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ANNUAL REPORT

RED LODGE FIRE RESCUE – FIRE DIVISION

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Fire Division

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2019 - 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Mission	3
Fiscal Year Highlights	3
Operations	4
Personnel	5
Staff Participation	5
Recruitment and Retention	5
Career Staff	6
Fire Prevention	6
Inspection and Plan Review	6
Public Education.....	6
Hazardous Fuels Reduction.....	7
Wildland Fire Mobilization.....	7
Capital Improvements	8
Future Goals	9

Cover Photo: Members of RLFR at the Shovel Creek Fire, Fairbanks, AK July 2019

Introduction

Red Lodge Fire Rescue (RLFR) provides high quality structure and wildland fire suppression, Critical Care Advanced Life Support and basic level EMS, technical rescue and extrication, hazardous wildland fire fuels reduction, as well as fire prevention and plan review services. RLFR represents a cooperative partnership between the Red Lodge Rural Fire District 7 (RD7), the City of Red Lodge Fire Department (RLFD), Carbon County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue (SAR), and the Red Lodge Roberts Ambulance District (RLRAD). This partnership provides these services more efficiently than each entity could provide alone and at a much higher level than that found in comparable communities of similar size.

The partnership has evolved over time to include seamless operation and sharing of volunteers, facilities, and equipment. In July of 2014, the three fire and EMS partner organizations were administratively consolidated through inter-local agreement under the management of the Red Lodge Rural Fire District. In July of 2015, Carbon County Search and Rescue was consolidated into RLFR by agreement.

Mission

The mission of RLFR is to provide quality fire and emergency services to the community it protects while providing a good value to the taxpayer by reducing insurance premiums, providing the highest possible level of service, and offering increased opportunities for community volunteers.

Fiscal Year Highlights

Operationally, RLFR's Fire Division responded to an average call volume with a total of 160 calls for service during the fiscal year.

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought many challenges to the Fire Division in the last half of the fiscal year, including suspension of all meeting and training activities in person, some career staff performing administrative duties from home, more complex response operations, reduced fire prevention activities, and some degree of financial concern. The planned purchase of a new Type 1 fire engine was postponed due to concerns over the potential for reduced tax revenue.

RLFR personnel and equipment were again dispatched to 16 out of area fire assignments across the United States in Montana, Alaska, Wyoming, and California as well as the assisting the COVID-19 Incident Management Teams in Carbon and Yellowstone County.

The Fire Division graduated a Recruit Academy in June of 2020 with a total of 4 new firefighter recruits. New textbooks and online resources are being incorporated into this academy in an effort to meet NFPA Firefighter Type I requirements. This program will eventually offer a nationally accepted certification for firefighter training.

Overall the Fire Division and the District as a whole continues to fulfill its mission and provide an excellent value to the community. Capital investment will continue to challenge the District, particularly in building replacement or improvement in the next few years. Volunteer and career staff recruitment and retention continues to be a struggle for the organization, with several personnel at or near retirement age, particularly those members with the most experience in the organization.

Operations

The Fire Division of RLFR continues to provide exceptional fire, rescue, and hazardous materials response to the community. The level of professionalism and experience in the department is extraordinary for a community of this size. During the fiscal year, the fire division responded to a total of 151 calls for service with a total estimated dollar loss of \$1,192,100.00. The majority of the reported loss was a result of a structure fire that resulted in a complete loss of a home on Silver Run Road and the structure fire at AY Supply in Red Lodge. Additional losses were two structure fires in the Roberts Rural Fire District (\$210,000.00).

Fire Incidents by Type		
Call Type	Number of Calls	Estimated Dollar Loss
Fire, Building or Structure	5	\$1,100,000.00
Fire, Wildland	6	\$92,100.00
Fire, Vehicle	4	
Motor Vehicle Accident	41	
Hazardous Condition	8	
Service Call	4	
Cancelled / No Incident Found	77	
Controlled Burning	1	
False Alarms	1	
Other	4	
Total	151	\$1,192,100.00

Four Year Call History				
Call Type	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Fire, Building or Structure	6	2	3	5
Fire, Wildland	6	7	11	6
Fire, Vehicle	3	3	2	4
Motor Vehicle Accident	41	43	39	41
Hazardous Condition	10	11	5	8
Service Call	4	2	4	4
Cancelled / No Incident Found	47	73	89	77
Controlled Burning	2	1	3	1
False Alarms	13	5	0	1
Other			7	4
Total	132	147	156	151

RLFR not only responds to fires within its jurisdictional boundaries; it also assists neighboring departments and agencies throughout the summer in wildland fire suppression. During the fiscal year, RLFR crews responded to a total of 17 fires at the request of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (MT-DES). Most of these requests were from out of state, as the fire season was moderate in Montana this season. Crews responded to fires in Alaska and California as well as a few in Eastern Montana.

Personnel

RLFR continues to maintain an adequate volunteer roster to serve the needs of the community with recruitment and retention issues still offering challenges to department staffing. Total fire division personnel include 6 career staff and 29 volunteer members. Of the fire division's 35 total members, 4 are Chief Officers, 4 are Captains, 6 are Lieutenants, and 21 are firefighters.

Staff Member Participation				
Activity	FY 2019 Total	FY 2020 Total	2019 Avg	2020 Avg
Fire Calls	1183.77	1446.75	30.35	39.10
Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance	275.5	366.15	7.06	9.90
Adminstration	1243	1092.65	31.87	29.53
Community Service	49.65	65.5	1.27	1.77
Training	2845.5	1245.95	72.96	33.67
Total Volunteer Staff Hours	5597.42	4217	151.28	120.49

Training of firefighters is a key aspect of the success of operations in any fire service organization. This fiscal year, members attended a total 1245.95 hours of training. Members participated in a total of 1040 hours of department offered training and an additional 206 of training offered outside the department. This is sharp decline over last year, largely due to the complete suspension of in-person training due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of all major conferences and training events that our members traditionally attend such as the Cody Fire School, Fire and EMS Conferences, and state conventions.

Staff Participation

RLFR's volunteer fire division staff participate in an extraordinary amount of department related activities ranging from incident response to administration, though the coronavirus certainly reduced those activities this fiscal year over last fiscal year. Overall participation in call response was higher than average, but training hours were greatly reduced. Volunteers are vital to the delivery of adequate fire protection in the Red Lodge Area.

Recruitment and Retention

In December of 2019, the Fire Division started the 2020 Recruit Academy with a total of 4 new members, 2 of which are new to the division and two were career staff members, hired last year in the after the conclusion of the 2019 Recruit Academy.

Volunteer retention continues to be a primary goal of the organization, as well as succession planning for future department leadership. Our current roster of Company Officers is designed to provide opportunities for experienced volunteer members to advance in the organization and eventually lead the department into the future. Our current recruitment rate is sustaining the department at an adequate level of personnel, but despite ongoing efforts to bring in younger volunteer members who are committed to stay in the Red Lodge Area, we have been unable to substantially increase fire division membership over the last several years. An increase in membership will become more and more

important as the Fire Division faces the likely retirement of several key officer-level personnel over the next several years.

Career Staff

The primary mission of RLFR’s five career staff members is to enable our volunteer staff to be successful in their jobs with the organization. RLFR filled two vacant firefighter paramedic positions as well as a newly created part time firefighter AEMT position over the fiscal year. This position has been budgeted to move to full time sometime in the winter of 2021.

In June of 2019, our rotating on shift firefighter-paramedic staff began a new 48/96 schedule. This scheduled has proven to be much better for our career staff, allowing them more time away from work while spending more time dedicated to station staffing. This scheduled removed the majority of their on-call requirements.

Fire Prevention

RLFR provides fire prevention and inspection services within the boundaries of the City of Red Lodge. The fire prevention program consists of regular fire safety inspections, plan review, hydrant inspections and flow testing (when required), and public education programs.

Inspection and Plan Review

The inspection program focuses on inspections of commercial properties with the highest incidence of public interaction such as assembly type occupancies. RLFR also routinely inspects residential short term vacation rental properties.

Inspection activities over the reporting period were primarily focused on short term residential rentals. This demand is being driven by policy changes in the City of Red Lodge, requiring inspections for all short term rentals. Plan review was mostly subdivision related.

Fire Prevention Activity		
Prevention Activity	FY 2019	FY 2020
Plan Review - General	2	0
Plan Review - Fire Protection System	1	0
Inspection - Permit Related	2	0
Inspection - Fire Safety	30	62
Reinspection	11	9
Inspection - Review System Inspection	7	3
Consultation - Fire Safety	2	1
Total	55	75

Public Education

RLFR’s Fire Division participates in many fire prevention related community events throughout the year. Volunteer and career staff participated in Fire Prevention Week activities at both the Red Lodge and Luther schools as well as assisted with the Bike Rodeo. Additionally, a few students from the Red Lodge High School participated in a job shadow program, spending a day in the station and working with career staff during their shift.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction

The Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program of RLFR seeks to reduce the risk of wildland fire, increase fire safety, and increase the chances of saving property in our service area by reducing wildland fire fuels around homes and other improvements. This program also provides a funding mechanism for wildland fire staffing over the summer months. Without this program, the success of the Wildland Fire Mobilization Program, detailed below, would not be possible. Due to the extremely busy fire season, our crews were away most of the summer work season. Our crews did complete fuels reduction work on a total of 6 projects during the time they had here.

Last fiscal year the program ran into the negative for the second year in a row. This occurred due the very busy fire season, with crews often split, and personnel working on department duties to maintain equipment and supplies for those responding to fires. This year the program is showing a gain of \$21,103.87. These funds are utilized for community fuels reduction projects, such as park and road clearing as well capital purchases for the next fiscal year such as new chain saws and vehicle maintenance.

RLFR was awarded a Western States Governor’s Grant in the amount of \$225,000.00 for project work beginning last spring. We continue to secure smaller projects, funded by a combination of

Hazardous Fuel Program Financials FY 2019-2020	
Revenue	
Grant Funded Projects	\$72,430.86
Land Owner Funded Projects	\$60,581.11
Total Revenue	\$133,011.97
Expenses	
Salaries	\$80,046.56
Supplies / Services	\$31,861.54
Total Expenses	\$111,908.10
Net Revenue	\$21,103.87

BLM and State of Montana fuels reduction grants as well as homeowner funded projects, including \$12,000.00 awarded to RLFR by the BLM last fiscal year.

RLFR completed treatment on several acres of private land including work in Grizzly Peak and Aspen Hollow Subdivisions, and the 400 Ranch. The crew also assisted Red Lodge Mountain with work on their projects. The Hazardous Fuels Crew completed home assessments on structures and also assisted the US Forest Service with fuels reduction projects near the end of the fiscal year in June. This cooperative program has proven to be an important partnership in reducing the threat of wildland fire in our community.

Wildland Fire Mobilization

The Hazardous Fuels Program provides the majority of our available staff to respond to out of district requests for fire assistance. This aspect of the program is critical to maintaining our capital asset replacement funds for wildland fire apparatus.

RLFR responded to a total of 16 requests for assistance on State Fire Mobilizations this year, including support of fires in Southern California. The 2019 fire season was busy, with volunteer and fuels crew personnel staffing fire assistance requests beginning the first week of June all the way through the middle of September 2020. These fire mobilizations added \$120,747.48 to the District’s capital

improvement fund. This is a decrease over last year’s revenue after expenses of \$219,880.24. We were requested to assist with fewer fires overall this last season and staffed severity personnel for the DNRC, which reduces overall equipment revenue.

Our volunteer staff contributes greatly to the wildland firefighting effort in Montana. Five of our members serve on the state’s County Assist Team (CAT). This team provides incident management at the Type 3 level throughout the state of Montana and last winter in the Southeast United States. Three members also help staff one of the Northern Rockies Type 2 management teams, providing assistance at the national level.

Fire Mobilization Activity FY 2019-2020	
Revenue	\$306,573.19
Expenses	
Salaries	\$161,565.40
Supplies / Services	\$24,260.31
Total Expenses	\$185,825.71
Net Revenue	\$120,747.48

Capital Improvements

The Rural Fire District budgeted for the replacement of E73 this fiscal as well as funds to pay off the remaining loan balance of \$200,000.00 for E75. Due to the financial insecurity that the coronavirus brought to local governments across the state, the District opted to postpone the purchase and loan payoff.

RLFR did take delivery of a new Type 2 ambulance for the EMS Division. Capital reserve funds were utilized for this purchase.

RLFR is also continuing to work on a major capital fund raising campaign to construct a large open air training facility along with a storage building, fire building, and rescue / extrication facilities at land on Highway 78 just outside of Red Lodge. Included in the future phases of this program are plans to develop a major remodel of the Red Lodge Fire Station, adding additional apparatus bays and training and office space. This is long term capital improvement project with construction slated to begin next spring. The total long term costs associated with this project could be several million dollars and will involve a long-term and substantial fund raising effort.

Fire Division - Major Capital Asset Register							
Asset	Year	Description	Purchased	Purchase Price	Condition	Owner	Rep. Cost
A71	2019	Type 1 Demers Ambulance	3/5/2019	\$192,796	Excellent	Rural	\$215,000
A75	2019	Type 2 Demers Ambulance	1/12/2020	\$79,400	Excellent	Rural	\$89,000
E71	2004	CAFS Structure Engine	7/1/2004	\$275,000	Good	City	\$650,000
E72	2000	Stucture / Wildland Engine	4/18/2002	\$117,003	Good	Rural	\$275,000
E73	1992	Structure Engine	7/3/2011	\$49,930.00	Fair	Rural	\$375,000
E75	2016	Structure / Wildland Engine	3/12/2015	\$378,554	Excellent	Rural	\$450,000
E76	2005	Wildland Engine	4/11/2007	\$58,682	Good	Rural	\$160,000
E77	2018	Wildland Engine	5/30/2018	\$159,153	Excellent	Rural	\$165,000
E78	2018	Wildland Engine	5/30/2018	\$159,153	Excellent	Rural	\$165,000
T71	2006	Water Tender	9/1/2006	\$253,043	Excellent	Rural	\$300,000
T72	2006	Water Tender	9/1/2006	\$253,043	Excellent	Rural	\$300,000
T73	1998	Water Tender	10/20/2008	\$65,000	Fair	Rural	\$300,000
R71	1991	Rescue Truck	1/15/2003	\$65,000.00	Good	Rural	\$300,000
R72	2016	Rescue Truck	3/23/2016	\$169,225.00	Excellent	Rural	\$225,000
701	2008	Command / Utility Vehicle	7/1/2008	\$60,000.00	Good	City	\$85,000
702	2019	Command / Utility Vehicle	6/24/2019	\$46,630.00	Excellent	Rural	\$51,000
705	2017	Jeep Rubicon	9/22/2017	\$38,310.00	Excellent	Rural	\$42,000
791	2015	Command / Com Vehicle	6/12/2017	\$354,600.00	Excellent	Rural	\$385,000
795	1999	Utility Vehicle	12/21/2015	\$0.00	Poor	Rural	\$42,000
794	2003	Utility Vehicle	4/29/2013	\$8,099.95	Poor	Rural	\$42,000
	2018	Honda UTV	3/2/2018	\$35,300.00	Excellent	Rural	\$35,000
	2008	Polaris UTV	12/21/2015	\$0.00	Fair	Rural	\$22,000
	2002	Live Burn Training Trailer	8/30/2002	\$69,500.00	Excellent	Rural	\$100,000
	1997	Command Bus	3/28/2007	\$27,000.00	Good	Rural	\$150,000
	2018	MSA SCBA (32)	5/30/2018	\$214,244	Excellent	Rural	\$240,000
	2004	Cascade Sytem / Compressor	11/22/2004	\$4,750	Good	Rural	\$12,000
	2008	Thermal Imaging Cameras (3)	1/15/2008	\$45,078	Good	Rural	\$60,000
	2016	Holmattro Extrication Tools	5/24/2016	\$13,556	Good	Rural	\$22,000

Future Goals

The Fire Division continues to grow and offer more services to the community. With that growth and expansion of services several key changes to our staffing model, program delivery, training, and organizational structure have occurred. As the organization has grown and changed organically, a need for strategic and master planning over the long term has developed.

RLFR's three divisions (Fire, SAR, and EMS) are looking forward to developing a master planning document over the next fiscal year to capture these changes and establish goals to streamline the organization into the future. This will be a large undertaking, with several stakeholders involved. This master planning document will include the aforementioned major capital improvement projects.