

MEADOW LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Annual Report For 2020



Introduction

It is my privilege to submit the City of Meadow Lake Fire Department's Annual Report for the year of 2020. The Fire Department's activities and statistics are summarized on the following pages.

This was a year of new challenges as well as opportunities to serve the public in new ways. With COVID 19 greatly impacting the functions of the department, we needed to evaluate all of our services, procedures and goals.

What did not change was the fire service's goal of excellent public safety, in homes, workplaces, roads and the community at large.

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2020 at a Glance

COVID-19 inspired some changes!

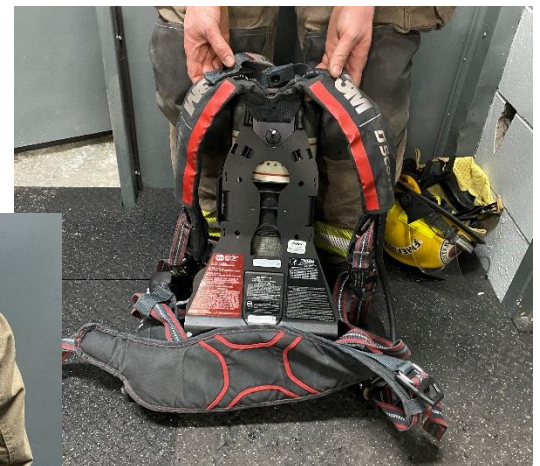
Significantly, training was changed to a 3-week cycle, with 1/3 of the personnel attending each Tuesday evening in order to keep gathering numbers down. We have found this to be a very workable approach with some distinct advantages over the previous bi-weekly schedule, and we may continue it indefinitely.

Other COVID precautions that were implemented into the daily practice of the department included:

- Training, where possible, shifted to online delivery, with in-house training focused on practical skills
- Limiting use of the classroom due to physical distancing limitations, and due to its use as the EOC for the first few months of the pandemic
- Mandatory PPE (masks, etc.) for training & emergency response
- Regular disinfection of vehicles, tools and fire hall surfaces
- Additional PPE requirements and modified protocols for patient care
- Contingency plans for potential COVID-19 outbreak among firefighters

Our primary concern was, and is, to ensure that the provision of emergency services is not jeopardized. Keeping firefighters healthy is vital.

Twelve new SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus) were put into service in April 2020, a necessary replacement of older equipment. These new units have larger compressed air cylinders, allowing for longer working time in a fire.



Ice rescue training sessions were held in February and in December. Firefighters and Search and Rescue members attended. A range of ice conditions and a good turnout made this a valuable exercise. Among other skills, they practiced the use of the new inflatable rescue raft, which was partially funded by the Meadow Lake Lions club.



Drive-by birthday parties were a popular COVID-safe celebration for Meadow Lake residents, and firefighters took part in several of these.



We continued various projects such as pre-incident planning, fire inspections and hydrant flow-testing.

The “new-to-us” rescue unit, designated R61R, arrived November 1st and was in service later that month. Two small trucks are now decommissioned as a result. The new R61R is able to hold most of the equipment needed for various types of specialty-rescue incidents. (Previously, this equipment was stored on shelves, and specific items were loaded into vehicles prior to responding).



A Vehicle Extrication course on October 3-4 was well attended. Hans Vidal (Vidal Towing) provided vehicles and yard space, and vendor SeaHawk provided extra tools for our use as well as some of the instruction.



This year saw the start of a fire protection agreement with the new Resort Village of Turtle View. As part of this agreement, the Village has formed a local fire brigade to help address the long response time to this remote location. The brigade's role is to assess each emergency scene and provide information to the Meadow Lake Fire Department so that we can provide the most effective response possible. They also provide some direct assistance at the scene. This arrangement has already proven its worth and has already resulted in cost savings and at least one saved house.

Voyent Alert, our new community communication system, was put into operation at the close of 2019, and its usefulness was proven many times over as 2020



unfolded. Originally chosen as an emergency notification tool, its use has expanded to include street closures, road work, service interruptions, public announcements, contests and, of course, regular COVID-19 updates.

More than 700 residents now subscribe to this service, approximately one-third of all households in Meadow Lake, and that number continues to grow. Fortunately, we have had only rare occasions to use Voyent Alert for actual emergencies, but with such a broad subscriber base, its effectiveness in any such situation is assured.

The July flooding also caused numerous road washouts in the RM, including some major routes such as the Cabana road. Voyent Alert notifications regarding these road closures were appreciated by many.

Meadow Lake and Area Floods 2020

Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue worked alongside the City's Emergency Management Organization, Public Works and community volunteers to help mitigate the effects of high water levels that resulted from heavy rains in June and July. Flood control supplies and equipment were borrowed from the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) emergency management branch.

These materials included: water-filled berms, sandbags, trapezoid bags (large gravel-filled berms), a sandbag filling machine, pumps and hoses.

Temporary water filled berms were installed around one threatened residence. 2,000 sandbags were filled and ready for deployment if needed. Fortunately, rainfall was less than predicted.



Left: a water-filled berm that was set up to protect a house which was threatened by the high water levels. **Right:** the sandbagging machine.

Below: Photos at the dog park on 9th Ave East, at the peak water level.



Fire Prevention Week

COVID-19 prevented our usual Fire Prevention Week Open House. However, firefighters pitched in to create a series of “virtual fire hall tours” which were posted on the City’s Facebook page:

Video #1: Response to an emergency: this video provided a behind-the-scenes look at what happens when a Fire Department member receives a call. Whether responding from their place of work or their homes, Fire Department members respond at all hours, day or night.

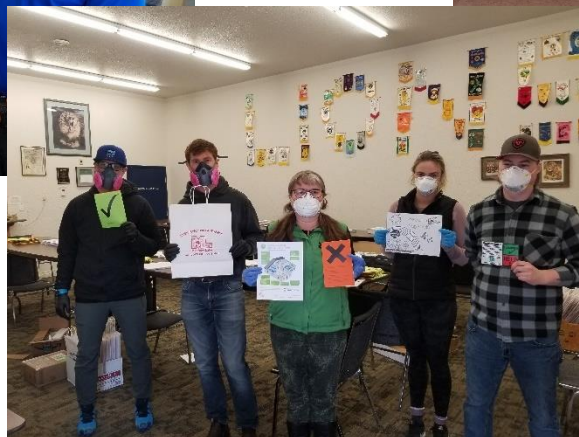
Video #2: Vehicle Extrication Course: this training covers procedures for emergencies involving victims trapped in vehicles or equipment. (See photos on previous page).

Video #3: Suit and PPE gear: the Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue team responds to a wide variety of fire and rescue related incidents. Each incident is unique and may require specialized personal protective gear. Two members of the fire department modeled the different suits and gear worn to different fire calls.

Video #4: A look into real life incidents: a series of photos from real incidents were shared with the public to showcase the range of calls the department receives. Although referred to as *firefighters*, the Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue team responds to a wide range of calls that are not fire related.

Video #5: A look at the crew: this video showcases some of the individuals who are part of the Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue team. We assembled content from both training and incidents to share with the public.

These videos were shared via the City of Meadow Lake’s Facebook page each day of Fire Prevention Week, from October 5th – 9th. (See them again at https://www.facebook.com/CityofMeadowLake/videos/?ref=page_internal)



Plans for 2021

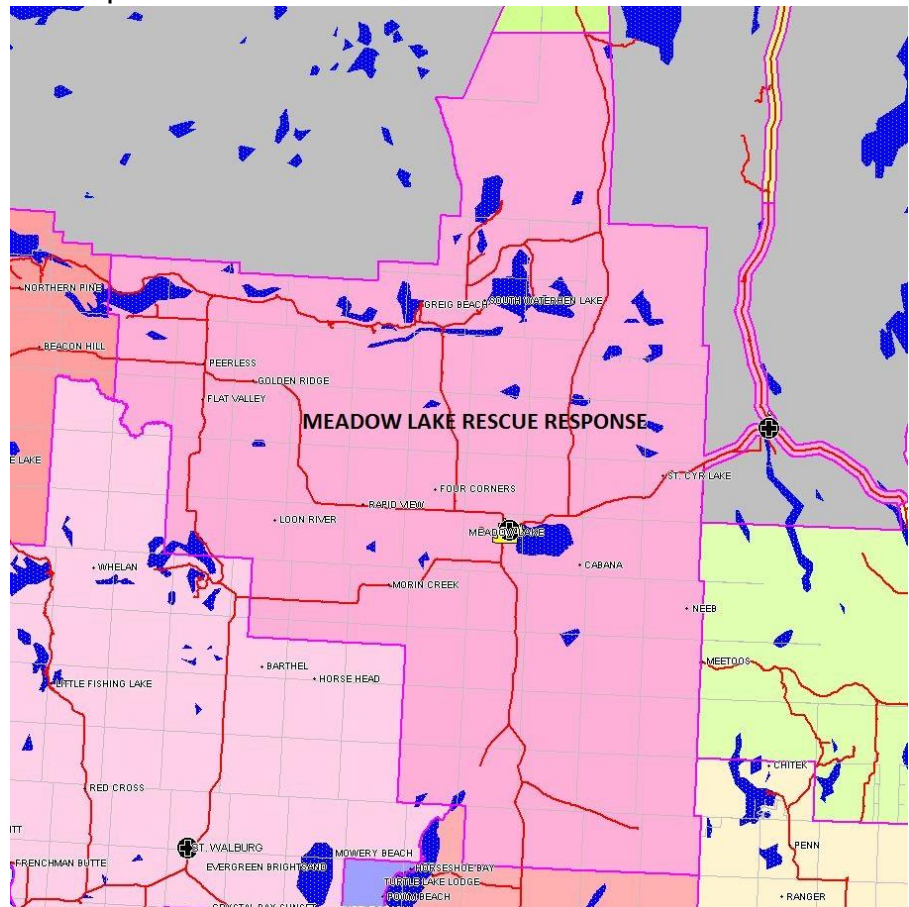
With pandemic restrictions and outbreaks continuing, many “normal” activities are still on hold, reduced in scale, or modified. However, we are looking forward to a busy and productive 2021.

The 2021 plans include:

- Firefighter Training: Confined space rescue, fire officer certification, instructor development, hazardous materials certification, professional firefighter certifications, and more! We will also continue to extend training opportunities to our neighboring fire departments and industrial brigades.
- Further emergency management staff and volunteer development, such as ICS 200, ICS300, various online courses, plus EOC and ESS exercises. While community disaster planning and preparedness is now headed up by the city’s Community Safety Officer, the fire department will continue to be heavily involved.
- Further work on fire prevention and public engagement, both within city limits and in our wider response area.

Right:

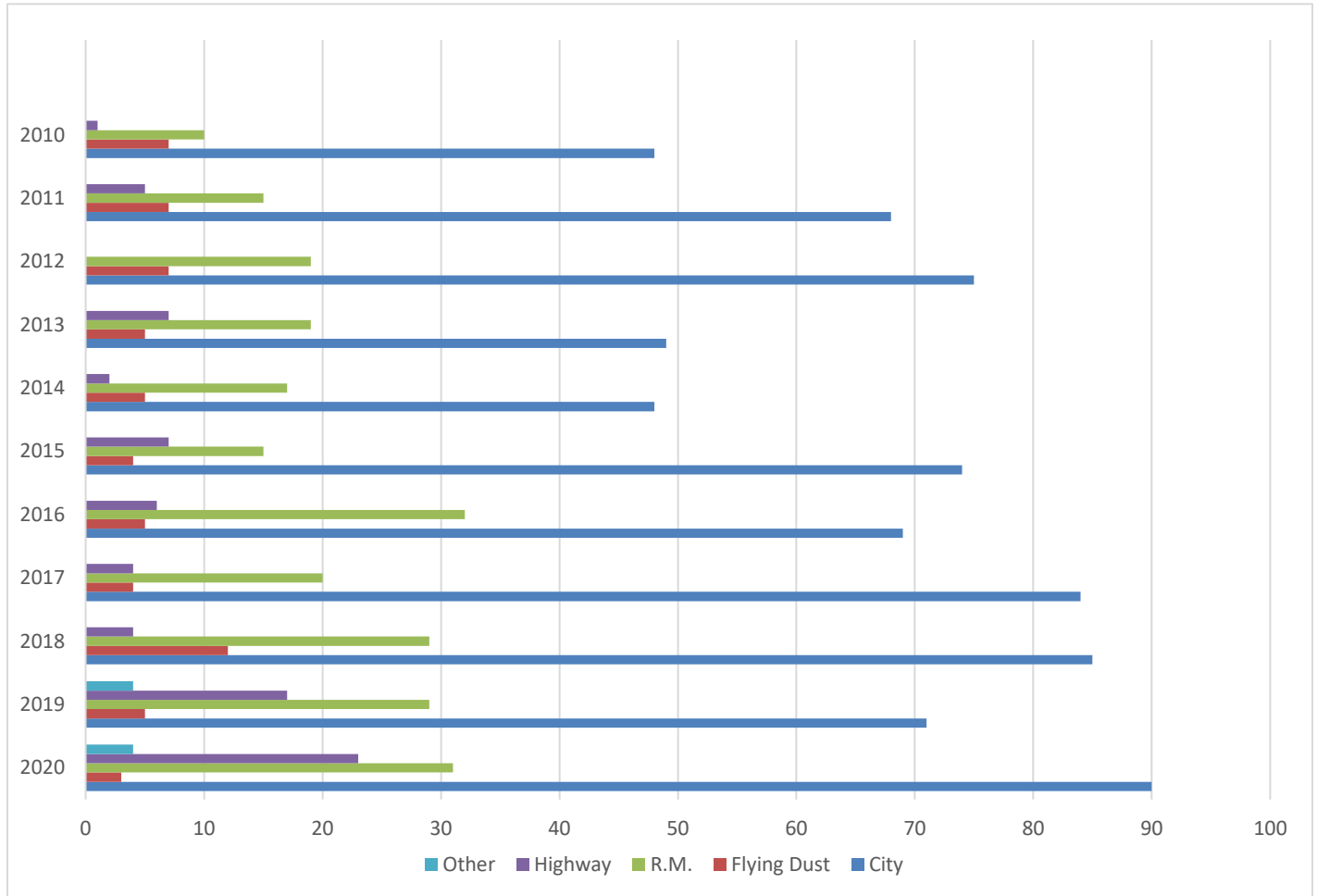
MLFD’s rescue response area (dark pink) extends from Beacon Hill to Keeley Lake to Beatty Lake to the Cowan Dam



Public Safety by the Numbers (Statistics)

Our emergency response records for the year are as follows:

Calls per Year by Location

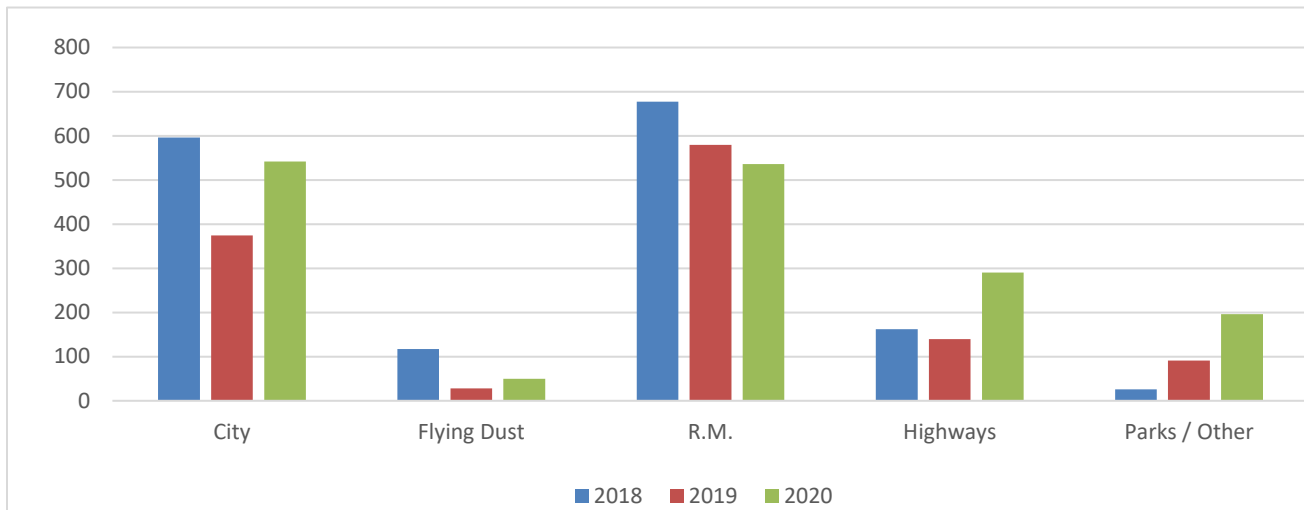


The above charts illustrate the number of calls received for each region in Meadow Lake’s call zone for the past 10 years. The “other” call category includes resort villages, forest lands and park locations.

Some trends are apparent:

- Calls within city limits are consistently the most frequent, followed by calls to the RM.
- Highway calls (mainly vehicle fires and collisions) have increased in the last two years. (2020 saw a remarkable increase in collisions requiring the use of extrication tools)
- Call volume, overall, is increasing

Crew Hours by Location



While the total number of calls for service is highest in the City, the actual person-hours are typically higher for rural incidents. This is due to the nature of the incidents in these areas: wildland fires and industrial fires present a high demand on resources.

Call type	Hours Dedicated
Vehicle Fire	156.5
Grass & Brush Fire	205
Good Intent Calls (Caller Error)	13
Malicious False Alarm Call	3
Explosion	1
Gas Leak	32.5
BBQ Fire	12
Smoke Investigations	47
Unauthorized Burning	18
Powerline Down	9
Dumpster Fire	13
Alarms Ringing (CO Related)	12
EMS Assist	45.5
MVC (2 ATV and 1 Motorcycle)	491
False Alarm	266
Extrication	9
Structure Fire	373
Elevator	2
Other	3
Total	1711.5

2020 Number of Calls by Type

158 calls total

Call Type	Call Number
Vehicle fire	11
Grass & brush fire	9
Good intent calls (caller error)	2
Malicious false alarm call	1
Explosion	1
Gas leak	4
Smoke reported	4
Unauthorized burning	3
Powerline down	1
Dumpster fire	3
Alarms ringing (CO related)	3
EMS assist	10
Motor vehicle incidents	41
False alarm	48
Extrication	2
Structure	11
Elevator	2
Other	3

There was a notable increase in motor vehicle accidents. 2020 saw a total of 41 incidents. This is an increase of 25 incidents of this type over 2019's tally.



Above: 2 vehicle collision in April 2020, just south of Meadow Lake

Call Type by Community

Call Type	City	RM	HWY	FDN	Parks	Other	Total
Vehicle fire	4	4	2	0	1	0	11
Grass & brush fire	1	8	0	0	0	0	9
Good intent calls (caller error)	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Malicious false alarm call	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Explosion	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gas leak	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
BBQ fire	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Smoke investigations	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Unauthorized burning	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Powerline down	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dumpster fire	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Alarms ringing (CO related)	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
EMS assist	8	1	0	1	0	0	10
MVC (2 ATV and 1 motorcycle)	9	5	20	0	2	5	41
False alarm	41	6	0	0	1	0	48
Extrication	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Structure fire	5	4	0	2	0	0	11
Elevator	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	91	32	22	3	5	5	158

Right: A vehicle fire that damaged a detached garage, December 2020.



Left: A vehicle damaged a building in downtown Meadow Lake.

As the preceding information illustrates, the Fire Department is called to assist at a wide variety of incidents, not limited to putting out fires. We expect to be called on for any of the following events:

Fire Department Services Currently Provided								
Service description	City	RM588	Flying Dust	Eagles Lake	Dorintosh	MLPP	Turtle View	Highways
Structure Fires	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vehicle Fires	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yard Fires	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Farm Equipment Fires	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Grass/Brush Fires	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Industrial Fires	✓	✓						
Alarms Ringing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Motor Vehicle Extrication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farm Equipment Entanglement	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Industrial Equipment Entanglement	✓	✓						✓
Ice Rescue	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Other Specialty Rescue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mass Casualty Incident	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EMS Assist	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
RCMP Assist	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Needle Pickup	✓							
Fuel Spill	✓							✓
Gas Leak	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hazardous Material Incident	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extreme Weather Event	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Disaster Response, general	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fire Code Inspections	✓							
Public Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Construction Plan Review	✓							
Other	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Disaster Management

The City of Meadow Lake has a central role in the mitigation and recovery from large-scale emergencies, or “disasters”. COVID-19 presented us with an unfamiliar and, to some extent, unforeseen scenario. This “disaster in slow motion” required a very different type of response. The City’s EMO initially identified specific priorities in response to the pandemic:

- Protection of critical city services (*e.g. water & sewer, emergency response*)
- Identifying populations at risk (*e.g. isolated seniors*)
- Community well-being, business survival and civic engagement (*we recognized that coping with the pandemic would be a community effort*)
- Security
- Contingency plans for secondary emergencies (*flooding, for example*)

Actions Included:

- A partial physical EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) was activated at the fire hall, while a full EOC was activated virtually. Meetings were held regularly with members of the EMO, multiple local organizations as well as community members.
- An online platform was set up for EOC communication and file sharing, safety measures and training for City employees, communication with key community agencies and monitoring the state of the community.
- Voyent Alerts were issued to provide regular informational updates to the public.
- A City web page dedicated to pandemic information.
- Delivery of informational packages to each household was carried out in April which included:
 - Window signs to communicate if residents required assistance.
 - City of Meadow Lake’s “[Pandemic Family Handbook](#)”
 - Evacuation magnets
 - Chamber of Commerce Bingo card
 - COVID 19 Activity Guide
 - Suicide prevention brochure: Creating a safer home



The EOC was eventually de-activated, as pandemic protocols became routine. It was, though, a valuable opportunity to test our ability to cope with the unexpected.

Our Fire Department Members

The 2020 roster included:

Senior Officers

Neil Marsh, Fire Chief
Joe Grela, Deputy Chief, SAFC Region 8 Director
Doug Bennett, Assistant Deputy
Scott Chuckrey, A-Crew Captain
Chris Warren, B-Crew Captain
Rick Burnett, C-Crew Captain

Lieutenants

Ian Kosokowsky	Yannis Karambetsos
Chris Gill	Joe Hallahan
Andrew Clements*	Frank Richardson*
Dustin Thomas*	Mike Wagner*

Firefighters

Lyndon Shryko	Keenan Gill	Andrew Toews
Arron Toews	Lucas Walters*	Brandon Lacendre
Ethan Prete	Clint Ruston	Wendell Brock
David Goertzen	Renee Stevenot	

Recruits, Trainees & Auxiliary

Amanda Bacher	Basil Paul	Preston Omuruwa
Carlos Bulao	Keltie Coupar	Jagjeet Singh
Christine Sawatzky	Zouhair Malaeb	Durwin Blabey
Carah Oftedal*		

* No longer active as at this writing

Your name here!
Recruit applications are
available at the Fire Hall, or
by contacting
psclerk@meadowlake.ca or
calling 306-236-0213



Qualifications

Among our membership we currently have
Firefighter II professional qualifications (NFPA 1001)
First Aid instructors
First Responder/EMR instructors
Fire Service Instructors, Levels 1 & 2
Driver/Operator professional qualifications (NFPA 1002)
HazMat Operations-level responders (NFPA 472)
Fire Investigators (NFPA 1033)
Fire Inspectors (NFPA 1031)
Paramedics
First Responders & Emergency Medical Responders
Ice Rescue technicians
Technical Rescue technicians
Search and Rescue practitioners
Critical Incident Stress Management practitioners

... plus a wide variety of other skills, certifications and competencies.

Employers

Without community-minded employers such as these, firefighters would be unable to respond to emergencies! We thank the following for their support and understanding:

City of Meadow Lake
Meadow Lake Co-Op
Extra Foods
Hercules Appliance Repair
AgMPower Services
Shkopich Enviro
Anglican Church
First Choice Plumbing
Northern Pride

Saskatchewan Health Authority
Tolko Industries
Department of Justice
CB Custom Contracting
Eagle Creek Motor Products
Northern Diesel Services
Alta Sask Wellness
Boston Pizza
7-Eleven

Several firefighters are self-employed

"An effective fire service is possible only when employees can leave work, without penalty, to attend to emergencies in the community."

In summary, I would like to express my profound appreciation to the members of the Meadow Lake Fire Department, and especially to their families and employers.

We endeavour to provide the best possible service to the citizens of Meadow Lake and our wider response area. Everyone deserves to live in a safe community, and the fire service has an important role in both preventing emergencies and responding effectively when they do occur. With the support of residents, employers and Councils, we will do our best to provide continued excellent services.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil Marsh
Fire Chief



Proud members of the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs and the Saskatchewan Volunteer Firefighters Association