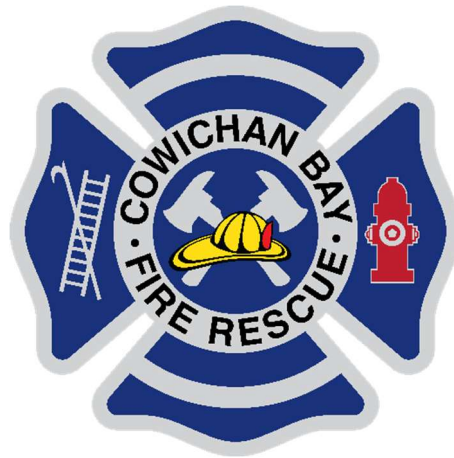


# COWICHAN BAY FIRE RESCUE

## Annual Report 2025



## Message from

### Fire Chief Dean Stennes

This report provides an excellent overview of the department's achievements over the past year and highlights the dedication, professionalism, and skill of the men and women who serve as our firefighters.

Their commitment to public safety, through emergency response, ongoing training, and community education initiatives, is a testament to the high standards maintained by this department. From fire suppression and rescue operations to public fire safety education, the contributions of our personnel have a meaningful and lasting impact on the wellbeing of our community.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the residents of Cowichan Bay Improvement District and the Board of Trustees. Your collaboration and trust in the fire department makes it possible to deliver a high level of service, and your recognition of the importance of our firefighters' work strengthens the department's ability to serve effectively.

We are proud of the achievements highlighted in this report and grateful for the dedication and leadership that our officers, firefighters and staff demonstrate every day. I look forward to continuing to work together with the community and the Board to ensure that Cowichan Bay remains a safe, resilient, and well-supported community.

### Thank You!



1938 Bickles Seagrave

## OUR MISSION (WHAT WE DO)

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue proudly serves our community by providing fire suppression and prevention, medical aid, and public education.

## OUR VISION (WHAT WE STRIVE FOR)

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue is a professional and highly trained team committed to excellence in fire service. We are trusted leaders in emergency response and public safety. We continuously adapt to the evolving needs of our community.

# OUR VALUES (HOW WE SHOW UP)

<b>Commitment</b>	We are dedicated to our purpose, to our community, and to our team. We put in 100% effort and we are always learning.
<b>Respect</b>	We take care of our equipment, our hall, each other, and the people we serve. We pay attention to the details and we do our best.
<b>Teamwork</b>	Teamwork is the foundation of who we are. We act in the best interest of each other and our community.
<b>Trust</b>	We earn the trust of our community and our team. We do this by training together, being consistent, being accountable, and having the skills and knowledge to do our jobs.
<b>Pride</b>	We are proud of our commitment, proud of our team, and our service to the community.
<b>Integrity</b>	We stand up for what's right and our actions align with our words.
<b>Accountability</b>	We accept responsibility for our actions and those of our team.



## History



### **The Early Years (1947–1962)**

The Cowichan Bay Volunteer Fire Department, as it was originally known, was established in 1947 with very modest beginnings. Its first equipment consisted of an old Air Raid Protection (ARP) unit pump and some lengths of 1½" hose, housed at a local gas station at Cowichan Bay and Wilmot Road.

The department's first piece of dedicated apparatus was a 3-ton Dodge truck purchased from Shell Oil Inc. Converted into the department's first tanker, it carried a 500-gallon water tank and a McCulloch fire pump. The first pumper truck was a 1938 Bickles Seagrave purchased from the Oak Bay Fire Department for \$2,500. This truck featured a 200-gallon tank, a 625 GPM pump, 300 feet of 2½-inch hose, and 1,000 feet of 2-inch hose, representing a significant upgrade in firefighting capacity at the time.

### **The Growing Years (1963–1976)**

By 1963, the department recognized the need for a permanent facility to accommodate its growing membership and equipment. This led to the creation of the Cowichan Bay District Fire Society, which undertook fundraising efforts to build a new fire hall.

On Saturday, March 13, 1963, the new Cowichan Bay Fire Hall was officially opened by Mrs. Myrna Ricketts, president of the Cowichan Bay Ladies Auxiliary. The hall, measuring 50 by 30 feet, was strategically located at the corner of Wilmot and Pritchard Roads, providing four-way access to the protection district.

In 1967, the department replaced its aging Bickles Seagrave pumper with a 1968 Ford Pumper, designated Truck 41. This new truck represented the most advanced equipment the department had operated since its founding in 1947, providing significantly improved firefighting capabilities for the growing community.



1976 brought the department more equipment as it received a brand new 1500 Gallon 1976 Ford cab-over tanker truck to be designated Truck 42, this truck was equipped with a Briggs & Stratton portable pump, two 1000 gallon drop tanks, and two 2" hard suction hoses.



### **Expansion and Modernization (1970s)**

By the 1970s, it became clear that the Cowichan Bay Fire Department needed a larger, more modern facility. With a new truck arriving soon, the existing hall could no longer accommodate the department's four pieces of apparatus. Additionally, the department's response area had grown sevenfold from its original size, now covering over 64 square miles.

A new fundraising campaign was launched, culminating in the official opening of the **new Cowichan Bay Fire Hall in 1977**. Strategically located at the intersection of the Trans-Canada Highway and Wilmot Road, the hall was positioned at the heart of the response area—a location still in use today.

Alongside the new hall, the department welcomed a **1977 International Hub Fire Engine**, designated Truck 44, which served the community with reliability and strength.





### **Planning for a New Fire Hall (2018–2025)**

As the needs of the Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue continued to evolve, concerns about the existing 1977 fire hall grew. It had become clear through building assessments and feasibility studies — including work completed in 2018 by the Cowichan Bay Improvement District and the Fire Department — that the station was no longer adequate for modern fire service requirements. These studies examined structural limitations, seismic risks, and the lack of appropriate space for firefighting operations, training, gear decontamination, and other essential functions. The findings reinforced the need to pursue a replacement facility that would better support the health and safety of volunteer firefighters and meet current building and safety codes.

In July 2022, the Cowichan Bay Improvement District undertook an Alternative Approval Process (AAP) asking resident property owners to approve borrowing funds for a new fire hall. The AAP successfully passed, allowing the district to borrow up to \$16 million toward the project — a critical step in moving the plan forward.

With community support secured, construction of a new, seismically certified fire hall began with a ground-breaking ceremony on November 27, 2023. The new facility, designed with input from HCMA Architects and project management by Integrity Consulting, represents a significant upgrade in space, safety, and function. Planned to meet post-disaster building standards and serve the community for at least the next 50 years, the hall was built directly behind the existing station so that operations could continue without interruption during construction.

The project includes expanded apparatus bays that can house modern fire apparatus without costly customizations, dedicated areas for gear washing and decontamination, enhanced training spaces, offices, and support facilities for volunteers. The new hall (approximately 18,547 sq ft) offers improved

environments for wellness, training, administration, and equipment maintenance, supporting the long-term sustainability of the department.

The new fire hall opened for service May of 2025 with an official community grand opening on September 27, 2025, marking a major milestone in the department's decades-long evolution and ensuring that Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue continues to serve its community safely and effectively well into the future.

Since these improvements, Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue has grown to include over 30 dedicated members. The department responds to an average of 250 emergency calls per year across a service area of approximately 170 square kilometers, which includes roughly 10,000 residents. The Improvement District covers a broader area than Electoral Area D (Cowichan Bay), encompassing parts of Cowichan Station, Koksilah, Cobble Hill, Arbutus Ridge, and surrounding communities.

The members of Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue generously give their personal time to serve their community. In addition to responding to emergency calls, each year they participate in roughly 50 training sessions, 50 equipment maintenance sessions, countless other community activities and educational events.

Beyond firefighting, members also respond to medical emergencies, often acting as first responders (EMA FR) for the BC Ambulance Service. They are trained in First Aid and CPR and carry specialized medical equipment, including automated external defibrillators (AEDs), providing critical care when seconds matter most.

The firefighters and first responders of Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue are always ready, demonstrating courage, skill, and dedication whenever our community needs them.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES 2025

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue attended 257 incidents between January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, as shown in the chart below.

### Yearly comparison of Incidents since 2021

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
January	13	15	15	17	16
February	16	12	33	12	17
March	15	9	17	21	20
April	12	17	17	9	18
May	12	39	20	22	23
June	12	17	20	20	25
July	18	16	18	18	21
August	37	25	54	18	33
September	17	21	15	13	18
October	19	22	29	19	19
November	20	29	13	22	22
December	47	10	9	13	25
<b>Totals</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>257</b>

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue attends a variety of incidents. The table below shows the types of incidents attended over the last 5 years.

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Incident Type</b>					
Medical Aid	31	34	65	54	66
All Fire Related	63	70	61	49	72
MVI	68	58	61	42	53
Alarms	31	24	47	32	39
Public Service	14	11	6	7	8
Wires Down	24	32	18	20	18
Hazardous Materials	7	3	2	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>257</b>

### Incidents by Type and Percentage

Type	Number	Percentage
<b>Totals</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>100%</b>
Medical Aid	66	26%
All Fire Related	72	28%
Motor Vehicle Incidents (MVI)	53	21%
Alarms	39	15%
Public Service	8	3%
Wires Down	18	7%
Hazardous Materials	1	1%

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue attends to all types of incidents at any time day and night. Below the table shows the days and times of day incidents occur.

Total Incidents	# Incidents	Times	Percentage
257	40	Midnight to 8AM	15%
	110	8AM to 4PM	43%
	107	4PM to Midnight	42%
Day	# Incidents	Times	Percentage
Monday to Friday	33	Midnight to 8AM	13%
Monday to Friday	80	8AM to 4PM	31%
Monday to Friday	80	4PM-Midnight	31%
Saturday and Sunday	64	All times	25%

### Training

Training occurred on a weekly basis. There were also weekend training events to provide additional training opportunities for members. All this training enables Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue to continue to meet the requirements set out by the Office of the Fire Commissioner, WorkSafe BC, and the Fire Underwriters who set insurance rates for the area.

### Community Events Involvement

Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue participated in several Community Events. This included the annual Easter Egg hunt at Coverdale Watson Park, Bench School Fun Fair, Halloween, Remembrance Day, Wounded Warrior Run, Santa Run and Food Drive.

### Firehall Tours

We conducted four scheduled hall tours with the following groups: SARDAV, Homeschool group, Duncan Probus Club and the Bonaventure Support Services.

## **Fire Prevention**

Members attended Bench School during fire prevention week and went over the basics of fire safety for 17 classes. We inspected three new daycares and one expansion in the area for Island Health licensing requirements and issued fourteen compliance notices as it relates to public safety and the fire safety act.

## **Wildfire Deployment**

During the 2025 wildfire season, Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue was called upon by the province to assist with the Wesley Ridge wildfire near Dashwood and Cameron Lake. This was the largest wildfire fire event on Vancouver Island. Tender 42 and two members assisted with this deployment.

## **Retirements**

In 2025 we saw the retirement of Lt. Noah Wickham after nine years of service. Noah has since been hired full time with Saanich Fire. Barnabas Arabambi after two years of service relocated out of district at the end of August.

## **New Recruits**

Each year Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue makes an annual call for recruits. In December of 2025, 3 new recruits were accepted into the Department.

## **Awards and Recognitions**

We are holding an awards banquet at the end of May 2026.

## **Chief 1 New Pickup**

Fire Chief response vehicle (Chief 1) has provided significant operational benefits to both the department and the community. This dedicated command unit enables rapid response, early incident command, and improved coordination.

Chief 1 is equipped with First Responder medical gear, allowing for immediate patient care, and includes a 150-gallon diesel tidy tank to support refuelling of our fire pump, generator and fire apparatus during extended incidents. This enhances operational efficiency, reduces downtime.

## **Significant Incidents and Community Impact**

Our department responded to several critical incidents that had a profound impact on both our members and the community we serve. Tragically, two of these incidents resulted in loss of life. These events serve as a solemn reminder of the risks that exist within our community.

Our members handled these difficult calls with professionalism, compassion, and dedication, reflecting the high standards of service expected within our department.

These incidents highlight not only the operational demands placed on our department, but also the emotional toll that emergency response can have on our personnel. We remain committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of our members and ensuring they have access to the resources they need following difficult calls.



Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue at the end of 2025 had 30 members.

- 1 Full time Fire Chief
- 1 Full time Deputy Chief
- 1 Full time Admin Assistant
- 27 Paid on Call members

**Total Hours each member contributed to Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue for 2025**

Members commit a huge amount of time to maintain the training requirements established by the province as well as attending incidents and public education events.

From January 1 to December 31, 2025, Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue members contributed the following hours to Incidents, Training, Public Education:

<b>Commitment Type</b>	<b>Hours</b>
<b>Training</b>	206
<b>Public Education</b>	82
<b>Incidents</b>	514
<b>Duty Crew Hours</b>	649
<b>Total Hours of Commitment</b>	1451

# FIRE DEPARTMENT APPARATUS

Chief 1 – 2025 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 Crew Cab 4 x 4

Command 47 – 2020 Ford F350 Crew Cab 4 x 4



Engine 41 – 2015 Smeal Fire Frontline Rescue Engine

Engine 44 – 2001 Superior Emergency Second Line Engine



Tender 49 – 2020 Kenworth Tender

Tender 45 – 2008 Kenworth Tender



Utility 46 – 2004 Ford F550 Mini Rescue / Wildland

Tender 42 – 2005 Sterling Tender

