

Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue

Fire Chief's Report

March 2020



Vision

A responsive and sustainable fire-rescue service, effectively meeting community needs and valued by those we serve.

Mission

Always learning, engaging and adapting to be response ready.



COVID-19 Operational Readiness update. There have been drastic and substantial changes in our Fire Department since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic. We had taken what was viewed at the time as extraordinary measures to be proactive in protecting the health and safety of our membership and community at large. We closed our offices to the public and prohibited all non-essential member traffic to our fire halls. We cancelled all face-to-face group training and meetings, which have since moved online with great success. Staff began multiple daily decontamination protocols of our halls and apparatus. Listing all the measures here is too lengthy for this letter. Suffice it to say, we were a month ahead of recommended government guidelines.

By taking measures so early on, we have been able to keep our membership completely healthy and able to respond 24/7. We responded to a structure fire on March 27th in the early hours of the morning and the house was saved. We want you to know that we are here for you, we are healthy, and we are taking every precaution available to us to protect our Responders and our island. Recently, we have formed a Mental Health Task Force to help manage the added stress on our membership. Professional online counselling is also available at no cost to our Firefighters and First Responders. We have been working very closely with BC Ambulance and Lady Minto Hospital to coordinate our response and again reduce exposure to our members and the public. We are monitoring and adapting to this very dynamic situation.

There have been some changes to protocols with respect to medical calls that you should be made aware of. Most importantly, our First Responders may appear unrecognizable with the added personal protective equipment. For example, gowns, masks, and face shields are now standard. Some of which have been made right here on Salt Spring Island by an army of volunteers inside and outside our department - to whom we are extremely grateful! It is that spirit of togetherness and perseverance that will see us through this Pandemic. As a community we have already triumphed over two natural

disasters in the last few years. A catastrophic windstorm and a snowstorm both shutdown our island and forced us into isolation. Albeit far more temporarily than our current situation. This too shall pass.

Many of you have asked, *what can I do to help?* The obvious answer is stay home and limit the spread of this virus. Our geography works both for us and against us. We are so fortunate to have outdoor space to enjoy and still be able to maintain our physical distance. We are, however, an island with extremely limited resources should this escalate. Therefore, we are asking you not only to stay home but to take great care in all that you do. Do not take unnecessary risks. Drive carefully. Every emergency we can avoid saves resources for where they are most needed.

Alas, we will again persevere. Salt Spring Island is special. Anyone that lives here knows and feels that in their own way. Let us practice gratitude for what we have and patience for the coming weeks and months.

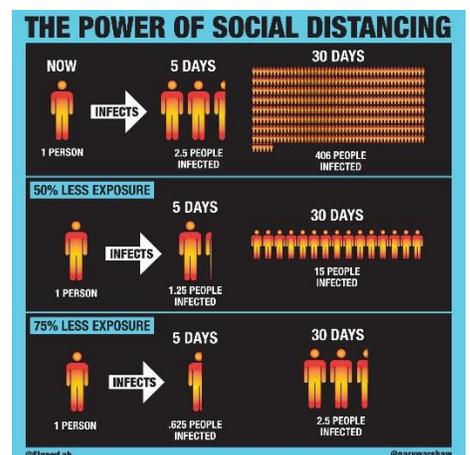
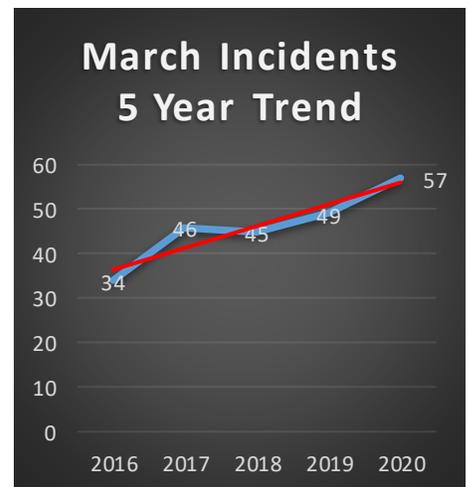
Response Report

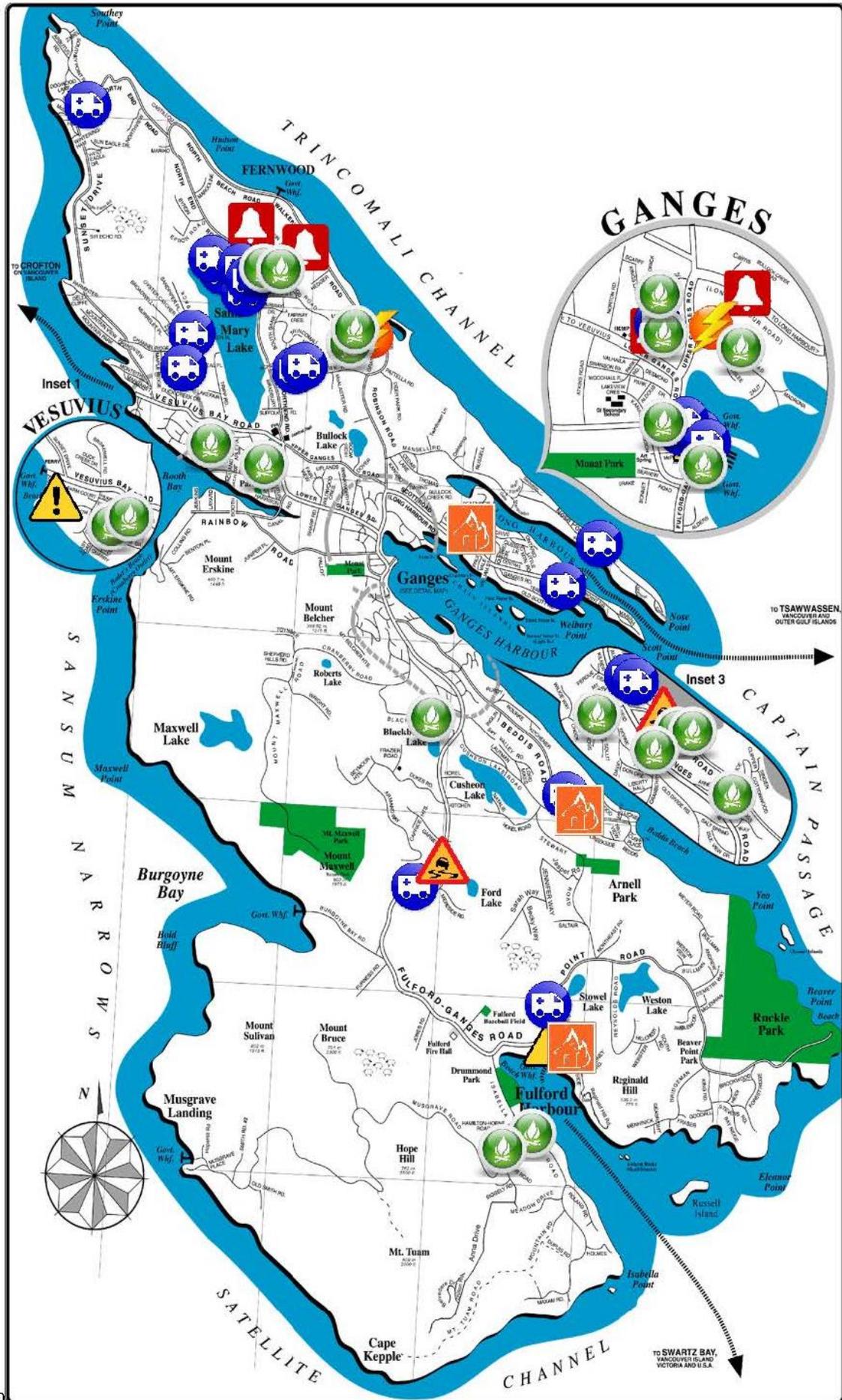
Salt Spring Island Firefighters responded to **57** calls for the month of March.

INCIDENT LEGEND		March 2020	Total Calls: 57
	Aircraft-Crash		
	Alarm Bells	CO 2	
		Commercial 2	
		Intrusion	
		Residential	
	Assistance	BCAS 1	
		Flooding 1	
		General Public 1	
		Misc Complaint	
		Public Works	
		RCMP	
	Beach	Beach Fire	
	Boat	Distress/Fire	
	Brush/Grass	Bark Mulch	
		Fire	
		Smoke Smell/Sighting	
	False Alarm	CO	
		Commercial	
		Residential	
	Fire-Misc	Misc Fire	
	HazMat	Chlorine	
		Petroleum Spill/Fire	
		Propane	
		Chemical/inknown spill/leak	
	Hydro	Fire	
		Lines Down 2	
		Tree on Lines	
	Medical	Medical A/B	
		Medical C	
		Medical D 21	
		Medical E 1	
	MVI	MVI 2	
	Open Burn	Campfire 3	
		General 18	
	Rescue	Animal	
		Elevator	
		Rope/High/Confined	
		Search	
		Water/Ice/Drowning	
	Rubbish	Rubbish/Dumpster Fire	
	Structure Fire	SFComm - Smoke/Smell	
		SFComm (Structure Fire)	
		SFRes - Chimney 2	
		SFRes - Mob Home/Trailer	
		SFRes - Smoke/Smell	
		SFRes - (Structure Fire) 1	
	Vehicle Fire	Vehicle Fire	
		Total Calls for the month: 57	

This month::	FIRE	30
	RESCUE	2
	MEDICAL	23
	ASSISTANCE	2
		57

YTD::	FIRE	68
	RESCUE	13
	MEDICAL	75
	ASSISTANCE	15
		171





Operations

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy in collaboration with provincial public health partners issued (March 26th, 2020) open burning restrictions for all High Smoke Sensitivity Zones across the province until further notice.

As cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in BC continue to increase, the BC Centre for Disease Control recommends implementing measures that help to reduce excess air pollution in populated airsheds across the province. There is strong evidence that exposure to air pollution increases susceptibility to respiratory viral infections by decreasing immune function. This means that:

- Deterioration in air quality may lead to more COVID-19 infections overall,
- Deterioration in air quality may lead to more cases of severe COVID-19 infections, adding further demand to our healthcare system, and
- Improvements to air quality may help to protect the whole population from COVID-19 and its potentially severe effects.

[Provincial Press Release Link](#)



Training



With COVID-19 impacting our regular training, SSIFR has adapted and transitioned to online training and group virtual Operational Update meetings. All face to face group training has been cancelled until further notice to protect our members from unnecessary exposures to COVID-19. Before restrictions came into effect, our junior members spent their first weekend in March getting their certification for Airbrakes. This certificate is one step closer to becoming a fire truck driver / operator.

Membership

Salt Spring Island Fire Rescue Roster

■ Career ■ POC Officers ■ POC Firefighters ■ POC FIT's ■ Cadets



Community Risk Reduction

Fire Inspections

21 Fire/Life Safety Inspections



6 Site Consultations



Fire & Life Safety Education

28 Community Outreach



SSIFR Fire and Life Safety Education team:

- Our Education team met with the Fernwood grade 1 class talking about fire and life safety (24)
- SSIFR presented a public presentation on Fire Smart Principles as part of the Emergency Program Workshop Series. (4)

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Arjuna George

Fire Chief