Volunteers do these things not because they are paid to but because they care and they want to.



Volunteers come with challenges. We are really good at responding with a good sized force but we can't stay long. Most of our calls are resolved in an hour or two - easy peasy lemon squeezey!

Volunteers—Continued On Page 3



Depression is Treatable Suicide is Preventable

As the cold weather, holidays, and shorter days come, it is embraced with mixed feelings. Many people find the winter and spring seasons to be great for outdoor activities, gatherings, and enjoyment. For others, this isn't the case. For lots of people, these seasons are anything but joyful. This brings us to the difficult topic of Depression and Suicide.

Montana ranks 3rd in the nation for suicides. The number of suicides climaxes during the winter and spring time. Pressure during the holidays, less sunlight, and struggles with depression all contribute to this increase. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports Montana's suicide rate of 26.3 per 100,000 people is almost double the national average 13.8. Suicide is a devastation that greatly affects families, friends, co-workers, communities, and the responders involved.

If you are struggling, or you know someone who is struggling with depressed or suicidal thoughts, there is help. Talk to your doctor, find a therapist, talk to a friend, or call the 24-hour suicide prevention line at 1-800-273-TALK(8255).

“Suicide is not chosen; it happens when pain exceeds the resources for coping with pain.”

If you are interested in learning more about the warning signs or ways to get involved, go online to Suicide Prevention Resource Center at <http://dphhs.mt.gov/suicideprevention> or call 406-444-3349.

No one has to struggle alone. We can make a difference coming together in our community to stop suicide.

Stay Safe and have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Volunteers—Continued From Page 2

When we get into calls that take days, like large wildland calls, we just don't have the staying power because we have to go back to work, take the kids to school, we were scheduled to be out of town, baseball practice, violin lessons, etc. Although we love being volunteer firefighters/EMTs, our priority is our job that puts food on the table and our family that eats the food on the table – just like you.

Another challenge is we can't guarantee someone is always around. There have been times when the pager has gone off and no one from our department was available to respond. In those cases, we have to rely on mutual aid from our neighboring departments to help us cover and they rely on us to cover them when they aren't available. The bottom line, we respond with someone almost 100% of the time but it is not like the career departments with paid personnel just sitting at the station waiting for the alarm. Volunteers are going through their normal daily lives and then the pager goes off to make a mess of their plans. They respond if at all possible but life gets in the way sometimes – just like you.

There is no more powerful force than a bunch of can-do volunteers that WANT to help! I know I trust my life to them every day.



LESSONS LEARNED

Since the last newsletter, we have responded to many situations that we think could be used to help others avoid a similar emergency. Here are a few:



We continue to struggle to find houses during 911 calls. If we can't find you, we can't help you. Our maps and the Active911 smartphone app we use will get us near the location but many cabin sites or condo locations are so congested, we are having to guess on the location. Please get an address plaque as the life you save may be your own. Address plaques can be obtained at:

http://www.lccountymt.gov/fileadmin/user_upload/Address_Coordinator/PlaqueOrderForm.pdf

We responded to a horse rider that had been bucked off their horse while hunting. Horse people seem to be very independent people as a group. Unless they are unconscious, the answer is the same every time – “No I don't want an ambulance!” We have to abide by your wishes. We cannot kidnap you to protect you. It took a long time before they deteriorated to point where we could convince them to allow us to get an ambulance. The golden hour for trauma was long gone by the time they were admitted for several life threatening injuries and then re-admitted 10 days later because they were not getting better. Please listen to our EMTs, we do NOT get anything for you riding in the ambulance. We only want what we feel is best for you as an independent voice. Please don't gamble with your life over embarrassment, bravado, or money.



We responded to an elderly gentleman with many health issues. His meds are shipped to his house via the mail. His health issues limit his ability to go to the mailbox. So getting the mailed medication to the house is a real challenge for him. In addition, he runs out before the next shipment arrives because he is not ordering them soon enough to allow for the shipping time. Please manage your meds! Order them as early as you can. Waiting until you are taking the last pill will result in you going several days without meds – not good! After several months of this happening,



we figured out timeliness of ordering was what was causing the problem but not before an ER doctor refused to allow him to be shipped in via ambulance for another round of emergency meds. He was forced to sit for two additional days without relief until his meds arrived. Heart breaking for us to see him suffer but nothing we, as EMTs, could do. We do not carry any drugs. YOU are responsible for your care. Please manage your meds.

NEW ARRIVALS

The Tri-Lakes Community would like to congratulate and welcome new family members to our volunteers:

- Oakley Elizabeth Bertram, daughter of Darren and Trina Bertram
- Maverick Alexander Neidich, son of Kyle and Tamara Neidich



WINTER CONTROLLED BURNING – YES IT IS POSSIBLE!

Controlled burning is allowed during the winter months under special circumstances. Between **December 1st** and **February 28th**, air quality and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) regulations are the driving force behind controlling winter burning, not fire danger (usually). MDEQ is now staffing a position to handle requests for Winter Time Open Burning. There is an established process for making such requests, having them approved, and then getting the burns carried out.

Winter burning greatly reduces fire danger but dramatically increases the risk of bad air quality. Additional MDEQ application steps focus on keeping the air quality in the Helena valley in the healthy range - where we all want it! Winter burning is a tradeoff between lower fire risk and higher health risks. Therefore, winter burning is a LAST RESORT! The Wintertime Burning Request requires information as to why it is ESSENTIAL to perform the controlled burning in the winter. Large mitigation projects protecting homes, escape routes, and entire subdivisions are going to get priority over smaller slash piles that could be completed in the regular burning season. The following steps must be completed for each burn:



Step 1: Obtain a L&C County Burn Permit at the burnpermits.mt.gov website or at the City/County Building – Real Estate Office. You must activate your L&C County Burn Permit each day you are allowed to burn by MDEQ. This notifies the L&C 911 Center that you are performing a controlled burn. The County Controlled Burn Permit System is functioning all year round and will allow you to activate your permit unless overall conditions are bad enough to prevent all burning. Burn permits issued in L&C County are valid from the date of purchase through December 31 of each year.

Step 2: Call the MDEQ's Air Quality Bureau at 444-3490 to talk with them about what you are planning to burn and when. They will help you determine if you qualify for essential winter burning before you spend the time completing steps 3 through 5.

Step 3: If the burning plan is deemed ESSENTIAL, complete the Montana Wintertime Open Burning Request form found at the <http://deq.mt.gov/Air/airquality/burnrestrictions> website. Detailed instructions are found under the heading: *Winter Burning Season (December 1 - February 28)*. All needed links and forms can be accessed from within these instructions telling you exactly what to do. The "MONTANA WINTERTIME OPEN BURNING REQUEST" is comprised of 12 questions detailing out exactly why the burning was not completed during the regular burn season or cannot wait until regular open burning starts, what you want to burn, a description of the piles, the location and relation to neighbors or sensitive areas, elevation, how long each burn will take, and the proposed burn dates.



Step 4: Return the completed form to the address found at the bottom of the second page of the application.

Step 5: Once MDEQ receives the request, it will either be approved or denied based on information provided in the application. If approved, you will work with the MDEQ Meteorologist to find a weather window for your location and duration of burn. The weather will dictate when your specific project and location are approved for actual burning. Once approved by MDEQ, activate your L&C County Burn Permit each day you burn.

It is important to follow all steps in this process as the MDEQ fines for violating air quality rules are in the thousands of dollars. They make fines for burning without a L&C County Burn Permit seem like lunch money! If you have questions or need advice, contact Fire Chief Bob Drake at 431-3600 to receive help in getting your burning done safely.

COMMAND RIG

We have shown you the command rig pictures in the past when we replaced the old one with a new used one. You have seen pictures of it with the “Close The Door” campaign and you have undoubtedly seen it around the district and in town. Hopefully you have not seen it up-close and personal in your yard.

The command rig is a rolling command post; medical response unit; AED; warming shed; IV cooling shed; rolling billboard; go to meetings, funerals, trainings, etc.; and maintenance vehicle. It is by far the busiest vehicle we have. It responds to over 95% of our calls and is on-call 24/7/365, if someone has it.

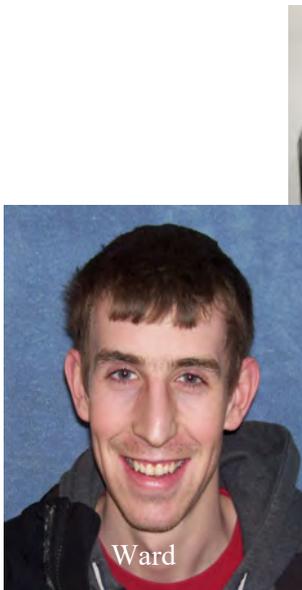


If you see the command rig (6801) on the road, it is in service - ready to respond to any page that comes out. You will see it pulling trailers, sitting outside the movie theatre, stores, restaurants, bars (the only places to eat in our district), other fire stations, the city/county building, and any other place that you can imagine. Just be careful if you see it because, at any moment, some firefighter/EMT may come rushing out the door to go to the latest call for service.

What we have learned through the years is having it in service with someone at all times drastically cuts our response times down. If the Chief is in a meeting uptown, without the lights and siren, he simply can't get through traffic and back to the district without significant delays. If the EMTs have to respond to a station to get a truck, it delays the response by at least 5 minutes or more. Those can be critical minutes for stroke, heart attack, allergic reaction, or pulmonary distress patients.

If you see the Command Rig with its lights and siren going, please pull over to the right and stop. It is on its way to save someone's life or property. If its lights and siren are not going when you see it – wave! Know they are only one page and one click of the switch away from rushing to the next call. It is not out for a drive, it is in service, ready to work for you.

Meet Our New Volunteers!!!



Ward



Anderson



Moots



McMahon

Tri-Lakes welcomes our new volunteer Firefighters and EMTs:

- Aaron Ward
- Bob Anderson
- William Moots
- Tim McMahon

**Thank you for
“Signing up”**

If you are interested in volunteering to be part of the Tri-Lakes VFD, please contact Bob at 431-3600.



No Place Like Home for the Holidays

Winter Home Safety



Snow and temperatures will soon be falling in our state and we all hear a huge sigh of relief as the wildland fires are finally being put to rest for the year...no fires till next year right? Wrong, unfortunately. As the season goes on and we shift more in to our warm homes, the risk of fire follows us there if we are not careful!

NFPA reports fire departments across the nation respond to approx. 360,000 structure fires every year -most of them occurring in the winter months.

Additional hazards from heating sources, holiday decorations, increased time baking and cooking - all of these things are considerations on making your home a safe place to be when the mercury drops.

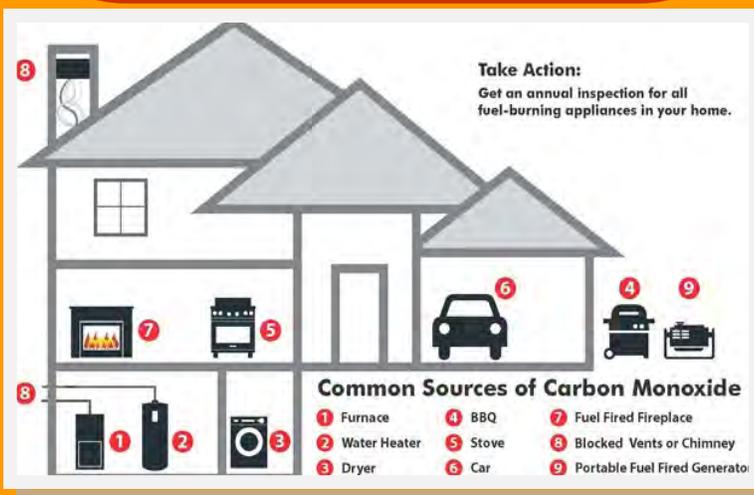
Here's some helpful tips on preparing for some of the different hazards in the winter months.

Space heaters, woodstoves, fireplaces oh my!

According to the USFA 17% of structure fires are caused from heating hazards.

Remember:

- * Keep any flammable objects at LEAST 3 feet away from any heat source.
- * Do not operate space heaters when no one is home.
- * For electrical heaters (or really anything you plan on plugging in to the wall), don't daisy chain it. Use outlets and chords for what they are intended for to avoid overload.
- * For wood heat sources; be sure to have your chimneys properly cleaned and in good working order before starting the first fire of the season and keep up on regular maintenance.



Carbon Monoxide Alarms:

They may not be as well known as Fire alarms, but these alarms are just as important and will warn of the unseen hazard of Carbon Monoxide in your home.

Make sure to place throughout your home (especially in high risk areas) and, if it is battery operated, that you keep the batteries fresh so that your alarm will work properly



Holiday Health and Safety Tips

1 Wash your hands often.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.



2 Stay warm.

Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing. Check on children, the elderly and pets.



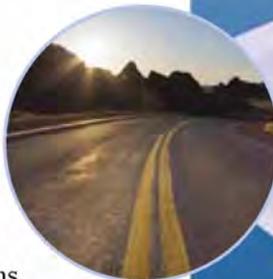
3 Manage stress.

The holidays don't need to take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Get enough sleep.



4 Travel safely.

Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don't drink and drive, and don't let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age. Get vaccinations if traveling out of the country.



The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.



5 Be smoke-free.

Avoid smoking and breathing other people's smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or talk to your health care provider for help.



inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test and change the batteries regularly.

6 Get check-ups and vaccinations.

Exams and screenings can help find problems early or before they start. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.



9 Handle and prepare food safely.

As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.



7 Watch the kids.

Children are at high risk for injuries. Keep a watchful eye on your kids. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids' reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Develop and reinforce rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media.



10 Eat healthy, and be active.

With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose more vegetables and fruit. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.



8 Prevent injuries.

Injuries from falls and fireworks often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals.

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices



To learn more, including the holiday song *The 12 Ways to Health*, visit www.cdc.gov/family/holiday



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Office of Women's Health



Clothes Dryer Safety

Doing laundry is most likely part of your every day routine. But did you know how important taking care of your clothes dryer is to the safety of your home? With a few simple safety tips you can help prevent a clothes dryer fire.

- »» Have your dryer installed and serviced by a professional.
- »» Do not use the dryer without a lint filter.
- »» Make sure you clean the lint filter before or after each load of laundry. Remove lint that has collected around the drum.
- »» Rigid or flexible metal venting material should be used to sustain proper air flow and drying time.
- »» Make sure the air exhaust vent pipe is not restricted and the outdoor vent flap will open when the dryer is operating. Once a year, or more often if you notice that it is taking longer than normal for your clothes to dry, clean lint out of the vent pipe or have a dryer lint removal service do it for you.
- »» Keep dryers in good working order. Gas dryers should be inspected by a qualified professional to make sure that the gas line and connection are intact and free of leaks.
- »» Make sure the right plug and outlet are used and that the machine is connected properly.
- »» Follow the manufacturer's operating instructions and don't overload your dryer.
- »» Turn the dryer off if you leave home or when you go to bed.

AND DON'T FORGET...

Dryers should be properly **grounded**.

Check the **outdoor vent** flap to make sure it is not covered by snow.

Keep the area around your dryer **clear** of things that can burn, like boxes, cleaning supplies and clothing, etc.

Clothes that have come in contact with **flammable substances**, like gasoline, paint thinner, or similar solvents should be laid outside to dry, then can be washed and dried as usual.

FACT

- ! The leading cause of home clothes dryer fires is failure to clean them.



Your Source for **SAFETY** Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169

Tri-Lakes Volunteer Fire Department
Fire Chief Bob Drake
406-431-3600

HIDDEN CODE



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WORD SEARCH

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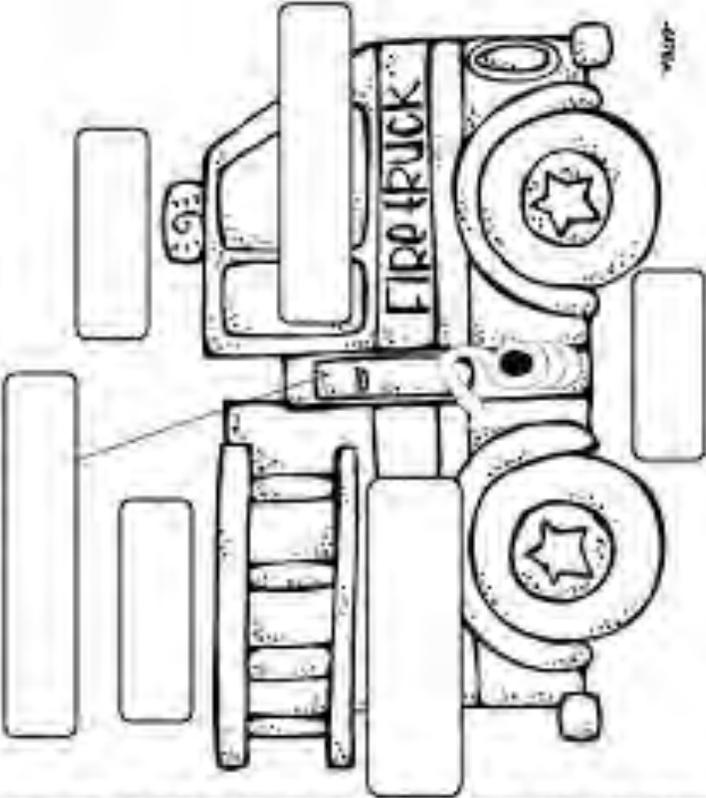


Emergency
Fire Department
Batteries
Smoke Detector
Alarm
Fire Truck
Fire Safety
Extinguisher
Flame

Fire Truck

Can you label the different parts of a fire truck?

You might like to visit [Sparky's website](#) for a closer look.



pump panel

fire fighters

siren

ladder

storage compartment

hose

3200 Spokane Creek Road
Helena MT 59602



The Tri-Lakes Board of Trustees meets the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm at Station #3, 3200 Spokane Creek Road. The public is encouraged to attend.

Fire Chief's Report Continued From Page 1

were working on the Alice Creek side of the fire, when an urgent call for help came from the north side of the fire. The fire had jumped dozer lines and was running to the north. We responded but were required to dump the water from all six trucks prior to crossing the Continental Divide. We ran to the other side of Rogers Pass to refill the trucks from the river which added over an hour to our response time. Frustrating, to say the least, and very risky when there is still no proof the mussel exists in Canyon Ferry.

We are moving to a new software system to make tracking our calls easier and more efficient. Because of this change, comparable call data is unavailable for this year. Our call volume is up over 10% in total calls but the breakdown of specific times and percentages are unavailable at this point. I can report your volunteers continue to work their hearts out for you with volunteer response on calls remaining strong and our number of volunteers remains stable.

Our latest installment in the "Close the Door" campaign is "Control the Flow – Close The Door." Closing doors and controlling air flow to the fire gives your family valuable minutes to get out of the house or, if the fire is between you and your planned exit, you can safely figure out an alternative escape route. Please remember to "Close The Door" on every room in your house. You never know when a fire might start. Give your house a fighting chance by closing all the doors!



I continue to be in awe of the power of our volunteers! They are capable of accomplishing anything they set their minds to. They truly do care about helping you with whatever the issue is today. Hug a volunteer firefighter/EMT when you see them, they do it because they want to, not because they have to!! Have a Merry Christmas and we will still be here in the New Year ready to serve you.
Bob