

Mayor's Communiqué

June 2012

**JAWS OF LIFE now ROAD RESCUE
provided by our Creston Fire Rescue
and the Riondel Fire Department**



Most people have heard the term “Jaws of Life”. What you may not know is that the name “Jaws of Life” is actually a patented registered trademark owned by the Hurst Tool Corporation; believed to be the first extrication tool manufacturer. These tools were originally designed and developed for driver extrication at race car tracks in the United States. Since that time, Jaws of Life equipment has been used along our roadways to assist in the extrication of victims from Motor Vehicle Incidents (MVIs).

In 1989, the British Columbia Ambulance Service (BCAS) discontinued the provision of victim rescue service throughout the province. Locally, with this transition, the BCAS loaned vehicle extrication equipment to the Jaws of Life Service, in which the Creston Fire Department, Canyon Lister Fire Department and Wynndel Lakeview Fire Department originally participated. Over time, the Creston Fire Department and the Riondel Fire Department came to be the Jaws of Life service providers for the area.

Creston Fire Rescue is called out for incidences occurring in the Creston Valley from the U.S. border located to the south, west to the Kootenay Pass Summit, east to Irishman’s Creek and north to Akokli Creek Bridge. If incidents occur off the roadway, a provincial organization known as the Provincial Emergency Program gives the local departments’ approval to attend. The Riondel Fire Department’s protection area is Riondel south to Akokli Creek. The Riondel service area was established in 2007.

Today, the term “Road Rescue” more accurately defines the extensive service provision associated with the Jaws of Life Service, including but not limited to: establishing site safety, which addresses fuel leaks, electrical hazards, gas leaks and traffic management; providing vehicle extrication which involves cutting a vehicle apart with the Jaws of Life tools to free trapped victims; attending to patients until ambulance personnel can attend; stabilizing vehicles in precarious areas; and, utilizing technical rope skills for moving patients.

Accident response by our fire department members is provided any time of day or night, in all kinds of weather conditions, and often involves management of dangerous and stressful situations. Many people

would agree that for someone trapped in a motor vehicle as a result of an accident, the provision of the road rescue service may mean the difference between life and death. It should be noted that Road Rescue service providers offer a distinct service apart from the Creston Valley Search and Rescue Group who conduct searches for victims and provide related technical services for missing people in the rural areas.

Motor vehicle incidents (MVIS) that require the use of Jaws of Life tools occur mostly in the rural areas, but not always. On March 2, 2012, a two vehicle MVI occurred at the intersection of Hillside and 10th Avenue, only 2 blocks from the Creston Fire Hall. The response by our Fire Rescue crew was immediate and by utilizing “air bag” and “Jaws of Life” equipment, the vehicle was lifted, opened, and the 2 injured occupants were extricated. One of the injured was transported to the Calgary hospital, and the other received treatment at the Cranbrook hospital. Eight firefighters responded to this incident and conducted scene safety, extrication, and patient care assistance. The RCMP officer who attended this MVI scene was very impressed with the extrication process and has stated that the specialized training of our staff and volunteers was most evident during this incident. While this accident occurred within the Town of Creston boundaries, the injured parties were residents of the larger Creston Valley and both individuals have now recovered.

The success of this service is credited to the local firefighter volunteers and staff who spend extensive hours in training to be prepared when called upon to provide this rescue service. The Road Rescue Service for the Creston Valley is primarily funded through an RDCK service at a taxation rate of \$0.018 per thousand dollars of assessed property value, or \$3.60 per year for a \$200,000 residence. The service is also subsidized by the Town of Creston and the Provincial Emergency Program.

In 2011, Creston Fire Rescue responded to 8 motor vehicle incidents in Creston and 53 in the outside response area.

I want to hear from you:

Please share your concerns, your experiences, and your issues (both positive and negative) on how we can improve the quality of life in our community (the Town and the Creston Valley).

Thanks
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