



# ANNUAL REPORT //2015



## Port Alberni Fire Department



Port Alberni Fire Department

2015  
Annual Report

The Fire Department provides the following services:

- Firefighting (residential, commercial, industrial, wildland)
- Rescue/extrication (including regional coverage)
- Medical 1st Responder supplementing the BC Ambulance Service
- Structural High Angle Technical Rope Rescue
- Confined Space Rescue
- Hazardous Material Spill response
- Fire Prevention, Inspection, Education & Code enforcement
- Contract Fire Suppression to multiple clients including industrial, residential and First Nations
- Emergency Preparedness Planning including management of the Tsunami Warning System

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Kat Slepian, [Alberni Valley News](#)



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Elected Officials 2014 – 2018

Councillors Ron Paulson and Dan Washington, Mayor Mike Ruttan,  
Councillors Chris Alemany, Sharie Minions, Denis Sauvé and Jack McLeman



During 2015 the Alberni Valley experienced a long, dry and hot summer season, resulting in wildfire risk conditions not experienced in the Alberni Valley since the 1950s. Those conditions were experienced throughout the coastal region, resulting in a high number of wildfires, some of which consumed considerable tracts of forest fuels before being controlled.

In the Alberni Valley we experienced the Dog Mountain Fire in early July. The Dog Mountain Fire, the largest in the Alberni Valley since the 1967 Taylor River Fire, consumed 450 hectares of forested land. Because Dog Mountain is almost completely surrounded by the waters of Sproat Lake, the fire was highly visible to the public, causing considerable concern to area residents whose homes were threatened. One cabin on Dog Mountain was consumed in the fire.

The extreme hot and dry weather conditions of 2015 contributed to several other fires in the Alberni Valley and to a heightened risk of fires for a prolonged period of time. PAFD responded to that risk by equipping and

staffing a light wildland firefighting vehicle through the summer season. That unit was made available to respond on behalf of BC Wildfire Service in the event that it was required.

During 2015 there were more structure fires in Port Alberni than in any other year on record. While there were some fire cause-and-origin commonalities such as weather conditions, socio-economic related living conditions and substance abuse, there was no single reason for the spike in fire activity experienced in 2015. From a community safety and livability perspective, 2015 was not a successful year given the number of structure fires that occurred, and the resultant economic loss and the displacement of so many residents due to fire. From a fire suppression response perspective, PAFD performed very well. I was extremely pleased with the response of our personnel to the workload challenges that we faced throughout the year.

Our automatic aid and mutual aid partners are to be thanked for the support that they gave us in 2015. Sproat Lake Fire Department and Beaver Creek Fire Department both responded into the City multiple times during 2015 under our automatic aid agreement, providing staffing and equipment support that we have come to rely upon. Cherry Creek Fire Department also responded into the City in support of PAFD during 2015 under our mutual aid agreement. The mutual aid response was triggered by two fires occurring at the same time, one an active fire involving Catalyst Paper’s #5 paper machine, and the other a multi-family residential building.

2015 was a year marked by PAFD leadership transition. In early 2015 Deputy Fire Chief Chris Jancowski left PAFD to take a fire chief position with the Township of Esquimalt. Chief Jancowski had been with PAFD for seven years in the deputy chief role, where he excelled at improving PAFD operations and also at helping many of our neighbouring community fire departments in improving their operations.

After undertaking an exhaustive and competitive process, the City hired Wes Patterson as PAFD’s new deputy chief. Chief Patterson had previously worked as a fire chief in the Thornhill Fire Department where he had demonstrated the leadership skills sought by PAFD. Chief Patterson is particularly strong at developing and maintaining external stakeholder relationships, and at supporting volunteer firefighters and officers, two skillsets that are important to the future success of PAFD and the Alberni Valley fire services.

On the whole 2015 was an eventful year, one in which PAFD brought considerable value to our community and demonstrated resiliency in the face of adversity.

*From a fire suppression response perspective, PAFD performed very well. I was extremely pleased with the response of our personnel to the workload challenges that we faced throughout the year.*



## Mission Statement

Our Mission is to enhance the quality of life of residents and taxpayers by creating a vibrant, healthy and united community through:

- Providing or facilitating the delivery of high quality core municipal services and programs
- Being fiscally responsible
- Planning and encouraging development to ensure a thriving economy and a strong tax base
- Maintaining infrastructure to support public health, growth and economic diversification
- Providing leadership and building partnerships (internal/external) of benefit to the City

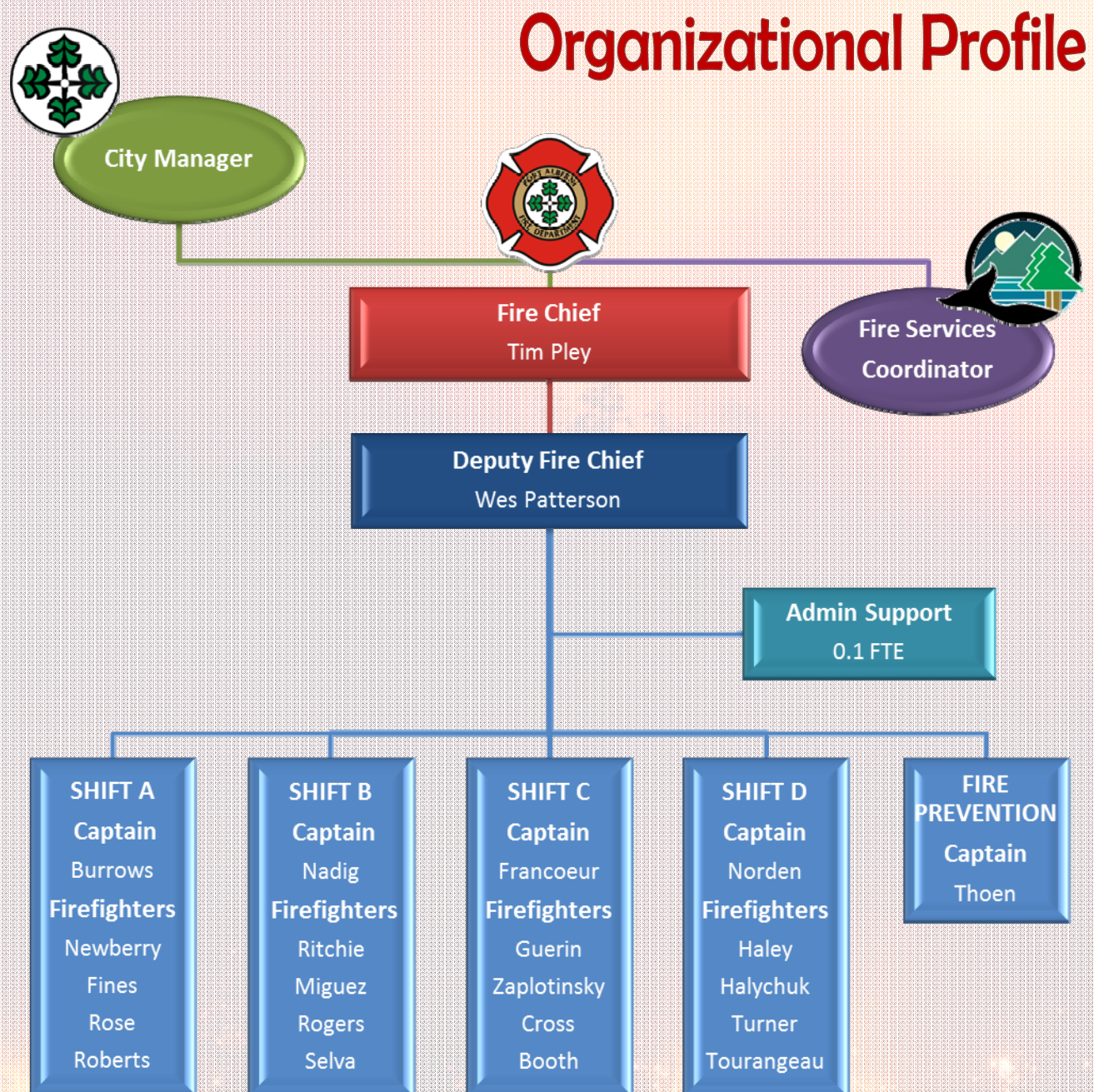
## Vision Statement

The City of Port Alberni is a vibrant waterfront community at the heart of the West Coast that ...

- Is sustainable and environmentally responsible
  - Is safe, caring, and healthy
  - Has a robust and diverse economy
- Is welcoming, accessible and attractive
  - Is actively creating its future







## Personnel

### Deputy Chief C.W. (Wes) Patterson

Wes joined the PAFD in July 2015.

Wes was born in Winnipeg Manitoba and raised in Terrace BC. He joined the Thornhill Volunteer Fire Department in 1983, became a full time employee of the Regional District of Kitimat Stikine in 1999 responsible for Emergency Services and Emergency Program Coordinator and was appointed Fire Chief in 2005. During his time with TVFD he has worked with First Nations Emergency Services Society and North West Community College to bring fire training to First Nations around the Terrace area, assisted with the implementation of 911 service, South Hazelton Fire Protection, Dease Lake Fire Protection and the Kemano Public Safety Initiative. He has served as the Zone 5 (Northern BC) rep for the BC Fire Training Officers and the Fire Chiefs Association of BC.

When not working he enjoys his time with wife Sharlene riding their motorcycle, camping and hopes to learn how to sail.







EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - RESPONSE TIMES

Considerable work has been done at PAFD in recent years to decrease response times to emergencies.

Fires in structures grow in size and severity exponentially over time. Associated damage to property and threat to life also increase exponentially over time as a fire grows unchecked.

The best way to stop fire growth, and associated risk and damage, is to assemble the necessary personnel and equipment at the scene of the fire, in order to control the fire near or at the point of ignition. In other words, fires are best controlled and extinguished when firefighters enter the structure as quickly as possible, and suppress the fire where it first ignited.

Therefore, one of the best measures of the efficiency of a municipality’s fire protection services is the time elapsed between the first call to 911 and the time when a full crew arrives on scene at the fire, ready to enter the structure and control the growth of the fire.

Likewise, the potential for survival from some medical emergencies decreases significantly as the response time of emergency personnel increases. Minutes and seconds in some cases can literally make the difference between life and death.

In the case of both structure fires and medical emergencies, outcomes are closely tied to response times. PAFD continues to strive for the fastest possible response times in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for those in need of our services.

Emergency Response Standards and Performance:  
Level and Timeliness of Response

The City of Port Alberni has adopted an initial response goal of four (4) firefighters with a travel time of four minutes or less, 90% of the time. This standard of care reflects recognized best practices.

While WorkSafe BC does not set regulations for level of service, it does require that before firefighters can enter into a building or other enclosed space for the purposes of suppressing a fire, there must first be assembled at that incident a minimum of four (4) firefighters. See excerpt from WorkSafe BC regulations below;

WorkSafe BC Regulation excerpt  
31.23 Entry into buildings

- 1) When self-contained breathing apparatus must be used to enter a building, or similar enclosed location, the entry must be made by a team of at least 2 firefighters.
- 2) Effective voice communication must be maintained between firefighters inside and outside the enclosed location.
- 3) During the initial attack stages of an incident at least one firefighter must remain outside.
- 4) A suitably equipped rescue team of at least 2 firefighters must be established on the scene before sending in a second entry team and not more than 10 minutes after the initial attack.
- 5) The rescue team required by subsection (4) must not engage in any duties that limit their ability to make a prompt response to rescue an endangered firefighter while interior structural firefighting is being conducted.



NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments

Fire Department **Total Response Time** to incidents is made up of several components broken down below;

- Alarm Handling which includes,
  - Call Answering (Public Service Answering Point) (PSAP)
  - PSAP Call Handling
  - Alarm Processing Time (Fire Dispatch Center)
- Turnout Time (PAFD)
- Travel Time (PAFD)

Of the above components that make up Total Response Time, PAFD controls only Turn Out Time and Travel Time. Other components of Total Response Time are controlled by the 911 call answering and dispatch service providers.

Turnout Time

The time interval that begins when the emergency response facility’s and emergency response units’ notification process begins by either audible alarm or visual annunciation, or both, and ends at the beginning point of travel time.

Over recent years PAFD personnel have made considerable effort to improve turnout times. Performance has improved significantly, especially when compared to performance 10 or more years ago.

Turnout times are often not reported in the fire service, largely because many fire departments do not perform at a level that meets the NFPA 1710 Standard, and because many fire departments do not share the same level of commitment to excellence and commitment to transparent reporting as does the City of Port Alberni.

Established standards (NFPA 1710) for Turnout Time are:

Medical Incidents	60 seconds 90% of the times
Fire and Special Operations	80 seconds 90% of the times

Based on 1186 emergency responses to such calls in 2015, PAFD met the above-noted standards for Turnout Time;

Medical Incidents	81% of the times
Fire and Special Operations	71% of the times

Average Turnout Times for PAFD in 2015 were;

Medical Incidents	41 seconds	(45 seconds in 2014)
Fire and Special Operations	57 seconds	(61 seconds in 2014)

Travel Time

Travel Time is defined as the time interval that begins when a unit is enroute to the emergency incident and ends when the unit arrives at scene.

Established standards (NFPA 1710) for Travel Time are:

Medical Incidents arrival of a first responder unit	240 seconds (4 minutes) 90% of the times
Fire Incidents first arriving unit	240 seconds (4 minutes) 90% of the times
Fire Incidents full alarm assignment (15 firefighters)	480 seconds (8 minutes) 90% of the times

Based on 2015 emergency responses to calls, PAFD met the above-noted standards for Travel Time;

Medical Incidents	74% of the times
Fire Incidents first arriving unit	62% of the times
Fire Incidents full alarm assignment	0% of the times







TURNOUT TIME AND TRAVEL TIME - 2015		
ITEM	STANDARD	PAFD PERFORMANCE
Turn out time – Medical Calls	60 seconds <b>90%</b> of the times	60 seconds <b>81%</b> of times
Turn out time – Fire Calls	80 seconds <b>90%</b> of the times	80 seconds <b>71%</b> of times
Travel Times – Medical Calls	240 seconds <b>90%</b> of the times	240 seconds <b>74%</b> of times
Travel Times – Fire Calls	240 seconds <b>90%</b> of the times	240 seconds <b>62%</b> of times
Full Assignment – Fire Calls	480 seconds <b>90%</b> of the times	480 seconds <b>0%</b> of the times

**Notes:**

1. Average turnout time for medical calls in 2015 was 41 seconds, better than the 60 second standard. The threshold of 60 seconds was met 81% of the times, just below the standard.
2. PAFD does not meet the standard for turnout time for fire and special operations calls (80 seconds 90% of the times) having achieved that mark 71% of the time.
3. Where PAFD does not meet travel time standards (240 seconds) options for improvement are external to fire department operations.
4. PAFD does not meet the standard for full assignment arrival (15 firefighters in 8 minutes). This standard is generally satisfied by fire departments in larger urban areas by allocating resources from multiple fire stations, and/or multiple fire apparatus from one station. PAFD responds with one crew of 4 firefighters from one station, and simultaneously dispatches two apparatus (4 firefighters each) from neighbouring fire departments, plus paging out of off duty PAFD personnel.



2014 AND 2015 INCIDENT TYPES					
CALL TYPE	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL FOR 3 YRS	%
Delta medical calls	493	566	481	1,540	43%
Echo medical calls	27	35	33	95	3%
Other medical calls (e.g. lift assistance) <sup>(1)</sup>	22	33	49	104	3%
Medical call sub-total	542	634	563	1,739	49%
Structure fire calls	31	33	44	108	3%
Other fire calls (e.g. brush fires)	171	191	149	511	14%
Motor vehicle crashes	118	136	145	399	11%
Alarms	167	182	173	522	14%
Other calls	109	96	112	317	9%
Total annual calls <sup>(2)</sup>	1,138	1,272	1,186	3,596	100%

<sup>(1)</sup> This category is used to explain the difference between databases that track incidents (e.g. PAFD’s Fire Management System, North Island Dispatch, BCAS).  
<sup>(2)</sup> Excludes mutual aid calls.

## The Importance of Responding To Medical Emergency Calls

The Port Alberni Fire Department attends approximately 550 medical emergency calls at the “Delta” and “Echo” levels each year (i.e. 89% “Delta” calls, 5% “Echo” calls and 6% minor medical calls).

Medical calls comprise 47.5% of the Department’s annual call volume. These calls are all relatively severe medical emergencies where BCEHS’ RAP indicates that a first response is warranted. (i.e. There is a life risk issue for the patient where First Responder level III-trained firefighters can have a positive impact on patient outcomes.) BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) and the Port Alberni Fire Department are both dispatched to these incidents.

For medical calls, PAFD arrives first 81% of the time with BCAS first 19% of the time. These statistics are based on analysis of 63 calls, which are representative of the annual medical call volume.

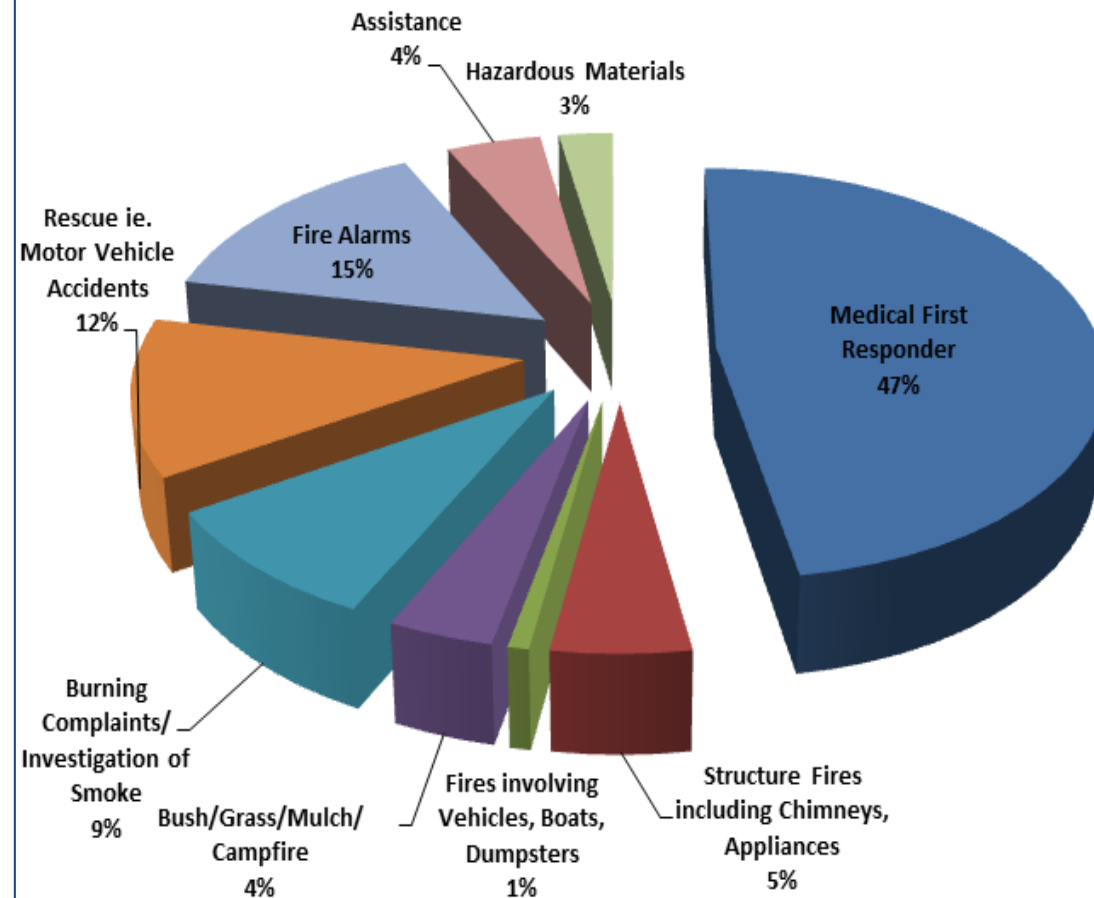
2015 TOTAL RESPONSES BY CATEGORY			
TYPE OF RESPONSE	2014	2015	PERCENT
Medical First Responder	631	563	47.5
Structure Fires including Chimneys, Appliances	59	59	5.0
Fires involving Vehicles, Boats, Dumpsters	14	9	0.8
Bush/Grass/Mulch/Campfire	61	45	3.8
Burning Complaints/Investigation of Smoke	112	107	9.0
Rescue i.e. Motor Vehicle Accidents	135	145	12.2
Fire Alarms	182	173	14.6
Assistance	45	54	4.6
Hazardous Materials	33	31	2.6
Total Responses	1272	1186	100



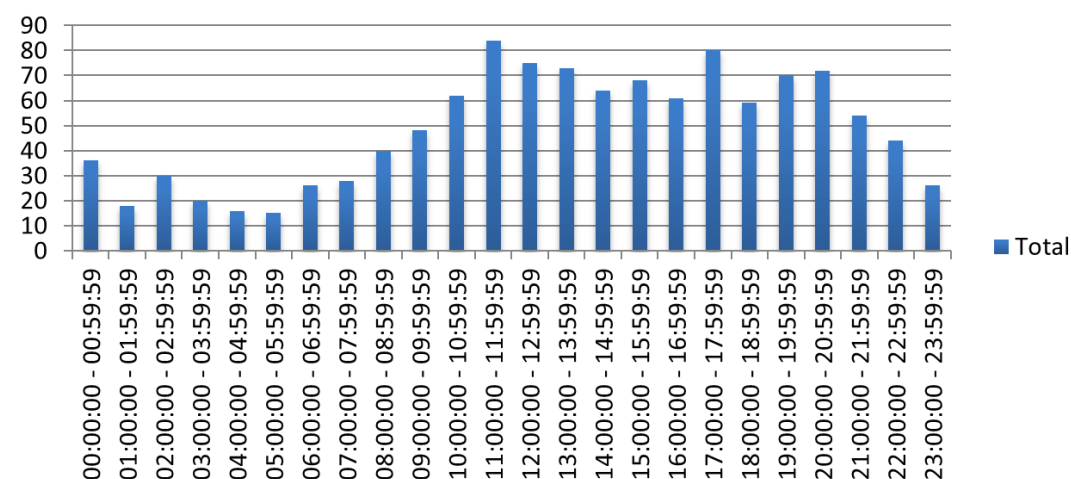




## 2015 Total Responses by Category



## Calls for Service by Hour - 2015



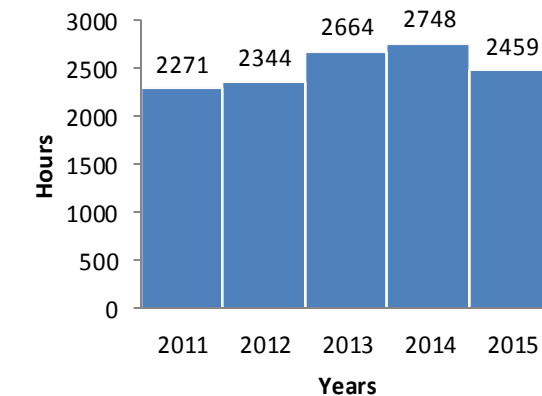
*This graphic demonstrates the total number of incidents occurring in each hour of the day. Most incidents occur in the afternoon and evening. The fewest incidents occur in early morning hours.*

# Training & Operations

## Training

The Port Alberni Fire Department was active in training during 2015. Members of the Department participated in over 2,459 person hours of training in preparation to serve the community's needs. This training was daily skills maintenance and officer development. The Department continued to train in support of other partner agencies such as the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and BC Ambulance Service.

## Total Department Training Hours



## Operations

The department responded to 1,186 incidents in 2015. This year was down 7.2% from last year. These calls ranged from structural fires to public assistance requests. Structure fire calls increased 33% to 44 calls. Medical calls were down by 12.6 %.



In 2015, partnering with the BC Wildfire Service (formerly the Wildfire Management Branch) continued. This partnership involved members being oriented to conduct initial size up and operations, and working with the Ministry in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

In 2015, the Department also continued with previous years' initiatives such as child car seat installation. This service is offered to parents in the community and has been positively received.

## EXTERNAL TRAINING COURSES

COURSE	LOCATION	HOURS
Supervisor Level III	Port Alberni, BC	4 Hours
Emergency Scene Management (ESM) I	Nanosee, BC	40 Hours
Emergency Scene Management (ESM) II	Victoria, BC	40 Hours
Fire Dynamix	Nanaimo, BC	8 Hours
Fire Officer II Training	Nanaimo, BC	60 Hours
ICS 400	New Westminster, BC	24 Hours



# Public Education



Public education continues in this division’s work. This year, a number of training sessions were delivered in partnership with trades training programs at NIC including Joinery, Construction Labourer and Care Aide Programs. The Fire Prevention Week theme was “Hear the Beep Where You Sleep” with presentations given to local grade three students using an eBook provided by NFPA and a fire investigation slide show from the Office of the Fire Commissioner.



**Fire Chiefs for a Day 2015 – Mia and Joshua**  
Each year the Port Alberni Fire Department celebrates Fire Prevention Week by selecting two school children as “Fire Chiefs for a Day”. This is a highly sought-after honour among school children. Fire Chief for a Day includes breakfast with fire fighters at McDonald’s, several opportunities to explore firefighting tasks, a ride on the City’s fireboat, a visit with the Mayor, lunch with the fire fighters, and finally being dropped off at school in a fire engine.



There were two “Fire Chiefs for a Day” that participated in activities at the Fire Hall at the end of October.



Social media became a valuable tool to distribute fire safety information to the public via the Fire Department’s Facebook and Twitter feeds with increased followings in both.

# Fire Prevention

Industrial inspections were priorities from 2014 that continued into 2015. The focus was to continue to work with two facilities to complete Fire Safety Planning and work with one facility to keep their current plan up to date based on their operations and needs. Smaller combustible dust operations continued to play a part with inspections and site reviews required for academic occupancies in the community. Extended Care Facilities continued to request assistance with Fire Safety Planning reviews, fire drills and training at local facilities.

The slight increase in the number of structure fires in 2015 resulted in the need for more fire investigations. Unseasonal warm temperatures arriving early combined with a number of other factors is believed to have contributed to the increase. Fire reporting to the Office of the Fire Commissioner was improved with the implementation of an electronic reporting process.



Fire extinguisher training with the City Works Yard crew

Positive community growth continued in 2015 with the beginning of construction of the Thunderbird building on Argyle Street on the former Somass Hotel site and an extensive renovation beginning on Beaver Creek Home Centre building in the late fall.

The solid fuel burner exchange program continued this year, with the majority of exchanges appearing to have occurred in the region. The City’s revised solid fuel burning bylaw continued to bring requests for inspection at the time of sale for properties. The requirement for all non-emission rated solid fuel burning devices to be removed from service by May, 2017 is approaching quickly.

Professional development for the Chief Fire Prevention Officer was limited to attending certified training in fire investigation in the fall of the year. A significant amount of time was spent training online and then attending practical training which resulted in attaining an IAAI – Fire Investigation Technician certification.

Changes to the City’s Business License process resulted in an improved collaborative effort between Building/ Planning Department and Fire Prevention to stream line site inspections, change of use reviews and other regulatory requirements. This process has crossed over into building permit application reviews, building plan reviews and final inspections for occupancy.



# FIRE



The Fire Department provides the following services:

- Firefighting (residential, commercial, industrial, wildland)
- Rescue/extrication (including regional coverage)
- Medical 1st Responder supplementing the BC Ambulance Service
- Structural High Angle Technical Rope Rescue
- Confined Space Rescue
- Hazardous Material Spill response
- Fire Prevention, Inspection, Education & Code enforcement
- Contract Fire Suppression to multiple clients including industrial, residential and First Nations
- Emergency Preparedness Planning including management of the Tsunami Warning System

## Highlights - 2015

- Supported City Council in adopting a comprehensive Fire Control Bylaw.
- Partnered with other Alberni Valley fire departments to prepare for hosting the Training Officers' conference in 2016.
- Partnered with Province's Wildfire Management Branch to assist in providing local coverage for wildfire initial attack services
- Expanded an industrial facility fire inspection program.
- Responded to 1 186 incidents, including 43 structure/content fire, a significantly higher than normal number of structure fires.
- Due to extreme weather-related fire risk conditions, experienced a high than normal number of outdoor fires.
- Supported ACRD in their Emergency Operations Center during the Dog Mountain fire event.

## Focus - 2016

- Prepare department's service plan to contribute to achievement of City Strategic Plan
- Tsunami Warning System - support Tseshaht FN to install and operationalize their tsunami warning system tower, which will be integrated with the City system.
- Co-host 2016 Fire Training Officers' conference
- Continue to advise and support Air Quality Council with woodstove exchange program, public awareness campaign.
- Partner with PAPFFA to provide a sauna facility for sweating out contaminants after attending fires.
- Support our partners at Alberni Clayoquot Regional District in hosting Exercise Coastal Response, the first ever Provincial-scale emergency response exercise.
- Seek Fire Underwriters' support in extending beyond 20 years the life of Ladder Truck 2
- Implement a Naloxone injection protocol that will enable firefighters to inject life-saving Naloxone to overdose victims.
- Complete a Fire Underwriters' Survey assessing the City's fire protection system.