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(38)

From: ()
 Sent: August 30, 2009 7:48 PM
 To: MayorandCouncil
 Subject: Fwd: WVFR staffing cuts

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 From: ()
 Date: Sun, Aug 30, 2009 at 7:42 PM
 Subject: WVFR staffing cuts
 To: MayorandCouncil@westvancouver.ca
 Cc: editor@nsnews.com

I am once again voicing my opinion on what Mayor, Council and West Vancouver Fire Chief are allowing to happen with West Vancouver Fire Rescue. By taking the Rescue and Aerial out of service because of insufficient manpower puts every resident and anyone who happens to be in the Municipality and requires the help of WVFR at risk. HOW DARE YOU!

I proudly and eagerly served the citizens of West Vancouver as a Firefighter ()

The Fire Chief trying to pass off the lack of a Rescue and Aerial as insignificant is absurd in the extreme. I have been there. I have been first on scene and in Command at incidents on the roads and highways with multiple casualties waiting for the Rescue truck with its manpower and equipment to arrive. I have been first on scene at a smoke in a high rise call, packed up with my crew and ready to start up the stairs to the floor involved, looked over and seen the Aerial arrive on scene and know that if things are serious it is there for my crew and the residents of the high rise. These are specialized apparatus each carrying its own special equipment, a lot of it not carried on first line pumpers. West Van Firefighters are not only trained in fire fighting and First Responders but also auto extrication, high angle rescue, confined space rescue, swift water rescue, interface fire fighting, etc. Most of the specialized equipment to perform these duties is carried on the Rescue truck and Aerial Platform. What is going on now is that after a call for one of these rescues comes in the equipment that is thought will be needed is loaded in the back of the Duty Chief's pick up and delivered to the scene, in my opinion INSANE. The time delay, hopefully nothing is missed and the lack of two Firefighters who are trained and able to participate are a few of the problems with this remedy.

When I started in () WVFR had just manned stations 2 (Horseshoe Bay) and 3 (Caulfeild) to full time 24 hour crews from manned daytime and volunteer at night. The stations were only manned by two Firefighters. That was done because of the structure fire deaths in both areas. Three people died in a night time house fire in the Caulfeild area, two people died in a night time house fire in Horseshoe Bay, right next to the station. The powers that be in the Municipality at the time resisted manning those stations because of the cost. It took 5 people to die before the Council changed their minds.

This staffing problem is not new, Mayor and Council has know about it for over 20 years, and have known that it was only going to get worse. With the amount that has been paid in overtime over the years I wonder if it may not have been cheaper to keep up with the problem rather than ignoring it and having to deal with it all at once. West Vancouver has had 7 Fire Chiefs since 1978. Seven Fire Chiefs in 31 years, One has to wonder, after spending your whole career working towards the top position why, on the average, would they spend less than 5 years in that position. Is it any wonder things are in the shape they are. How do you maintain a consistent long range plan for a Department with such a large turnover at the top. Every Chief has a different agenda from his predecessor. Over my years I lost track of the number of surveys and studies done by hired independent outside firms. trying to justify under manned apparatus and to close one of the four stations. All of them came back with the same answers. We need more Firefighters and we need

one more Fire Station. All were ignored by Council of the day because it did not tell them what they wanted to hear. The most recent was the Fire Advisory Group, These were residents of West Vancouver who volunteered their time. Their conclusion, 18 Firefighters on duty is the bare minimum and we need another Fire Station. Thanks for your time, but that is not what we want to hear. One of the group has spoken up about his disappointment about the dismissal of their findings. Mayor, Council, Chief, please don't waste residents time and don't spend anymore money on studies asking the same question you've had the overwhelming answer to for over 20 years.

It is my understanding that the last incident of a structure fire on IR 5 the Rescue and Aerial were out of service because of lack of manning. The Firefighters had to reuse almost exhausted air bottles before fresh bottles arrived. While all first line pumpers carry air packs for all four of the crew and a spare for each pack with the heat and exertions of a working fire the air supply is eaten up pretty quickly. Again the Rescue and Aerial carry many more spare bottles which were not available when needed, and the Rescue Truck has an on board filling station so air bottles can be filled on scene. An off duty Chief had to be contacted, drive to 1 station, pick up fresh bottles off the Aerial or Rescue and take them to the scene. At the same time as the structure fire there was a medical aid call in the Caulfeild area. That was responded to by the standby pumper from NVDFD. I have sat on the highway on standby numerous times as the only available pumper in the District and was uneasy in the extreme. We would standby in the center of West Van just off the highway and respond to any other emergency that happened any where in West Van. For the Fire Chief to say that there would only be a 4 minute delay in response of that standby pumper is just not true. Standing by just below the Salmon House adds considerable time responding to the top of the Properties or out to White Cliff, or the lower Caulfeild area, as well as other areas, remember West Van's response area stretches from Jacob Crescent to Sunset Beach. During my career I participated in at least two response time studies.

West Vancouver has a dedicated, passionate and professional Fire Rescue Service, one of the best on the Lower Mainland. Any accusations that they are voicing their concerns over these issues for selfish, self serving reasons is an insult. They care in the extreme about what they do, they care about the people they serve. Seeing their ability to look after the residents of West Vancouver being slowly but surely eroded is frustrating and demoralizing. There are rules by WCB that state how many Firefighters have to be on scene before there can be an aggressive interior attack on a structure fire for rescue or extinguishment. There are standard operating procedures for WVFR that state how many bodies have to be on scene for rescues such as confined space, high angle and swift water rescues should proceed. These are in place so that the incident does not end up with more victims. There is a minimum North American standard for the number of personnel on an apparatus. West Vancouver is saying it may be okay to operate under these standards. Four man pumpers is not written in stone in West Vancouver and the threat of dropping to 3 man pumps is always there. In West Van two Firefighters man both the Rescue and Aerial. If the Rescue is out on a call the Aerial is not available, and visa versa. I would call that bare minimum manning. We are on a very slippery slope here and if Mayor, Council and the Fire Chief are allowed to continue their cost cutting no Rescue and Aerial and thee man pumpers may not be far off. The month of August alone there were 21 days when the Aerial and Rescue were not manned, 21 days and nights. West Vancouver has had a manned Rescue and Aerial since the first Aerial arrived in 1979. How Mayor, Council and the Fire Chief can sit back and allow this to happen is unbelievable. You can take this to the bank, it is absolutely only a matter of time before they get caught. I just hope it is not me or mine that pays the price. It would be my guess that the money is found to man both apparatus during the 2010 Olympics. I'll bet the Fire Chief breaths a sigh of relief when he drives over the Lions Gate bridge and crosses through Vancouver, Richmond and Delta () knowing if he is involved in a serious MVA the necessary resources are available deal with the situation.

Anyone who uses the highways, streets and bridges in West Vancouver should be concerned. Anyone who uses the parks and rivers for recreation in West Vancouver should be concerned. Anyone who lives in a high rise in West Vancouver should be concerned. Anyone who works in West Vancouver and has to enter a confined space should be concerned. Hell everyone should be concerned. Mayor, Council and the Fire Chief have decided it's okay to gamble with your safety.

Mayor and Council have been told by the residents that they want no reduction in the core services and yet it is being done slowly and quietly regardless. Each time the Rescue and Aerial are taken out of service the lives of residents and Firefighters are put at risk. It will only be a matter of time until the folly of these decisions is proven.

Lastly it is also only a matter of time before North Vancouver get fed up with supplementing West Vancouver with resources that Mayor, Council and Fire Chief don't choose to man full time. Mutual aid is just that mutual aid, How

long do you think North Van will deplete their resources when West Van won't and can't reciprocate, West Van is one of the richest Municipalities on the Lower Mainland and yet it has been decided not to properly man an essential service, and shame on the people who are allowing this to happen, Shame on all of us for allowing this to happen. I for one will remember the next time I am asked for my vote and will do my best to inform my neighbours and fellow residents of West Vancouver.

Mayor and Council, hire the people needed to maintain at least 18 Firefighters per shift 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

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