



Meadow Lake Fire & Rescue Year End Report **2021**



Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I present the Meadow Lake Fire Department's annual report for the year 2021.

This was a remarkable year, packed with events, disasters, achievements, and a record number of emergency calls for service. It was also an exhausting year, which pushed our small fire department to its limits.

The coming year, 2022, will also be memorable, for myself at least, as I prepare to hand over this role to the next Fire Chief. For the first time in Meadow Lake's history, we will have a full-time Fire Chief entirely focused on the fire department and its services to the community. This is a welcome advancement, as the demands and expectations of fire and emergency services will only continue to grow. There is much that needs doing, and your new Chief will have a chance to make some substantial contributions to our community.

As this will be my last annual report, I will take this opportunity to say that it has been a great privilege and honour to serve as your Fire Chief for these past eleven years. The men and women who are the fire department's members really are the community's finest. That they can devote their time and energies to this demanding vocation is in large part thanks to the support of their families, their employers and the community as a whole. Meadow Lake is a great place to be a firefighter, and I have been truly fortunate to have had this opportunity to serve.

Neil Marsh, Fire Chief, 2011 – 2022

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2021 In Review

The Fire Department responded to 203 calls in 2021, which surpassed the previous year's record of 158, which broke the 2019 record of 133 calls for emergency service, and so on back. The trend of the last 12 years has been toward ever-increasing call volumes.

Emergencies are never conveniently scheduled, of course, and it is not unusual to have several calls over the course of a day. The firefighters who turn out for the first call will be the same ones responding to the next call, and the one after that. There are no relief crews or mutual aid from other communities: we are it!

Highlights (and Lowlights)

- In addition to numerous structure fires, vehicle fires and equipment fires, fire losses included the NorSask kiln fire (March) and the Meadow Lake Arena (June).
- Extremely dry conditions led to the largest number of grass and brush fires experienced in many years, some of which resulted in significant property losses. Fire bans remained in effect most of the summer, a highly unusual occurrence.
- The continuing pandemic resulted in further safety measures and other changes to practices and procedures. Some of those changes will be maintained for the foreseeable future.
- The City's fire protection agreement with the Resort Village of Turtle View continued for its second year, and the village's "Fire First Responders" group has been proving its value beyond expectations.
- Videographer Jordan Ness assisted with several videos for the Fire Department and the Emergency Management group. These are excellent and give our public profile a welcomed boost.
- Work on the new training site on Madill Avenue began, and the fenced compound is now mostly completed. The Fire Department looks forward to many days of valuable training that this new site makes possible.

The Northern Village of Green Lake suffered a serious breakdown of its fire engine and requested that we temporarily extend our fire protection area to cover their community. This provided an opportunity to develop a closer working relationship with that fire department, which hopefully will continue to develop in years to come.

Our pre-incident planning system, Blazemark, greatly enhances our ability to provide emergency services to remote areas and unfamiliar locations. Information on access routes, water supplies, hazards, contacts and more are made accessible to the responding fire crew, enabling them to prepare the most effective strategies while still enroute.



A combined total of 647 hours were spent responding to grass and brush fires in 2021. The year proved to be extremely dry, with 31 grass fires on record. Grass fires can be ignited from carelessly discarding cigarettes, exhaust pipes on ATVs and other motor vehicles, fireworks or various other causes.

This photo was taken in May after a large grass fire. The crew spent a combined 80 hours during this call.

Cleaning and inspecting the equipment following a fire is important to ensure everything is ready for the next call.

New equipment and upgrades

The Fire Chief's vehicle, C61R, was replaced with a new Chevrolet pickup. The new vehicle was put into service in May 2021, and the older pickup was reassigned to the Public Works department.

Thanks to Eagle Creek Motors, Kelly Graphics and GL Mobile for their assistance.



2022 Plans

The current year is packed with many projects, many of which have been in development for several years. Hopefully many of the following will be complete by the time the new Fire Chief takes office:

- Moving the Fire Chief's office to the Fire Hall
- Capital purchasing that includes: turnout gear cleaner, a shipping container for training, breathing air compressor upgrades, and an air supply trailer
- Further developing of the Madill Avenue training grounds
- Enhanced public education & engagement
- New specialty supporting roles within the fire department
- Expanding recruiting efforts (including making it easier for rural residents to become firefighters)
- Continuing fire hydrant flow testing throughout the city
- Continuing the development of pre-incident plans
- *Training, training, training!*

Training

Members of the Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue Department train, and re-train, for a wide variety of incidents. Our work is often carried out in extremely hazardous settings, and the safety of firefighters requires that competency be maintained.

Tuesday evenings are regular training nights, where a wide variety of lessons, topics and skills are covered. Additional weekend training sessions are held whenever the opportunity to do so is present, to give the Fire Department more occasions for in-depth and specialized training.

Weekend training sessions completed in 2021 included:

- HazMat (Hazardous Materials) training – March 14 instructed by SPSA
- Confined space rescue training - July 27th instructed by Oak Ash & Thorn of Winnipeg
- Air brakes – August 14th instructed by David Goertzen
- Training day with the Turtle View Fire First Responders at Golden Sands Aug 19th - reviewed SOPs, Safety, Communications, Pump operations and Water supply

- Low angle rope rescue training – October 2nd and 3rd instructed by Chris Warren
- SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) training – December 11th and 12th instructed by MLFD instructors



Prior to its loss, the Meadow Lake Arena provided an excellent setting for training involving searching buildings and rescue of victims



Confined space training in July, 2021

2021 Statistics

As mentioned above, 2021 proved to be a busy year for the Meadow Lake Fire Department, both in the numbers of calls and the scale of some of the incidents.



Meadow Lake Arena fire, June 2021



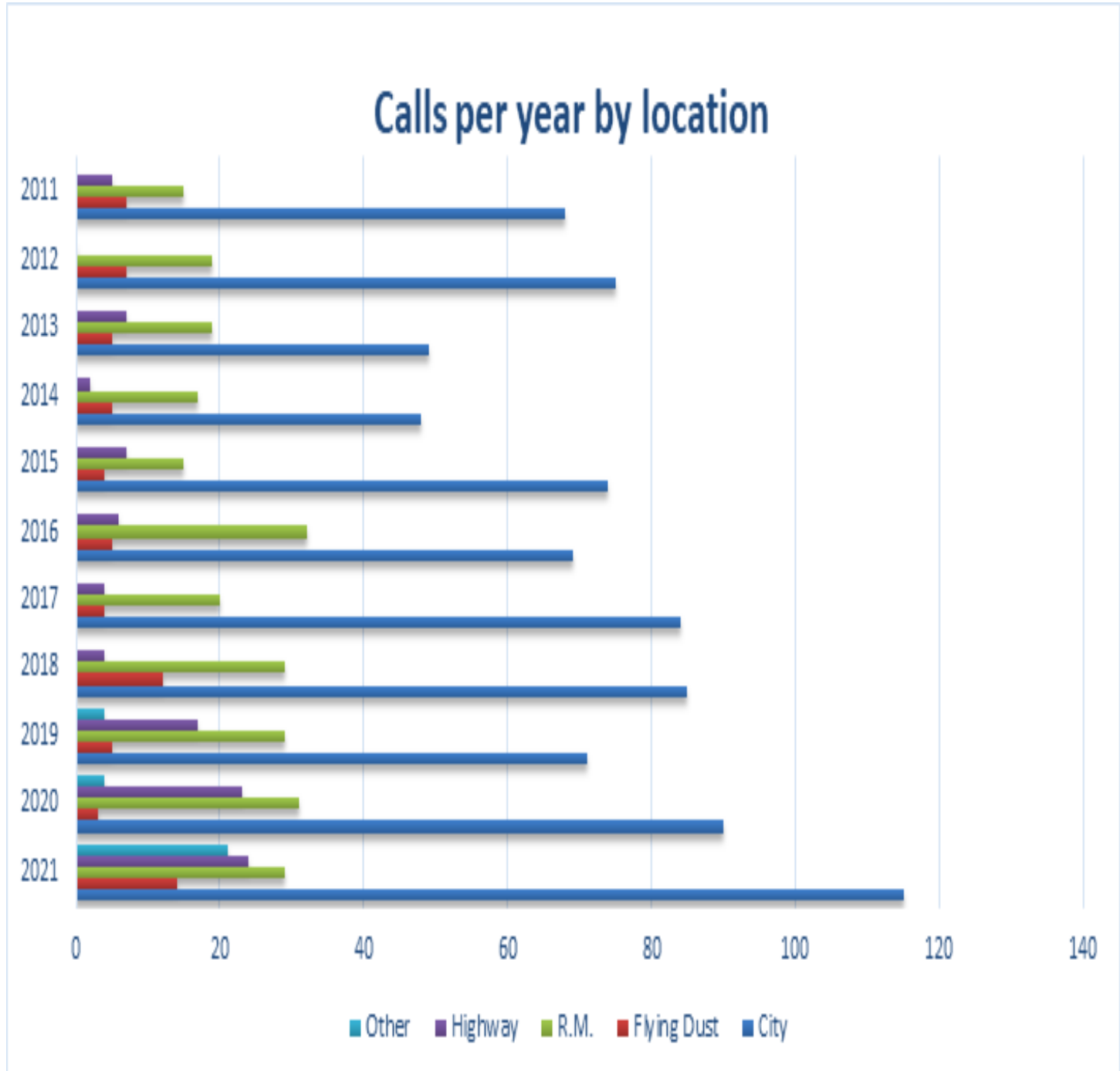
Structure fire August 2021, Myras Lake.



Brush fire near Rapid View May 2021.

Calls per year by location

The chart below illustrates the number of calls received for each region in Meadow Lake Fire Department's response area over the past 10 years. (The "other" call category includes resort villages, forest lands and park locations.)



Crew hours by location

Listed below are fire crew person-hours by location. The labour expended in 2021 was 1352 hours more than in 2020, and more than double 2019's total.

	2018	2019	2020	2021
City	596	374	705	1114
Flying Dust	117	28	50	240
R.M. #588	677	579	529	941
Highways	162	139	297	246
Parks / Other	26	91	130	425
Totals	1579	1212	1711	2966

Hours by Call Type

Different types of responses require varying amounts of labour.

Call Type	Hours Dedicated
Vehicle fire	319
Grass and brush fire	655
Good intent call	16
Gas leak	18
BBQ fire	7
Smoke investigation	16
Unauthorized burning	2
Powerline down	9
Dumpster fire	58
Needle pick-up	6
EMS assist	61
Motor vehicle accident	419
False alarm	165
Extrication	11
Structure fire	1166
Elevator	2
Other	36
Total	2966



Meadow Lake Arena fire in June

Notable increases of person-hours expended:

Vehicle Fires

2020: 156 2021: 319

Grass and Brush Fires

2020: 205 2021: 655

Structure Fires

2020: 373 2021: 1166

Call Types

The chart below breaks down the number of calls by type of incident.

Call Type	Call Total
Vehicle fire	17
Grass and brush fire	31
Good intent call	3
Needle pick-up	6
Explosion	0
Gas leak	4
Smoke reported	3
Unauthorized burning	2
Powerline	2
Dumpster fire	9
EMS assist	12
Motor vehicle incident	43
False alarm	35
Extrication	1
Structure fire	24
Elevator	1
Other	10
Total	203

Notable increases to the number of calls:

Structure Fires
 2020: 11 2021: 24

Grass and Brush Fires
 2020: 9 2021: 31



Norsask Forest Products March 2021



Firefighters spent 200 combined hours on the Meadow Lake Arena fire (this does not include time spent on investigations).

The fire began in the early hours of June 6, 2021.

By the time the fire department was alerted, the fire was well advanced.

Types of calls in various locations

Predictably, motor vehicle incidents top the list for highways, and wildland fires were the most common calls for assistance in the RM. Within the city, a wide variety of incident types is to be expected.

Call Type	City	RM	HWY	FDFN	Parks	Other	Total
Vehicle fire	2	4	4	1	0	6	17
Grass and brush fire	6	16	1	5	1	2	31
Good intent calls	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Explosion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas leak	3	0	0	0	1	0	4
Smoke investigations	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
Unauthorized Burning	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Power pole	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Dumpster fire	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Needle pick-up	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
EMS assist	12	0	0	0	0	0	12
MVC	15	0	18	3	0	6	42
False alarm	31	2	0	0	0	2	35
Extrication	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Structure fire	12	7	0	2	1	2	24
Elevator	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	10	0	0	0	0	1	11
Total	116	29	23	12	4	19	203

A Word on Building Standards and Fire Safety

Catastrophes do happen, and whether it is a shed, a house or a large public building that is damaged or lost, the effects can be devastating. "How could this happen?" is the inevitable question that follows such an event.

This very valid question is really two questions: "How did the fire start?" and "How did the fire spread?" The answers to these are worth understanding more thoroughly.

1. Fires in buildings are *started* in many ways, but these all fall into just three categories:
 - a. Direct human action, whether it is intentional (arson) or accidental (careless cooking for example).
 - b. Escape of energy from a mechanical or electrical system, resulting from improper installation, maintenance, or use. Building systems and appliances deteriorate with time and must be kept up. Dryer ducts, wood stove chimneys and toasters all need regular cleaning to remove combustible residues. Electrical systems need to be checked and repaired to eliminate potential faults. Extension cords and portable heaters must be used with care.
 - c. "Outside sources" can include lightning, an encroaching forest fire or fire that spread from another building or from a vehicle.
2. Regardless of the initial cause, fires in buildings *continue to burn* for just three basic reasons:
 - a. Occupant habits: For example, general housekeeping and the amount of "stuff" that is kept in a building directly affects how quickly a fire will spread and how intense it will become; doors propped open allow smoke and flame to spread into other parts of the building.
 - b. Maintenance: Certain building features are designed to contain or slow the spread of smoke and fire in a building. In a house, these include doors and drywall. Larger buildings often have automatic dampers and fire doors. Buildings of any size may have detection systems that alert occupants and the fire department, and sprinkler systems that effectively contain the fire. All of these require maintenance to ensure that they will function as intended when a fire occurs.

- c. Construction: Sometimes the fate of a building is sealed even before its construction is complete. The choice of materials, methods of assembly, size and spacing, choice of detection and suppression systems, quality of workmanship, and more, all contribute to the quality of a building's fire-resistiveness.

Also, a building's resistance to fire may be compromised by future modifications: accessory buildings placed too close, non-combustible materials replaced with more-combustible materials; highly combustible synthetic materials left exposed; alarm and sprinkler systems not upgraded.

***Fortunately, there are solutions:
Building Standards, Fire Prevention, and Education***

1. Ensure that your construction and renovation projects meet or exceed the requirements of the National Building Code. Your local building standards office can be of great assistance in providing plan reviews, inspections, and advice.
2. Ensure that your buildings are well maintained, and are used as intended. The National Fire Code provides minimum standards that, if followed, are highly effective in preventing fires from occurring, and help ensure that fires can be contained when they do occur. Similarly, the FireSmart program can help protect your buildings from outdoor fires. Your local fire department can provide inspections and other assistance to help you maximize fire safety.
3. Be aware of fire risks and adopt best practices to minimize those risks at home, at work and on the road. A wealth of information and resources are available through the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) and your local Fire Department.

All fires have understandable causes, and most fires are completely preventable. The primary limiting factor is the extent to which people are willing to understand and make positive changes.

Every fire is unexpected.

Too many people have said "if only I had known."

Now you know!

The 2021 Fire Department Membership

Senior Officers

Neil Marsh, Fire Chief
Rick Burnett, Captain
Chris Warren, Captain

Joe Grela, Deputy Fire Chief
Scott Chuckrey, Captain

Administrative Assistant

Kaila Lefort

Lieutenants

Ian Kosokowsky
Chris Gill

Andrew Clements*
Yannis Karambetsos

Joe Hallahan

Firefighters

Lyndon Shryko
Arron Toews
Ethan Prete*
David Goertzen
Basil Paul

Keenan Gill
Preston Omurowa*
Clint Ruston
Renee Stevenot

Andrew Toews
Brandon Lacendre
Wendell Brock*
Zouhair Malaeb*

Recruits, Trainees & Auxiliary

Amanda Bacher
Doug Bennett
Durwin Blabey*
Jeremy Toews

Keltie Coupar
Lyndsay Stevenot
Brad Buxton

Christine Sawatzky
Jagjeet Singh*
Billie-Jean Abbott

** No longer active as at this writing*

Turtle View Fire First Responder Volunteers

Chuck Brander
Lionel Nicholson
Gregg Gagnon

Corey Bannerman
Elgin Holderness
Scott DeSchover

Ben Richter
Dennis Schultz
Willie Thompson

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 technicians
- Critical Incident Stress Management practitioners

Plus a wide variety of other skills and competencies.



Firefighter qualifications on display - part of the new "Wall of Fame"



Confined Space Rescue training, July 2021

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

Employers

Without community-minded employers, 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
Northwest School Division
AgMPower Services
Shkopich Enviro
AltaSask Wellness
First Choice Plumbing**

**Saskatchewan Health Authority
Tolko Industries
Department of Justice
CB Custom Contracting
Eagle Creek Motor Products
Northern Diesel Services
Boston Pizza
Pure Water Station**

Several firefighters are self-employed



Join Us!

Being a member of Meadow Lake Fire and Rescue is rewarding and challenging. You will gain new skills and become educated on a wide range of topics and skills, and will respond to an almost endless variety of calls for emergency assistance.

Those who join need to be eager to learn, and able to commit to the time required to gain and maintain competency. Regular training is provided to help you achieve your goals and gain confidence.

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

In summary, I would like to thank the people of Meadow Lake and area for their ongoing cooperation and support of the work of the fire department. Public safety is a collaborative effort, and everyone in the community has a vital role to play. Fire departments respond to emergencies, but only *you* (along with your families, co-workers, and friends) can *prevent* them. Let's continue to work together to make our communities as safe as possible.

The fire department is just one part of the larger Emergency Services team, and we are deeply appreciative of the police, paramedics and other professionals who daily put themselves in harm's way. Also, many local agencies work to assist and improve the lives of people in our communities - especially the most vulnerable. Their work has untold ripple effects that contribute to everyone's health, safety and well-being. My hope is that all of us take every opportunity for collaboration and cooperation in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Neil Marsh
Fire Chief



Meadow Lake Fire Department is a proud member of the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs and the Saskatchewan Volunteer Firefighters Association