2025

Emergency Management Group

Creston Valley Fire Service

Fire Master Plan

REGIONAL DISTRICT CENTRAL KOOTENAY

CRESTON VALLEY
TOWN of CRESTON

CRESTON VALLEY

www.emergencymgt.com
info@emergencymgt.com
705.719.9007
888.421.0665
Darryl Culley, President

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Creston Valley Fire Service has grown to include areas within the Regional District of Central Kootenay, operating as a unified fire service with four fire halls located in West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon Lister, and the Town of Creston. This Fire Master Plan (FMP) provides a comprehensive review of the Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS), outlining a 10-year roadmap for organizational improvements. It analyzes current and projected population trends and anticipated growth and evaluates present service levels. Additionally, the plan assesses the fire department's service goals and expectations to ensure it meets the needs of its personnel and the communities it serves.

To ensure they meet the needs of CVFS and its firefighters, CVFS and the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) acknowledge the importance of conducting this organizational review to maintain high-quality fire services for residents, businesses, and visitors. The development of this Fire Master Plan allows for a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the service, including operational costs and capital budgets necessary to sustain or enhance fire protection efforts.

Benefits of Master Planning

The FMP offers several key benefits, including:

- A clear roadmap for future needs and their implementation timeline,
- A structured guide with options and budget estimates for execution,
- Prioritization of projects to ensure strategic development, and
- Enhanced communication with staff and both internal and external stakeholders regarding the organization's future goals.

The recommendations in this FMP outline strategic goals and implementation strategies designed to support Creston Valley Fire Service in making informed decisions about resource

allocation and staffing. These recommendations, provided by Emergency Management Group (EMG), are categorized into the following timelines:

Immediate

0 to 1 year (should be addressed urgently due to legislative or health and safety requirements)

Short-Term

1 to 3 years

Mid-Term

4 to 6 years

Long-Term

7 to 10 years

Ultimately, implementing the recommendations will depend on the Town of Creston Council and the RDCK direction, the availability of resources, and the capacity to act on the proposed strategies outlined in this document.

Overview of Fire Master Plan

The following describes the actions carried out by the EMG team in developing the FMP for the CVFS.

Staffing and Professional Qualifications

- Review of existing level of service and staffing levels (full-time, paid-on-call and work experience program).
- A review of comparable departments.
- Review of the department training needs and standards.
- Retention, recruitment and use of paid on-call members.
- Review of administrative workflow.
- The Department's service capacity in the context of the existing demographic profile.

Fire Prevention

- Fire Prevention activities, including fire safety inspections, fire investigations, public education, and pre-incident fire planning.

Financial

- Review of the operating and capital budgets.

Apparatus, Fire Stations, and Equipment

- Inventory and maintenance best practices, annual equipment testing, the equipment's life span, replacement criteria, and supplies.
- Station locations and related response data analysis.
- Communication systems and equipment.

Legislative Mandate and Contractual Agreements

- Contractual and recommended future agreements between the municipality and external agencies.
- Fire service mutual aid/automatic aid agreements.
- Dispatch services and contractual agreements.

Administration/ Policies and By-laws Review

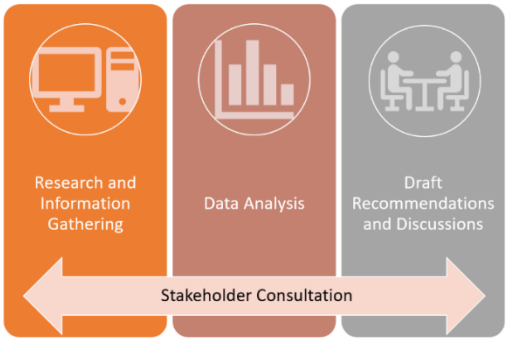
- Staffing, records management, software, and technology.
- Review of Standard Operating Guidelines, Bylaws, policies, and procedures.
- A review of fire and emergency management bylaws.
- A review of emergency management.
- Succession planning and the CVFS.

Emergency Response

- Provide a review of the response requests and response times in comparison to requirements as outlined by National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

Project Methodology

EMG conducted its review based on the CVFS Request for Proposal (RFP) and proposal response document. The outlined scope of work from the RFP was carefully examined and incorporated into each section of this report. The FMP review was guided by best practices, current industry standards, and relevant legislation, ensuring a comprehensive and well-informed assessment.



EMG employed both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to assess the community's current conditions and anticipate future needs. The methodology incorporates extensive research, document review, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement. These elements inform the development of the draft report and recommendations. The final document serves as a dynamic, strategic guide for the CVFS, providing high-level direction for future planning and decision-making.

Emergency Management Group conducted a comprehensive needs analysis and assessment of the current environment. This process included interviews with key stakeholders such as CVFS personnel (administration, firefighters), elected officials, RDCK personnel, and community representatives. Additionally, public input was also gathered through a survey to ensure a well-rounded evaluation. The outcome of this analysis provided a comprehensive set of recommendations for improvement presented in the form of an FMP for the next ten or more years.

Performance Measures and Standards

This FMP has been based upon (but not limited to) key performance indicators that have been identified in national standards and safety regulations, such as:

- *The Fire Safety Act*
- *The Workers Compensation Act*
- *The Wildfire Act*
- *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*
- *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation*

- WorkSafeBC OHS Reg Part 31
- British Columbia Structure Firefighters Minimum Training Standards (2024)
- BC Fire Code and BC Building Code
- The NFPA standards
- The FUS technical documents

Summary of Key Performance Indicators

The Fire Safety Act

- Replaced the former *Fire Services Act*, and in force since August 1, 2024. It also updates fire prevention and inspection in BC by clearly assigning responsibilities and powers. For example, property owners now have a legal duty to prevent fire hazards on their premises through the assessment and removal of fire hazards on their property. The *Act* also requires local governments to appoint Fire Safety Inspectors and Investigators, sets training standards and authorizes tactical or preventative evacuations during fire emergencies. It also provides local government with some additional cost recovery powers.

Workers Compensation Act

- British Columbia's *Workers Compensation Act (WCA)* and its associated regulations safeguard firefighter health and safety by establishing workplace protections for all workers. The *WCA* requires employers, including municipalities and fire departments, to maintain a safe work environment and grants WorkSafeBC the authority to enforce safety standards. Notably, the *Act* includes presumptive disease provisions for firefighters, recognizing specific cancers and illnesses as occupationally related if firefighters meet the required criteria, such as length of service and exposure history. This means affected firefighters are automatically eligible for compensation unless proven otherwise.

The Wildfire Act

- Provincial legislation in British Columbia that governs the prevention, control, and suppression of wildfires, particularly on Crown land and in designated areas. It places legal responsibilities on individuals and organizations conducting activities near forested

areas to assess and mitigate fire hazards, and to act quickly to control any fires that may start. While municipal fire departments typically operate within their local boundaries, they may also respond to wildland-urban interface (WUI) fires, where structural protection efforts overlap with wildfire response. The Act includes provisions for cost recovery, meaning those responsible for causing a wildfire may be held financially accountable for suppression costs.

Emergency and Disaster Management Act

- Came into force on November 8, 2023, replacing the older *Emergency Program Act* of 1993. It adopts a proactive, all-hazards approach across the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It requires local authorities (municipalities and regional districts) to develop emergency plans, conduct hazard risk assessments, and it provides updated powers for declaring states of local emergency and managing disasters. The *Act* also emphasizes alignment with Indigenous governance and modern practices.

Fireworks Act

- *Fireworks Act* (RSBC 1996, c.146) – Provincial law regulating the sale and use of fireworks. *The Fireworks Act* works in tandem with federal explosives laws and local bylaws. It enables municipalities to restrict or ban fireworks use for safety and prohibits certain fireworks activities (e.g. sales to minors or unpermitted public displays) unless conditions are met. The province supports local control of fireworks through this *Act.*

Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation Bylaw No.1929, 2021

- In September 2019, the Ministry of Environment introduced the revised Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation which divides the province into 'sensitivity zones'. outlines provincial rules for open burning of debris (e.g. land clearing fires). It aims to minimize fire risk and smoke pollution during outdoor burning. It was updated with stricter requirements (e.g. classifying regions by smoke sensitivity, larger setbacks, venting index requirements) to reduce wildfire hazards and air quality impacts

WorkSafeBC OHS Reg Part 31

- This Part applies to employers and to workers who are employed in firefighting activities on a full or part time basis, including volunteer firefighting. It covers training, equipment, and procedures to protect firefighters on the job. Compliance with these regulations is legally required and is enforced by WorkSafeBC inspections.

British Columbia Structure Firefighters Minimum Training Standards (2024)

- Commonly known as the BC Playbook**,** establishes minimum firefighter training requirements for all fire departments in BC. It ensures that firefighters are trained to a recognized level based on the type of service their department provides.

BC Fire Code and BC Building Code

- The BC Fire Code and BC Building Code are provincial regulations that provides detailed fire safety requirements for existing buildings and facilities. *The Fire Code* is based on the *National Fire Code* and is updated periodically. It complements the *Fire Safety Act* by setting technical standards for things like fire alarms, sprinklers, egress, and fire hazard control in buildings.

The NFPA Standards

- The NFPA is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating fire, electrical, and related hazards through the development of consensus-based codes and standards. It provides guidance, training, and research to improve fire safety and emergency response worldwide. The NFPA plays a critical role in shaping the fire service by establishing standardized guidelines for firefighter training, apparatus design, emergency operations, and fire prevention. Its standards help fire departments maintain consistent operational procedures, ensuring effective emergency response while reducing liability risks for municipalities. Additionally, NFPA standards influence equipment design, ensuring that fire apparatus, personal protective gear, and breathing apparatus meet stringent safety requirements. Ultimately, NFPA provides a framework that enhances firefighter safety, operational efficiency, and public protection, guiding fire departments toward best practices in service delivery.

FUS Technical Documents

- The FUS plays a significant role in the Canadian fire service by assessing fire protection capabilities and assigning Public Fire Protection Classification (PFPC) and Dwelling Protection Grades (DPG) for municipalities. These ratings influence insurance premiums for homes and businesses, as higher-rated fire departments can help lower insurance costs for their communities. FUS evaluates factors such as fire department staffing, training, water supply, response times, and fire prevention programs, providing municipalities with a benchmark for improving fire protection services. Ultimately, the FUS helps drive improvements in fire service effectiveness while directly impacting community fire insurance rates.

Project Consultants

Although several staff at EMG were involved in the collaboration and completion of this FMP, the overall review was conducted by (in order of involvement):

Lyle Quan

Fire Service Consultant/VP of Operations

Les Karpluk

Fire Service Consultant – Project Lead

Haida Fortier

Fire Service Consultant

Darryl Culley

President

The team brings extensive experience in all aspects of fire and emergency services, including program development, evaluation, and training. EMG has led a variety of projects, ranging from fire service assessments to the development of strategic and master fire plans, as well as the creation of emergency response programs for various clients.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

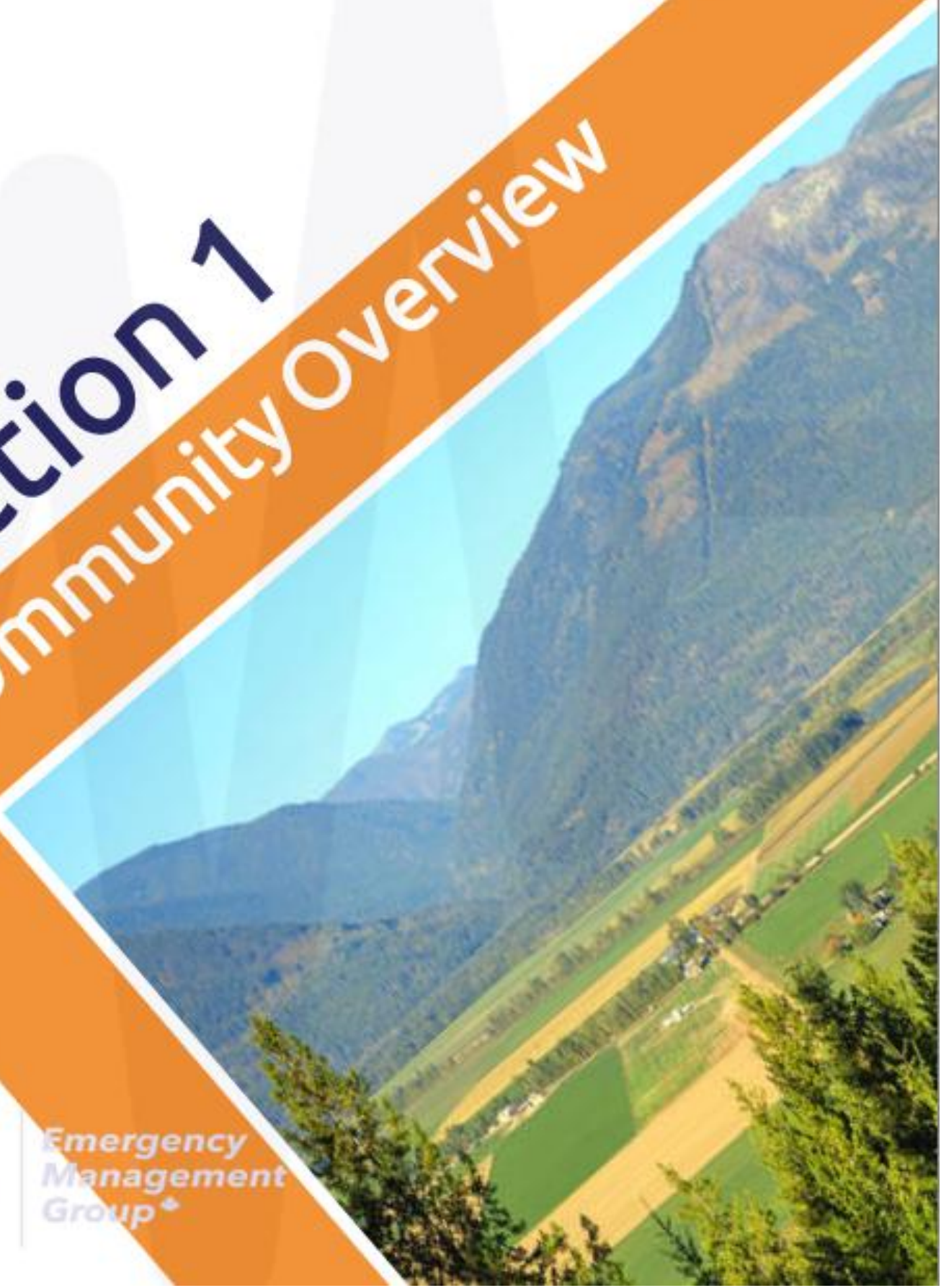
AHJ	Authority Having Jurisdiction
AMP	Administrative Monetary Penalties
BCAS	BC Ambulance Service
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CAFC	Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management
CRA	Community Risk Assessment
CRRP	Community Risk Reduction Plan
CVFS	Creston Vally Fire Service
DCRRA	Disaster & Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EDMA	Emergency Disaster Management Act
ERF	Effective Response Force
EMG	Emergency Management Group Inc.
EOC	Emergency Operation Centre
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
ESS	Emergency Social Services
EV	Electric Vehicle
FESO	Fire and Emergency Services Organization
FMP	Fire Master Plan
FPO	Fire Prevention Officer
FSA	Fire Service Agreement
FUS	Fire Underwriters Survey
HAZMAT	Hazardous Material
HRVA	Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment
ICS	Incident Command System

ACRONYMS

ISO	Incident Safety Officer
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NG911	Next Gen 911
OFC	Office of The Fire Commissioner
OHS	Occupational Health & Safety
POC	Paid On Call
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RDCK	Regional District Central Kootenay
RMS	Records Management System
SCBA	Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus
SOG	Standard Operating Guidelines
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPU	Structure Protection Unit
STSS	Superior Tanker Shuttle Service
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
WEP	Workplace Experience Program
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

Section 1

Community Overview



Emergency Management Group

SECTION 1: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

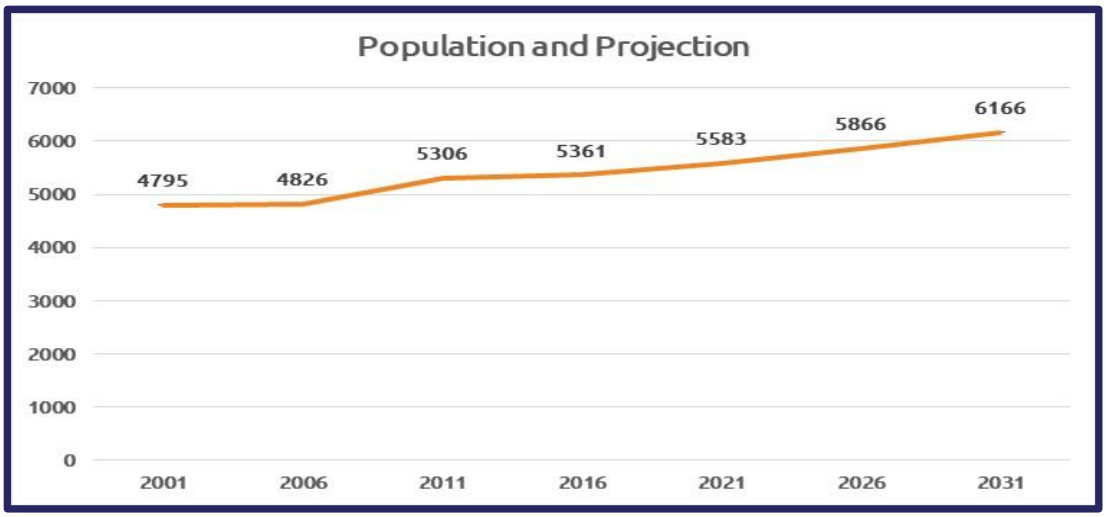
1.1 Community Overview

The Town of Creston is located in the Kootenay region of British Columbia and is home to approximately 5,583 residents. Creston Valley's population is just over 14,000 and a blend of rural and small-town communities. This picturesque area is renowned for its rich agricultural heritage, diverse economy, and breathtaking natural landscapes.

The Town of Creston is a vibrant small town situated on the unceded traditional territory of the Yaqan Nukiy within the Ktunaxa Nation. It has a land area of 8.41 km² (3.25 sq mi) and a population density of 663.9/km² (1,719.4/sq mi), nestled between the Selkirk and Purcell Mountain ranges. It is the largest community in the Creston Valley, with a population of 5,583 residents, as noted in the 2021 Census. It serves as the economic hub to Erickson, Lister, Canyon, Wynndel-Lakeview, and other surrounding communities.

Creston boasts a diverse economy, supported by key industries such as agriculture, forestry, retail, and tourism. The region is particularly renowned for its fruit production, including apples, cherries, and peaches, which contribute significantly to its agricultural sector.

The Town of Creston is experiencing growth, with a recorded population of 5,583, representing an increase from 5,351 in the 2016 Census. According to data from the 2021 Census released by Statistics Canada, most areas within the Creston Valley have experienced population growth over the past five years. Between 2001 and 2021, the population grew by 16.43%, with an average annual growth rate of 0.76%. From 2011 to 2021, the increase was 5.2%, averaging 0.52% per year. Based upon a 1% growth rate from 2021, it is anticipated that Creston will reach a population of 6,100 by 2031.



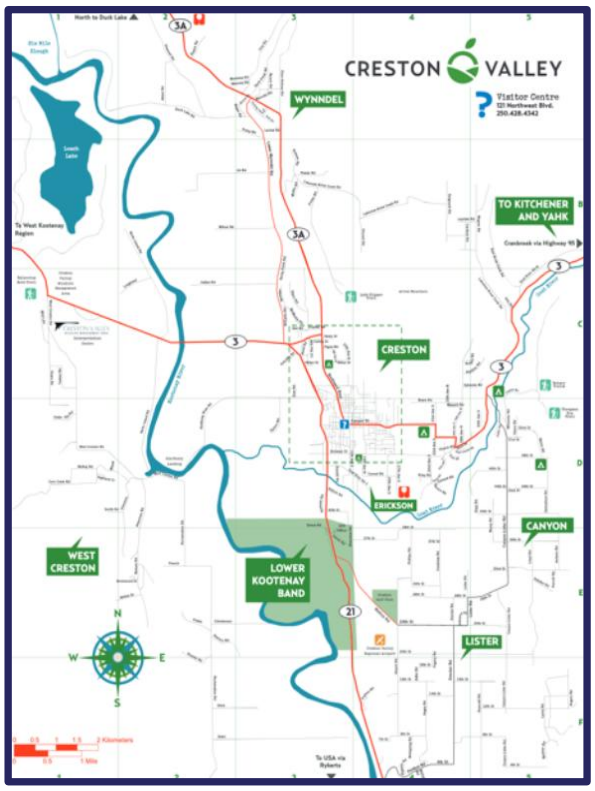
According to the 2021 Census of Population conducted by Statistics Canada, the RDCK recorded a population of 62,509, reflecting a 5% increase from its 2016 population of 59,517. Based on a 0.99% average annual growth rate, the anticipated population for the RDCK in 2035 is expected to be approximately 71,711.

Electoral Area A, served by the Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall, has a population of 2,241 residents. Electoral Area B, home to the Canyon Lister Fire Hall, has 4,802 residents. Electoral Area C, served by the West Creston Fire Hall, has a population of 1,475. Each fire hall provides coverage tailored to the geographic and residential characteristics of its respective area.

Based on Statistics Canada data, population trends across the three electoral areas served by the Creston Valley Fire Service show varied trajectories. Electoral Area A experienced notable growth between 2016 and 2021, increasing from 1,930 to 2,241 residents, a rise of approximately 16%. Electoral Area B saw modest growth, increasing from 4,657 to 4,802 residents, while Electoral Area C remained relatively stable, with a slight decrease from 1,482 to 1,475. These trends suggest that while certain areas, particularly Area A, are experiencing steady growth, others are expected to remain stable over the near term. As such, future fire service planning should account for localized growth pressures while continuing to support areas with consistent population levels.

Creston Valley's population is just over 14,000 and a blend of rural and small-town communities. Nestled in a valley surrounded by mountains, its geography influences the types of natural disasters the region faces. The area is particularly vulnerable to flooding, while dry summer months increase the risk of forest fires, posing significant threats to both the environment and local communities.

The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) has grown to serve areas within the Regional District of Central Kootenay, operating as a unified fire service. It now includes four fire halls located in West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon Lister, and the Town of Creston, working together to provide comprehensive fire protection across the region. The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) is a vital component of the community, dedicated to protecting residents and their property. Staffed by highly trained professionals, CVFS provides rapid emergency response, fire prevention programs, and public education initiatives. The department responds to a wide range of emergencies, including structure fires, vehicle accidents, and medical incidents.



Over the years, the department has expanded from two full-time employees to a team four full-time employees, a part time assistant and 60 paid-on-call firefighters, including participants in a work experience program. CVFS is led by a full-time Fire Chief, an Assistant Chief, and two Fire Service Support Supervisors (FSSS). The FSSS (Captain) are responsible for the day-to-day management of the service, ensuring that both career and paid on-call firefighters are effectively coordinated. Additionally, the CVFS operates a work experience (WEP) program that integrates firefighters from across Canada into its operations.

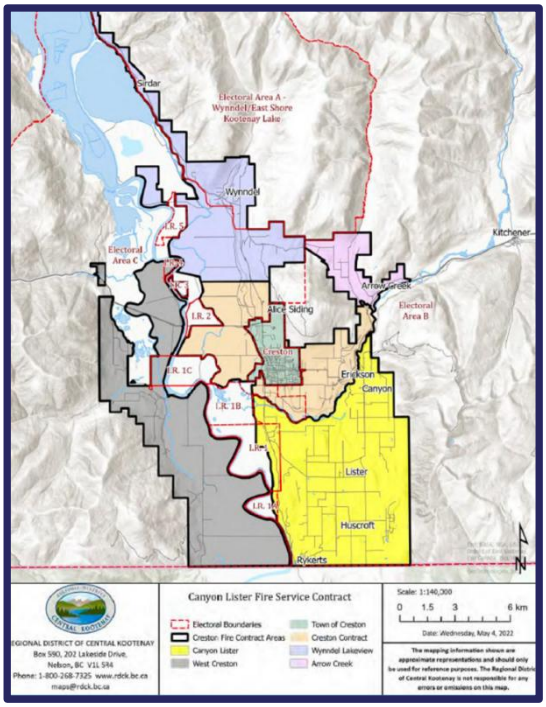
Fire protection contracts between the RDCK and the Town of Creston ensure automatic incident response across all service areas. In 2007, a consultant conducted a study to assess the fire service, incorporating input from elected officials, personnel, and residents. However, until this time, a comprehensive FMP for the CVFS has not been developed.

1.2 Fire Service Composition

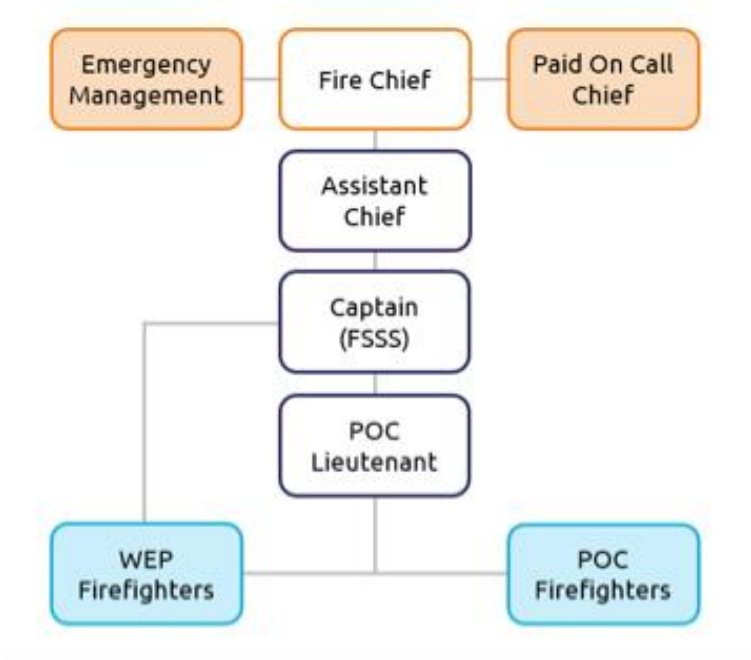
1.2.1 Creston Valley Fire Services

Regional District of Central Kootenay Bylaw No. 2744 provides the legal and operational framework under which the CVFS operates across the RDCK portions of the valley. This bylaw formalizes the agreement between the RDCK and the Town of Creston, authorizing Creston Fire & Rescue to deliver fire protection and emergency services in designated portions of RDCK Areas B and C. As the CVFS has evolved into a single, integrated service operating out of four fire halls, West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, and the Town of Creston.

Bylaw 2744 (to regulate Fire Protection and Associated Services within defined portions of Electoral Areas A, B, and C) serves as the key regulatory instrument that governs how services are extended into the regional areas. It outlines the scope of services (e.g., fire suppression, first response, hazardous materials response), defines authority and jurisdiction, and enables cost recovery mechanisms for incidents occurring in the RDCK areas. The bylaw also clarifies the roles of the Municipal Fire Chief (Town of Creston) and the RDCK Regional Fire Chief, reinforcing the governance model for the CVFS. In combination with the Town of Creston's Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, Bylaw 2744 ensures consistency, compliance with provincial regulations, and clarity in service delivery expectations across the broader Creston Valley.



The governance structure is further defined by the Town of Creston's Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, which establishes the legal framework for the fire department's operations, outlines the services provided, and sets regulations related to municipal burning.



Regarding oversight of apparatus and fire halls, the CVFS manages facilities in various locations, including West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, and the Town of Creston. The RDCK provides operational and capital funding for the West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview and Canyon-Lister fire halls. Ownership of the equipment and fire halls identified in the agreements remains with the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK). The RDCK is responsible for replacing such equipment as required to meet Fire Underwriters', NFPA standards and requirements of WorkSafe BC.

1.2.2 Regional Fire Service

On January 28, 2025, the Town of Creston Council approved a one-year extension to the fire service agreements with the RDCK. This amendment ensures continued fire protection services for the following areas until December 31, 2025:

- West Creston Fire Protection
- Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Protection
- Arrow Creek/Erickson Fire Protection
- Canyon Lister Fire Protection

The previous agreement was set to expire on December 31, 2024. This extension supports ongoing collaboration between the Town of Creston and RDCK, maintaining essential emergency response services as the FMP for 2025 is developed.

The CVFS is an example of a regional fire service model, having transitioned from a collection of individual departments into a unified, multi-jurisdictional fire protection service. This regional approach enhances public safety, improves operational efficiency, and delivers tangible value to the communities it serves.

One of the key strengths of the CVFS model is its ability to provide emergency response across the region. Multiple fire stations and apparatus are dispatched automatically to significant incidents, such as structure fires or wildland-urban interface (WUI) events. This coordinated response ensures that the nearest available resources, regardless of jurisdiction (electoral district), are mobilized quickly, significantly reducing response times and improving outcomes during high-risk emergencies.

By standardizing policies, training, and equipment such as SCBA and turnout gear, the CVFS is creating an interoperable team capable of delivering consistent, high-quality service across the valley. The pooling of resources also enables a more strategic deployment of personnel and apparatus based on risk, call volume, and geographic coverage. This approach would be challenging to achieve within siloed (stand-alone) departments.

As call volumes rise, populations shift, and community needs evolve, the CVFS is positioned to adjust its service delivery accordingly. Whether piloting a community risk reduction strategy in the future or evaluating innovative service delivery models such as quick response units or health and wellness outreach, a regional structure offers the flexibility to act decisively.

The CVFS model also provides opportunities for recruitment and retention by offering paid-on-call firefighters a role within a respected regional fire service. This fosters a stronger sense of identity, purpose, and organizational pride among members. An added benefit is the sense of unity it builds among firefighters from Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, and West Creston—strengthening team spirit and collaboration across the region.

The CVFS regional model is not only a practical solution to the challenges facing many fire departments but also a proactive investment in community safety, resilience, and service excellence. A key strength of the model is its ability to deliver fire protection services across jurisdictional boundaries. While the CVFS has already demonstrated measurable benefits, it remains a young and evolving organization, formally established just over two years ago. As such, there are natural learning curves and areas for improvement, including financial structures

and administrative processes. Continued collaboration and honest evaluation of what is working and what needs refinement will be essential to ensuring the CVFS develops into a mature, sustainable, and high-performing regional service.

1.2.3 Creston Fire Rescue Service Overview & Regulatory Bylaws

Creston Fire Rescue Services is a dedicated team of approximately 47 members, bringing extensive fire and rescue experience to the community. The department is led by a full-time Fire Chief, an Assistant Fire Chief, and two Fire Service Support Supervisors (Captains), with the remaining members serving in a paid-on-call capacity. Additionally, Creston Fire Rescue operates a Work Experience Program (WEP), attracting firefighters from across Canada to gain hands-on experience while serving the community.

The department operates under the governance of the Town of Creston, with oversight from Town Administration and Town Council through Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928. This bylaw formally establishes the Fire Department, outlines its municipal fire protection responsibilities, defines the range of services it provides, and establishes regulations for controlled burning within the municipality.

Creston Fire Rescue Services provides fire protection services to:

- The municipal boundaries of Creston
- Portions of Regional District Central Kootenay Area B (Erickson)
- Portions of Regional District Central Kootenay Area C (E.g. West Creston)
- Additionally, the fire department receives automatic aid response from Canyon-Lister and Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Departments

Many of the CVFS firefighters are trained and certified to the NFPA 1001 Level II Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications. All members receive training based on this standard, progressing toward certification over several years to ensure a high level of competency and readiness.

Fire Service Bylaw No. 1928, (2021), which outlines Council's direction to the Creston Fire Department, prescribes the services the department must provide. This bylaw was consolidated in March 2024. It is recommended that fire service bylaws be reviewed annually or when significant changes occur within the community or the fire department. Regular reviews ensure

that the Fire Chief's service levels, responsibilities, and authority remain aligned with the community's evolving needs.

It is a good practice for the Fire Chief to proactively work with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to bring the bylaw forward to newly elected officials every four years. This ensures that incoming council members understand the fire department's service levels and their responsibility to provide the necessary funding to maintain these services as established by the Council.

From a legal standpoint, the fire department's authority, service levels, and responsibilities must be explicitly outlined in a bylaw. Without such provisions, there is a lack of standardized powers governing fire department operations and service delivery. In the event of litigation following an incident, firefighters named in a lawsuit may face challenges in proving they were acting within their "scope of employment" if the bylaw does not clearly define their authorized services.

Within the *Fire Services Bylaw*, the Fire Protection and Assistance Response is defined as all aspects of fire safety, fire suppression and emergency response, including.

- Fire prevention activities
- Firefighting
- Fire suppression
- BC Fire Code, fire hazard and fire safety inspections, including inspections required by the Fire Services Act and this Bylaw
- Pre-fire planning
- Fire investigation
- Medical first responder calls
- Technical rescue responses including vehicle extrication
- Inspecting, monitoring and advising on Hazardous Materials storage and handling
- Public education and information in relation to fire safety and prevention; and
- Training, advising and other development of Members in relation to the activities listed as a) to j) in this definition.

Part 10 and Appendix A of Fire Service Bylaw No. 1928 clearly outline the cost recovery and charge-out fees for fire services, ensuring transparency and financial accountability. These sections effectively establish the framework for service fees, cost recovery, and billing procedures for specialized responses. A summary for services fees and cost recover is listed below[1]:

Service Fees

The Fire Department may charge fees for services that include, but are not limited to:

- Providing personnel and equipment on standby when hazardous materials pose life safety or fire/explosion risks.
- Decontaminating or repairing equipment exposed to hazardous substances during incidents.
- Responding to incidents resulting from violations of municipal bylaws or provincial regulations.
- Extinguishing fires that were deliberately set and required Fire Department intervention

Cost Recovery

The Fire Department is entitled to recover costs from property owners or responsible parties for:

- Third-party assistance engaged during an incident.
- Responses to hazardous material spills or releases, including costs for decontaminating or replacing affected equipment.

[1] For more detailed information on the fees for services and cost recoveries for the Creston Fire Rescue service, see Part 10 and Appendix A of *the Fire Services Bylaw 1928, 2001.*

1.2.4 Regional District of Central Kootenay - Creston Valley Fire Service Regulation Bylaw No. 2744 (2022)

This bylaw establishes fire protection and associated services within defined portions of Electoral Areas A, B, and C, under an agreement between the RDCK and the Town of Creston. The agreement authorizes Creston Fire & Rescue Services to provide fire protection and assistance response in the designated service areas and established the CVFS as a regional based fire service.

The Creston Fire & Rescue Services is authorized to provide the following services:

- Fire suppression, including interface fires
- Fire and life safety education
- Fire inspection upon request or as required
- Fire investigations as required
- Hazardous materials response to a maximum of 'operations level'
- Subject to Section 3.3 of the Agreement, First Response Medical Assist
- Technical rescue, including auto extrication and rope rescue to the same standard as providing within the municipality
- Enforcement of the Fire Safety Act
- Enforcement of the Operational Bylaw

The bylaw identifies the powers of the Creston Fire & Rescue Services Fire Chief in overseeing the management and operation of the RDCK fire stations, apparatus, equipment, personal protective equipment as well as the authorities and responsibilities of the Fire Chief.

Additionally, the bylaw identifies that residents must meet the RDCK Civic Addressing Bylaw, 2391, maintain fire department access and fees for service and cost recoveries.

1.3 Call Volume

BCAS Lift Assists

218 calls (11%)
Highlighting the ongoing need to support BC Ambulance Service, particularly with patient handling and mobility.

Motor Vehicle Incidents

196 calls (10%)
Reflecting the importance of maintaining readiness and technical rescue capabilities.

Structure Fires

86 calls (4%)
While fewer in volume, these are typically resource-intensive and high-risk responses, underscoring the need for fire suppression readiness.

Unclassified Calls

163 calls (8%)
This category may represent calls that were not clearly documented or do not fit traditional categories and could benefit from further review to improve data quality and call classification.

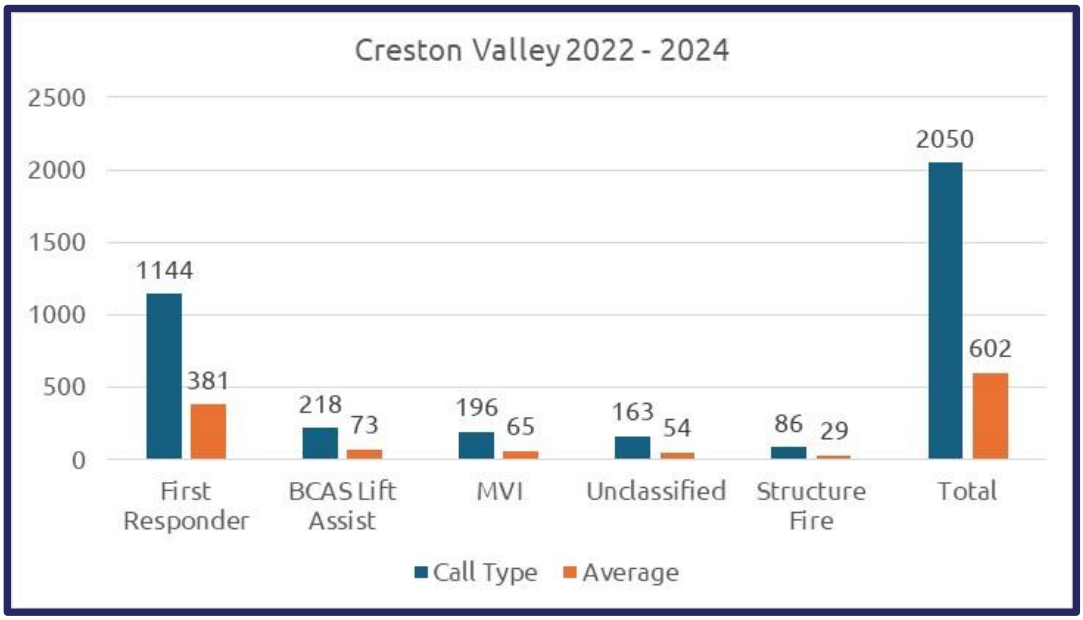
1.3.1 Creston Fire Department

Understanding the volume and nature of emergency calls is a foundational step in evaluating the current capacity, performance, and future needs of the CVFS. Call data reveals not only how often the service is activated but also the types of incidents most frequently encountered, the time and resources required to respond, and emerging trends that may signal the need for operational or staffing adjustments. For the purposes of this FMP, analysis has focused on the top five most frequent call types, which together represent the vast majority of incident responses. By examining these key categories across historical and recent call volumes, the CVFS can make informed decisions about service delivery, resource allocation, staffing models, and overall readiness to meet the community's needs.

From 2022-2024, the Creston Fire Service responded to a total of 2,050 calls. Most of these calls fall into the First Responder category, which accounted for 1,144 incidents (56%), clearly demonstrating the department's significant role in providing medical assistance and support.

Additional notable categories include:

Accurately recording call types is essential for understanding the true nature of community risks and the demands placed on fire department resources. Reliable data allows the department to identify trends, prioritize training, and allocate staff and equipment effectively. It also supports risk reduction planning by pinpointing where and how incidents are occurring, which in turn helps target public education and prevention efforts to the right audiences. When call types are misclassified or vague, such as those listed as *"Unclassified"* it becomes harder to draw meaningful conclusions, which can limit the department's ability to plan strategically or advocate for necessary resources. The Unclassified category presents opportunities to refine reporting practices or identify emerging call types.



1.3.2 Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Department

Over the reporting period, Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Department responded to a total of 77 calls, with an average of 26 calls per year. The data reflects a relatively low but consistent call volume, typical of a small or rural response area.

The most frequent call types include:

Motor Vehicle Incidents

23 total (8 average per year)
Highlighting roadway risk as a key service demand.

Open Burning Complaints

16 total (5 average per year)
Indicating ongoing challenges with fire bylaw compliance and public awareness.

Unclassified Calls

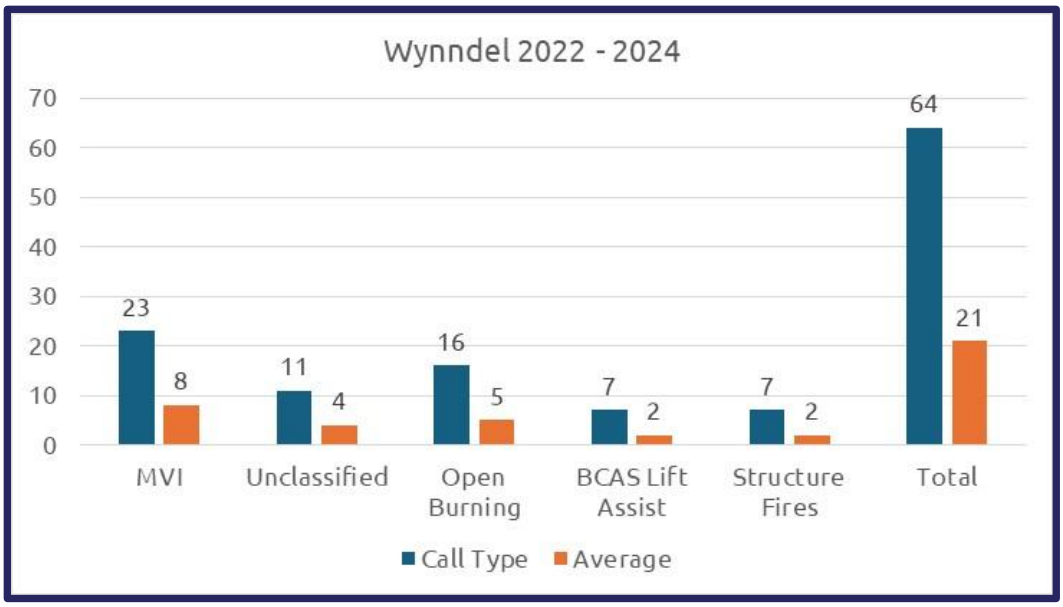
11 total (4 average per year)
Suggesting a need for improved data tracking or categorization.

BCAS Lift Assists & Structure Fires

7 total each (2 average per year)
While lower in frequency, these calls require trained personnel and appropriate resources due to their complexity or risk.

Motor vehicle incidents represent the most frequent type of emergency response in Wynndel-Lakeview, and as such, they are likely a key factor influencing training priorities, equipment requirements, and overall response planning. Open burning calls also make up a notable portion of the call volume, highlighting the ongoing need for effective public education and consistent communication around local burning regulations.

While structure fires occur less frequently, their complexity and risk level demand a high degree of preparedness, coordination, and operational capability. Additionally, the presence of unclassified calls suggests there may be gaps in how incidents are recorded. Reviewing and refining call categorization will enhance data accuracy and enable the department to identify emerging service trends more effectively.



1.3.3 Canyon-Lister Fire Department

Canyon-Lister responded to a total of 118 emergency calls from 2022-2024, averaging 39 calls per year over the reporting period. Although the overall volume is moderate, the range of incident types highlights the need for versatility in training and service delivery.

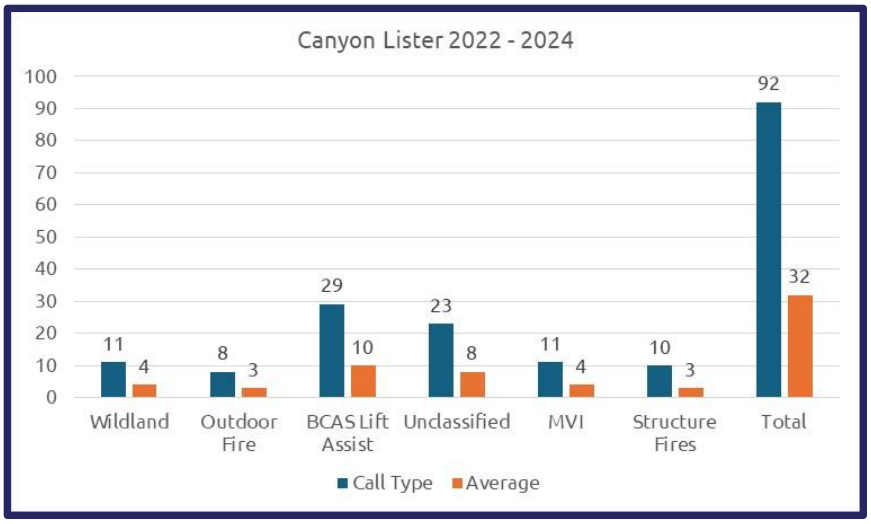
The most frequent call type is BCAS Lift Assists, with a total of 29 responses and an average of 10 per year. This underscores the department's important role in supporting medical response and interagency collaboration with the BC Ambulance Service. Unclassified calls also account for a significant portion (23 total / eight average), suggesting there is value in refining call categorization to improve data accuracy and better understand service demands.

Wildland Interface (11 calls) and Outdoor Fires (8 calls) reflect a clear exposure to vegetation-related fire risks, particularly during dry seasons. These incidents support the ongoing importance of wildfire preparedness, prevention messaging, and operational readiness.

Motor Vehicle Incidents and Structure Fires, each averaging three to four calls annually, are less frequent but require high levels of preparedness due to their complexity and potential consequences.

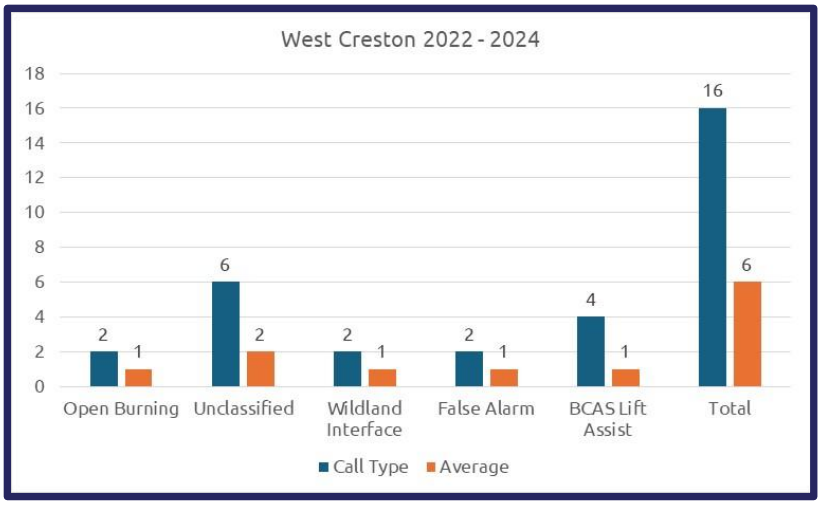
The department plays a critical role in supporting medical responses through lift assists. In addition to medical support, fire risk within the wildland-urban interface remains a key concern, requiring ongoing attention to prevention, preparedness, and seasonal readiness. Improving

the accuracy of call classification, particularly for incidents currently labelled as unclassified, will strengthen the department's ability to analyze trends, support evidence-based planning, and align resources with actual service demands.



1.3.4 West Creston Fire Department

Although call volumes in West Creston are relatively low, with an average of six responses per year, the data highlights the important and varied role the fire department plays in ensuring community safety. Calls range from open burning and wildland interface incidents to medical lift assists and false alarms, each requiring trained responders and a timely, professional approach. Even in smaller communities, the presence of a capable fire service contributes significantly to public confidence, risk reduction, and emergency readiness. Continued attention to call classification, especially among unclassified incidents, will further support planning efforts and help ensure resources remain aligned with local needs.



1.4 Call Type Classification

A review of call data across all four fire departments, Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, and West Creston, reveals a consistent trend: each department reports a notable number of "unclassified" incidents. While some variability in incident types is expected, the recurring presence of unclassified calls suggests a gap in data capture or categorization practices. Accurate call classification is essential for effective fire service planning, resource allocation, performance measurement, and community risk reduction. When call types are unclear or misclassified, it becomes difficult to identify trends, justify staffing or budget needs, or accurately evaluate service demand. Improving incident reporting practices will not only enhance operational analysis but also support more targeted prevention efforts and strategic decision-making.

1.5 FUS and the Importance of Accurate Call Data

The FUS plays a significant role in evaluating fire protection capabilities across Canadian municipalities. Its assessments contribute directly to the determination of a community's Public Fire Protection Classification (PFPC), which in turn influences local insurance rates for residential, commercial, and industrial properties.

A critical component of the FUS evaluation process is the quality and consistency of fire department records and data management**,** particularly the accurate classification and documentation of incident types. Reliable, well-organized data provides evidence of service demand, response performance, and operational readiness.

FUS best practices emphasize the following data-related expectations:

- Standardized and comprehensive incident reporting, using consistent and recognized call types to support meaningful analysis.
- Detailed documentation of response types, resource deployment, and operational outcomes.
- Routine data review and quality assurance, ensuring discrepancies are identified and addressed.
- Integration of call data into strategic planning, including decisions related to apparatus, station coverage, training needs, and public education initiatives.

When call types are accurately recorded and consistently categorized, fire departments can clearly demonstrate their operational effectiveness and risk management capabilities. This level of data integrity can lead to improved PFPC ratings, potentially lowering insurance premiums for property owners and businesses.

A high number of "unclassified" or inconsistently recorded incidents may signal data quality concerns. This can weaken a department's ability to track service trends, justify resource needs, and advocate for appropriate staffing, training, or equipment. Incomplete or vague incident data may also raise questions about a department's ability to meet community risk and response demands.

FUS evaluations typically focus on four key areas of fire protection:

- Water supply
- Fire department operations
- Fire prevention and public education
- Emergency communications

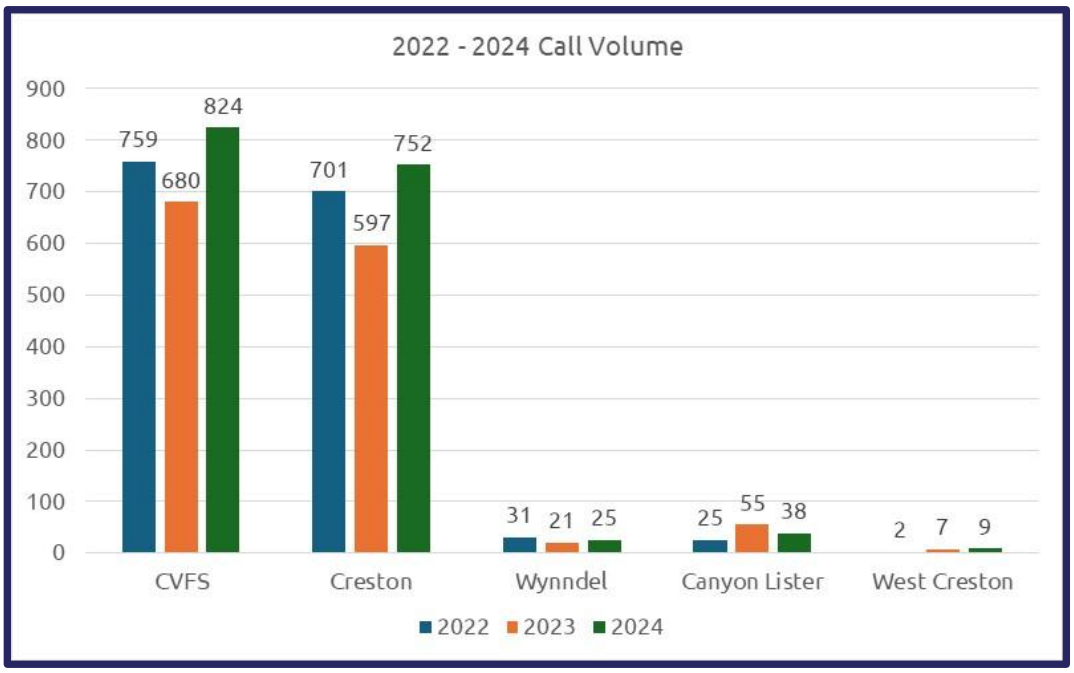
Within the fire department category, FUS places strong emphasis on:

- Accurate and current records of apparatus and personnel.
- Detailed incident reporting and response tracking.
- Use of call data in operational planning and performance measurement.

By aligning with FUS best practices, the CVFS not only enhances their ability to plan and respond effectively but also contributes to broader community resilience. Accurate, detailed, and standardized data is more than just a reporting requirement; it is a strategic asset that supports better decision-making, strengthens public trust, and helps maintain affordable fire insurance rates for residents and businesses alike.

1.6 Creston Valley Fire Service – Call Volume Trends (2022–2024)

The Creston Valley Fire Service responded to a total of 759 calls in 2022, 680 calls in 2023, and 824 calls in 2024, reflecting an overall upward trend in emergency activity across the region. While there was a slight dip in 2023, the 2024 volume marks the highest in the three-year period, representing a 21% increase over the previous year.



The Town of Creston consistently accounts for the vast majority of CVFS calls, ranging between 597 and 752 annually. This reinforces Creston's central role in regional emergency response and highlights the importance of maintaining strong staffing, apparatus, and operational capacity in the core service area.

The rural response areas, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon Lister, and West Creston, also demonstrate variable but important levels of activity:

- Wynndel-Lakeview's call volume remains relatively stable, averaging about 26 calls per year.
- Canyon Lister saw a spike in 2023 (55 calls), before returning to a more moderate level in 2024. This fluctuation may indicate localized risk changes or temporary increases in incident activity.

- West Creston continues to experience low call volume, but shows a gradual increase over the three years, from 2 to 9 calls. While small in number, this upward trend still requires monitoring to ensure appropriate coverage.

The rising total call volume in 2024, reaching a three-year high of 824 responses, suggests growing community demand and increasing pressure on CVFS personnel, resources, and service delivery systems. This upward trend underscores the importance of proactive planning to ensure the department can continue to meet service expectations across the region. The Town of Creston consistently generates the highest volume of calls year over year, reinforcing the need to maintain strong core operations, including staffing, apparatus availability, and response readiness.

As the CVFS continues to serve both urban and rural communities, careful attention to call volume trends will be essential. Understanding where and how demand is increasing supports more effective mutual aid planning, targeted investment in personnel and resources, and the long-term sustainability of service delivery. By aligning operational priorities with real-time service demands, CVFS can ensure that its response capacity evolves alongside the communities it protects.

1.6.1 Anticipating Long-Term Call Volume Growth

The increase in total call volume across the Creston Valley Fire Service, culminating in a 21% rise from 2022 to 2024, may be an early indicator of a long-term upward trend in emergency service demand. While three years alone do not constitute a definitive pattern, this timeframe was selected to capture the most recent and relevant changes in service demand, as annual call volumes have shown to be consistent during this period. The consistent dominance of calls within the Town of Creston, combined with modest but steady increases in rural areas like West Creston and episodic spikes in Canyon Lister, suggests that call volumes are likely to continue rising over the next decade. Several contributing factors may drive this growth:

- Population increases and aging demographics, which often correlate with more medical and support-related calls (e.g., lift assists).
- Expanded development and housing growth in both urban and rural areas, introducing new risks and increasing the number of potential incidents.
- Climate change and extreme weather patterns, potentially contributing to more wildland interface and outdoor fire events.

- Public reliance on fire services for a broader range of emergencies, including alarms, minor rescues, and non-fire-related incidents.

To forecast future service demand, the 21% increase in total call volume from 2022 to 2024 provides a useful indication of short-term trends. While a three-year window may not be enough to establish a definitive trajectory, it offers insight into emerging demand patterns, alongside demographics and community pressures.

Using a conservative linear projection, CVFS could experience a 6–8% increase in call volume every three years, potentially rising 20–30% over the next decade, resulting in more than 1,000 calls annually. This estimate accounts for population growth, an aging demographic, housing expansion, and increased reliance on emergency services.

Localized spikes in Canyon Lister and West Creston should also be monitored and incorporated into periodic reviews. Though annual fluctuations are likely, this projection provides a strong foundation for long-term planning in staffing, apparatus, facilities, and risk reduction programs.

1.7 Fireworks Regulation Bylaw No. 1778, (2012)

Fireworks Regulation Bylaw No. 1778 establishes clear guidelines for the possession, sale, and use of fireworks within the Town of Creston to ensure public safety and compliance with federal and provincial laws. The bylaw includes key definitions, prohibitions, permit requirements, and offence and penalty provisions to regulate the responsible use of fireworks. It strictly prohibits the sale of fireworks, as well as the possession or use of firecrackers and other restricted pyrotechnic devices such as cherry bombs and stink bombs. Fireworks may only be discharged on October 31 between 5:00 PM and 10:00 PM unless special permission is granted by the Town Council. If October 31 falls on a Sunday, fireworks are permitted on October 30 instead. Individuals under the age of 18 are not allowed to possess or discharge fireworks, and it is illegal to provide fireworks to minors. Additionally, fireworks must not be used in a manner that poses a risk to people or property.

A permit is required for the use of both consumer and display fireworks. Applications for consumer fireworks must be submitted to the municipality by noon on October 31 or the last business day before Halloween if it falls on a weekend. For special events, applications must be submitted at least 30 days in advance. Display fireworks events require a certified Fireworks Supervisor to oversee the discharge, along with a detailed site plan and proof of appropriate liability insurance. The Fire Chief has the authority to approve or deny permit applications based

on public safety considerations, and failure to comply with permit conditions may result in permit revocation or fines.

The bylaw also includes provisions for the enforcement of regulations and the penalties for violations. Peace officers, including the Fire Chief and other designated enforcement personnel, have the authority to issue bylaw notices and seize fireworks that are being used or possessed unlawfully. Fireworks seized under this bylaw may be disposed of without compensation. Offenders may face fines ranging from $2,500 to $10,000, with additional penalties for repeat violations. Each day that a violation continues is considered a separate offence. The bylaw aligns with federal and provincial fireworks regulations to ensure that fireworks are used safely and responsibly within the community.

1.7.2 Open Burning Bylaw No. 1929, (2021)

The Open Burning Bylaw No. 1929 for the Town of Creston regulates and restricts open-air burning to ensure public safety and environmental protection. The bylaw provides key definitions to clarify its scope, including terms such as open burning, yard waste, prohibited materials, and permit. Open burning is generally prohibited unless authorized by a permit issued by the Fire Chief, with exceptions for controlled burns related to fire training, municipal land maintenance, and ceremonial or religious events. The bylaw strictly prohibits the burning of yard waste and prohibited materials such as construction waste, plastics, rubber, and treated wood. Cooking fires in approved fire pits or barbecues are permitted, provided they meet size and safety requirements. The bylaw categorizes open burning permits based on fire type and size, including residential piles, field clearing, large piles, and land clearing. Permits are subject to a fee, and only six permits are allowed per property annually. Repeated violations or failure to adhere to permit conditions may result in revocation and fines.

The bylaw also stipulates general regulations and prohibitions to minimize fire hazards and environmental impacts. Open burning must comply with safety measures, including minimum distance requirements from buildings and combustibles, constant supervision with proper firefighting equipment, and restrictions on burning during adverse weather conditions. Burning barrels are strictly prohibited, and fires must not create excessive smoke or cause a nuisance to neighbours. The Fire Chief has the authority to impose fire bans or revoke permits if conditions become hazardous. The bylaw aligns with provincial environmental regulations, including air

quality standards, to ensure responsible burning practices. Violations can result in fines ranging from $2,500 to $10,000 per offence.[2]

1.7.3 Inspection and Testing of Fire Protection Equipment Bylaw No. 1930 (2021)

The Inspection and Testing of Fire Protection Equipment Bylaw No. 1930 establishes regulations for the inspection and testing of fire protection equipment in the Town of Creston. It outlines specific requirements for building owners and occupiers to ensure compliance with the *BC Fire Code*. A key component of the bylaw is the role of the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC), a self-governing professional association that certifies fire protection technicians responsible for inspecting and testing fire protection equipment. Only certified technicians recognized by ASTTBC are authorized to conduct inspections, ensuring consistency and adherence to professional standards. The bylaw provides clear definitions of terms such as fire protection equipment, fire alarm system, and fire protection technician, ensuring clarity in its application.

The bylaw mandates that all fire protection equipment in hotels and public buildings must be regularly inspected and tested by a certified fire protection technician, who must document their findings using standardized labelling and reporting procedures established by ASTTBC. Fire alarm systems, automatic sprinkler systems, portable fire extinguishers, standpipe and hose systems, kitchen fire suppression systems, and emergency lighting must all meet inspection requirements. Building owners are responsible for notifying the fire department immediately if any fire protection equipment becomes inoperable, and the fire chief has the authority to enforce compliance. Violations of the bylaw carry significant penalties, with fines ranging from $2,500 to $10,000 per offence, and each day a violation continues is considered a separate offence. The bylaw ensures a high standard of fire safety by establishing clear accountability for fire protection system maintenance and compliance with inspection standards.[3]

[2] Creston Valley, Fireworks Regulation Bylaw No. 1778 (2012).

[3] Creston Valley, Inspection and Testing of Fire Protection Equipment Bylaw No. 1930 (2021).

1.7.4 Fire Service Legislation

The British Columbia *Fire Safety Act*[2] came into force on August 1, 2024, replacing the repealed Fire Services Act. It provides direction on fire safety inspections, evacuations, compliance monitoring, investigations, inquiries, and enforcement. The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) is responsible for administering the legislation through a provincially led program that promotes fire safety awareness and sets minimum training standards for fire inspectors, investigators, and fire service personnel. Under the Act, the Town of Creston must designate individuals to perform the roles of Fire Inspector and Fire Investigator, with appointments required by October 28, 2024.

The Act outlines procedures for tactical and preventative evacuations. The Fire Chief may authorize a tactical evacuation and determine re-entry timing, with police assistance if needed. A preventative evacuation may be ordered if a fire would pose a risk to life. Provisions cover non-compliance with fire orders, securing evacuated premises, and cost recovery.

The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) meets provincial mandates, including investigating all reportable fires within five days and submitting reports to the OFC within 30 days. Designated members have authority to enter premises without a warrant for investigative purposes. These obligations apply throughout the CVFS response area, including the Town of Creston and RDCK Electoral Areas, reflecting the regional model's shared governance.

Enforcement may occur through inspection orders issued by the Fire Inspector, with related fees and fines governed by Town bylaws. The OFC may also issue administrative monetary penalties (AMPs) for non-compliance. Additionally, provincial courts may impose fines, remedial actions, or orders requiring individuals to act—or cease acting—under the legislation.

Recommendations – Section 1

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
1	The CVFS should develop a long-term call volume projection model every five years to guide operational planning and resource allocation.	Mid-Term (4 to 6 years)	Staff Time	Proactive call forecasting will help the department anticipate service demands and ensure future readiness as community risk profiles evolve.

Section 2

Community Safety

Emergency Management Group

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY SAFETY

2.1 Three Lines of Defence

The Three Lines of Defence is a fire protection model established by the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, but its principles are universally applicable to fire departments across Canada. Regardless of location, every fire department can benefit from implementing this model to enhance public safety and reduce fire-related risks.

1. Public Fire Safety Education

Fire prevention begins with education. This first line of defence focuses on proactive public awareness campaigns to teach communities about fire risks, prevention strategies, and emergency preparedness. Programs such as smoke alarm awareness, escape planning, and fire-safe behaviours can significantly reduce fire incidents.

Fire departments across Canada, from large urban centers to small rural communities, can adapt public education efforts to fit their unique demographics. Whether through school programs, social media outreach, or direct engagement with at-risk populations, this line of defence is essential for reducing fire-related injuries and fatalities.

2. Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement

Fire safety regulations exist to protect lives and property, and the second line of defence ensures these standards are met. Fire departments enforce local and national fire codes, conduct inspections, and ensure compliance with safety regulations.

Provinces and territories enforce similar legislation, such as the *National Fire Code of Canada* and in British Columbia, the BC Fire Code. Regardless of jurisdiction, all fire departments share the responsibility of enforcing safety measures, ensuring proper building construction, and mitigating fire hazards through proactive enforcement.

3. Emergency Response

Despite best efforts in prevention and enforcement, fires still occur, making emergency response the third line of defence. Fire departments must be well-equipped and trained

to respond efficiently to fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, and rescues.

This principle applies to every fire service, whether career, volunteer, or composite. Timely response, adequate staffing, and modern firefighting tactics are critical for minimizing fire spread and saving lives. While emergency response is crucial, it should not be relied upon as the sole fire protection strategy—strong public education and enforcement efforts reduce the burden on emergency services.

2.2 NFPA1201 Standard for Providing Fire and Emergency Services to the Public

To assist with EMG's review and related recommendations, reference has been made to key NFPA standards and how services can be delivered based on the composition of the emergency service.

National Fire Protection Association Standard 1201 – Standard for Providing Fire and Emergency Services to the Public Section 4.3.5 notes:

> *The Fire and Emergency Services Organization (FESO) shall provide customer service-oriented programs and procedures to accomplish the following:*
>
> 1. *Prevent fire, injuries and deaths from emergencies and disasters*
> 2. *Mitigate fire, injuries, deaths, property damage, and environmental damage from emergencies and disasters*
> 3. *Recover from fires, emergencies and disasters*
> 4. *Protect critical infrastructure*
> 5. *Sustain economic viability*
> 6. *Protect cultural resources.*

To effectively accomplish these objectives, the CVFS must adopt a structured, multifaceted approach that aligns with NFPA 1201, while also considering the specific needs of the communities it serves. Below are key strategies to meet each objective:

1. Prevent Fire, Injuries, and Deaths from Emergencies and Disasters

Public Education Programs

Implement comprehensive fire safety education, including home fire escape plans, smoke and carbon monoxide alarm awareness, and fire prevention strategies.

Community Risk Reduction (CRR)

Conduct fire risk assessments, identify vulnerable populations, and tailor prevention strategies to address specific hazards.

Fire Code Enforcement

Conduct regular inspections, ensure compliance with national and local fire codes, and promote fire-safe construction.

2. Mitigate Fire, Injuries, Deaths, Property Damage, and Environmental Damage.

Fire Suppression and Response Planning

Optimize staffing models, and apparatus deployment to ensure efficient response times.

Mutual Aid/Automatic Agreements

Establish agreements with neighboring departments to enhance response capabilities.

Specialized Training

Train personnel in hazardous materials response, technical rescue, and wildland-urban interface firefighting to minimize damage in various emergency scenarios.

3. Recover from Fires, Emergencies, and Disasters

Post-Incident Recovery Plans

Develop plans for assisting residents and businesses after a fire or disaster.

Emergency Management Integration

Work with municipal and provincial emergency management agencies to coordinate recovery efforts.

5. Sustain Economic Viability

Business Continuity Support

Work with businesses to develop fire safety and disaster preparedness plans.

Insurance Rating Improvements

Improve fire protection services to positively impact fire insurance ratings, reducing costs for homeowners and businesses.

Efficient Resource Allocation

Implement data-driven decision-making to optimize personnel, apparatus, and equipment expenditures.

4. Protect Critical Infrastructure

Infrastructure Risk Assessments

Identify and prioritize fire protection for critical infrastructure such as water treatment facilities, hospitals, and transportation hubs.

Pre-Incident Planning

Develop site-specific pre-incident response plans for key facilities.

Fire Protection Systems

Ensure that essential buildings have up-to-date fire suppression and alarm systems.

6. Protect Cultural Resources

Preservation Planning

Collaborate with heritage and cultural organizations to develop fire protection strategies for historic sites.

Fire Suppression in Heritage Buildings

Train personnel in best practices for protecting cultural assets during firefighting operations.

Community Engagement

Raise awareness about the importance of fire protection for cultural and historical sites.

Implementation Approach

To strengthen service delivery and align with modern fire service standards, the CVFS must adopt a strategic framework grounded in data-driven decision making, interagency collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement. By leveraging call volume data, GIS mapping, and formal risk assessments, the department can more effectively allocate resources and tailor response strategies to identified community needs.

Enhanced coordination with key partners, including police, EMS, public works, and emergency management agencies, will further ensure a unified and efficient response to emergencies. Additionally, the CVFS should commit to regularly reviewing and updating its operational policies, training programs, and tactical procedures to reflect current NFPA standards and evolving best practices within the fire service. This evidence-based approach will help ensure the CVFS remains responsive, resilient, and ready to meet the community's changing needs. By incorporating these strategies, EMG's review and recommendations can ensure that fire and emergency services operate efficiently, effectively, and in alignment with NFPA 1201.

2.3 NFPA 1720 Standard

NFPA 1720 Standard for Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments identifies response times serve as a primary performance measure in emergency services, particularly for volunteer fire departments. This standard establishes expectations for both response time and an effective response force in the suppression of structure fires. Specifically, NFPA 1720 outlines the minimum number of personnel required to combat a fire in a 2,000 ft² (186 m²), two-story, single-family dwelling without basement exposures. It also defines the minimum staffing levels and response times based on demand zones and population density to ensure adequate fire suppression capabilities.

For Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS), these guidelines are essential in evaluating response effectiveness and resource allocation. Given that the Town of Creston falls within the *Suburban Area Demand Zone* (having more than 600 people per square kilometre), CVFS must structure its response plans accordingly to meet the NFPA 1720 standard of a minimum of 10 firefighters arriving on scene within 10 minutes, at 80 percent of the time.

Table 4.3.2 Staffing and Response Time of NFPA 1720 identifies the following.

- *A jurisdiction can have more than one demand zone.*

Demand Zone	Demographics	Minimum Staff to Respond	Response Time (minutes)	Meets Objectives (%)
Urban Area	>1000 people/mi^2 (2.6 Km^2)	15	9	90
Suburban Area	500-1000 people/mi^2 (2.6 Km^2)	10	10	80
Rural Area	<500 people/mi^2 (2.6 Km^2)	6	14	80
Remote Area	Travel distance > 8 mi (12.87 Km)	4	Directly dependent on travel distance	90
Special risks	Determined by AHJ	Determined by AHJ based on risk	Determined by AHJ	90

- *Minimum staffing includes members responding from the AHJ's department and automatic aid.*
- *Response time begins upon completion of the dispatch notification and ends at the time interval shown in the table.*

The standard further identifies:

> *4.3.3 Where staffed stations are provided, when determined by the AHJ, they shall have a turnout time of 90 seconds for fire and special operations and 60 seconds for EMS, 90 percent of the time.*
>
> *4.3.4 Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department shall have the capability to safely commence an initial attack within 2 minutes 90 percent of the time.*
>
> *4.3.5 Personnel responding to fires and other emergencies shall be organized into company units or response teams and have the required apparatus and equipment.*
>
> *4.3.6 Standard response assignments and procedures, including mutual aid response and mutual aid agreements predetermined by the location and nature of the reported incident, shall regulate the dispatch of companies, response groups, and command officers to fires and other emergency incidents.*

Meeting the 10 Firefighters in 10-minute rule outlined in NFPA 1720 is essential for Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) to ensure effective fire suppression operations. This benchmark is critical in providing an effective response force capable of suppressing structure fires in their

early stages, minimizing property loss, and protecting lives. NFPA 1720 establishes these requirements based on population density and demand zones, recognizing that different jurisdictions require different response models to meet service expectations. By adhering to this standard, CVFS can reinforce operational effectiveness and enhance public safety within its service area.

To achieve compliance, CVFS must ensure that staffing, response time, and operational readiness align with NFPA 1720 guidelines. This includes organizing personnel into company units, equipping responders with the necessary apparatus, and implementing standardized response procedures. By maintaining compliance with NFPA 1720, CVFS demonstrates its commitment to public safety and operational excellence, ensuring that the community receives a timely, well-coordinated, and effective emergency response.

2.3.1 Effective Response Force

When evaluating the Effective Response Force (ERF) and the overall performance of the CVFS service, three critical factors must be considered: availability, capability, and operational effectiveness of both personnel and equipment.

- Availability
    - The readiness and accessibility of resources for immediate deployment. The CVFS is dependent upon their paid on-call firefighting force, and the work experience program firefighters.
- Capability
    - The ability of deployed resources to effectively manage an incident. The CVFS has a structured training program that includes both classroom instruction and hands-on skills assessments.
- Operational Effectiveness
    - A combination of availability and capability, reflecting both the outcomes achieved by deployed resources and their ability to address the risks they face. In addition, the operational effectiveness consists of the minimum number of firefighters and equipment required to reach an emergency scene within a defined maximum response time. The ability to assemble resources within this timeframe is a key measure of deployment efficiency and overall effectiveness.

Maintaining an effective response force is fundamental to CVFS's ability to provide timely and efficient emergency services. By ensuring adequate staffing, continuous training, and the availability of properly equipped apparatus, CVFS can meet the NFPA 1720 response benchmarks and uphold its commitment to public safety. Ongoing evaluation of response performance, coupled with strategic planning for recruitment, retention, and training, will be essential in sustaining operational effectiveness. As the community grows and emergency demands evolve, CVFS must remain proactive in adapting its response model to continue delivering a high level of fire protection and emergency services.

2.3.2 Response Zones

To support an assessment of response capabilities in accordance with NFPA 1720, the following maps illustrate the areas within the Creston Valley Fire Service where a minimum of 10 firefighters can respond to an incident within 10 minutes, 80 percent of the time. These visualizations help evaluate compliance with the standard and identify any service gaps or areas requiring further resource planning.

FIGURE #1 – FIRE HALL LOCATIONS

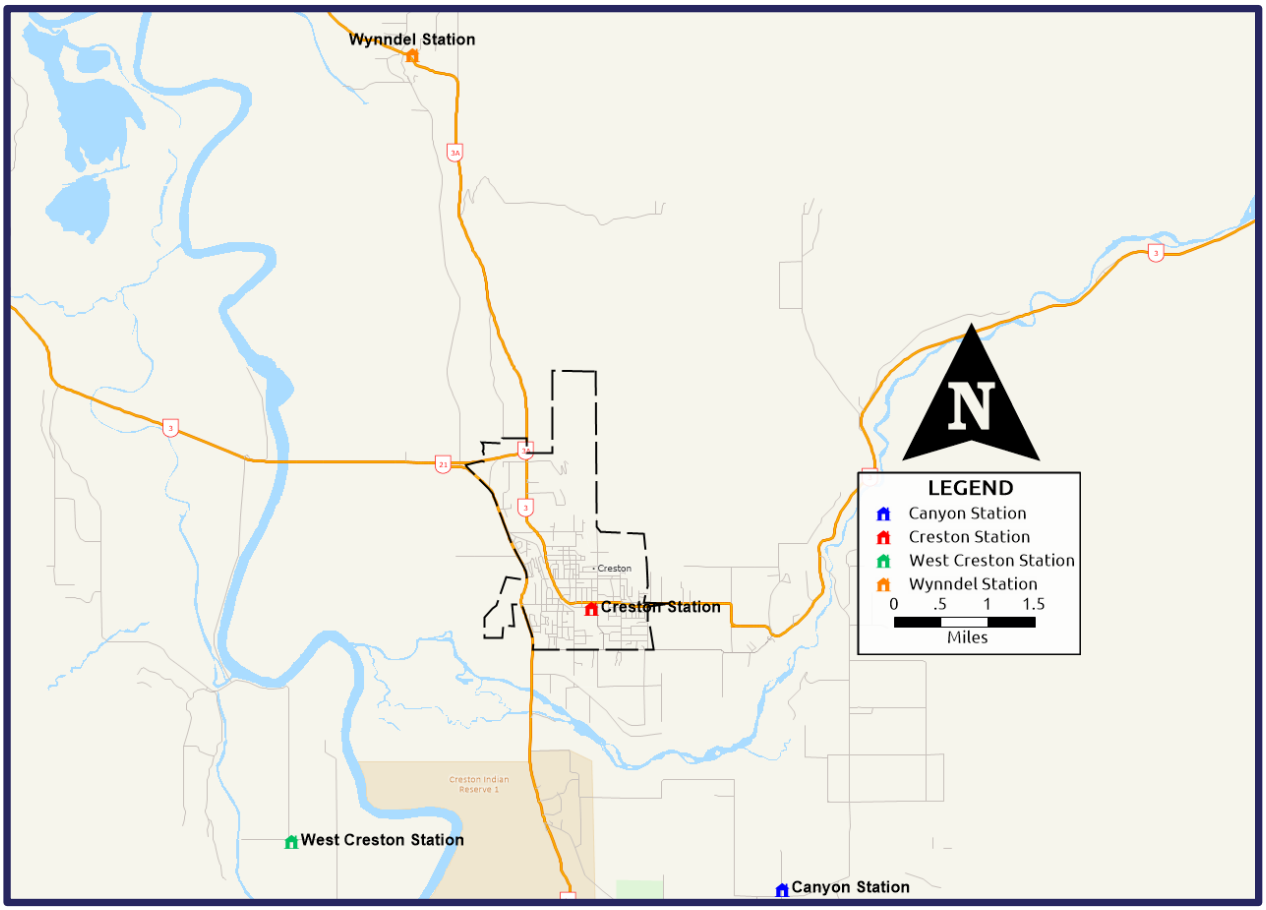
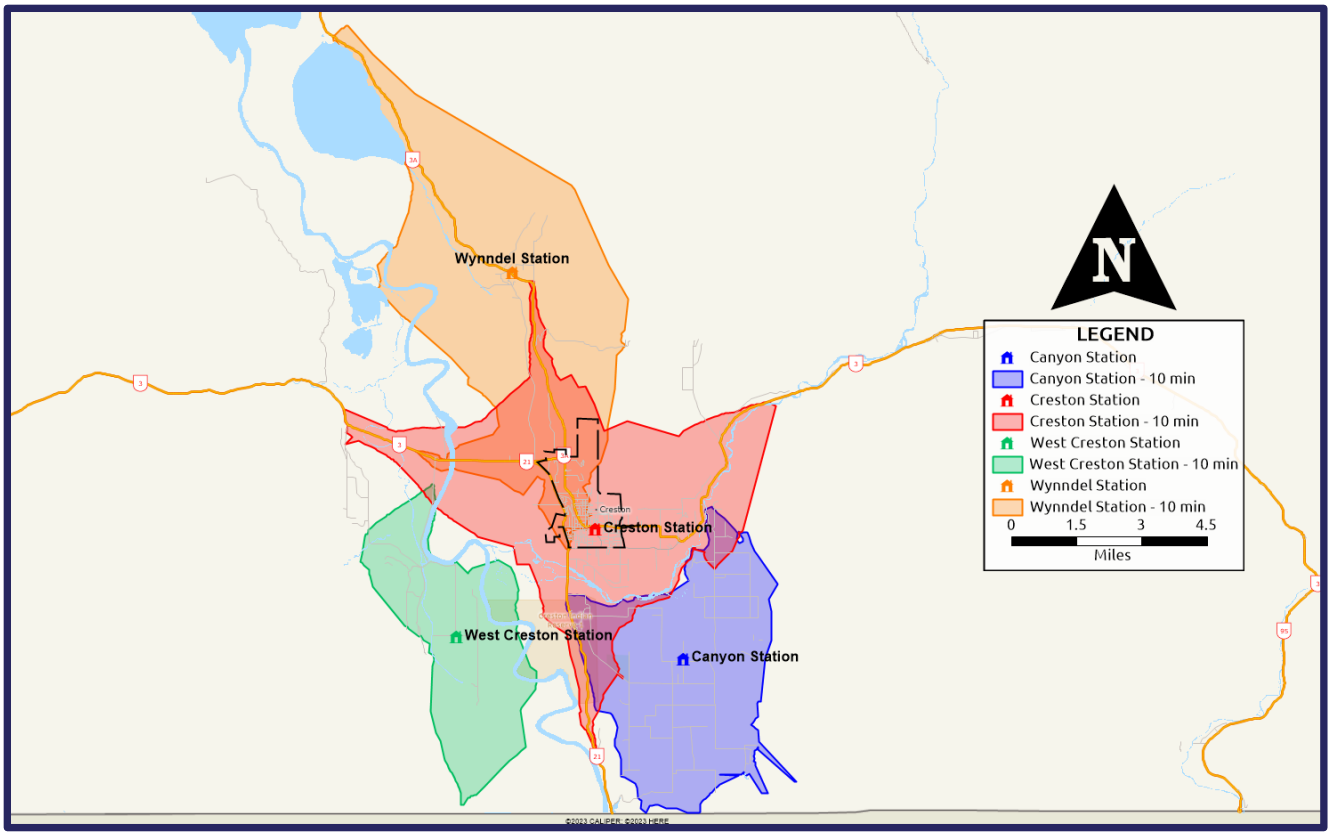


FIGURE #2 – STATIONS WITH 10 MINUTE TRAVEL TIME



2.3.3 CVFS Composite Model

The CVFS operates under a composite response model, blending core staffing from career officers, WEP firefighters, and a strong contingent of POC volunteers. During staffed hours, the department can initiate an immediate response from the Creston Fire Hall. However, for incidents that require additional resources or those that occur outside of regular staffing hours, POC firefighters respond from home to the fire hall, resulting in a natural response time delay before full deployment. To strengthen regional capacity and ensure adequate response, POC firefighters from the West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, and Canyon-Lister halls are automatically paged for specific incident types. This integrated approach balances operational readiness with financial sustainability, ensuring 24/7 coverage while maximizing the effectiveness of the regional service model.

2.4 Public Survey Feedback

Engaging the community was a vital step in shaping this FMP. The public survey provided meaningful insight into residents' expectations, concerns, and priorities related to fire protection in the Creston Valley. While the majority of respondents expressed confidence in the CVFS's professionalism and commitment to safety, the survey also highlighted opportunities for improvement, particularly around public education, community visibility, and targeted outreach initiatives like smoke alarm programs.

Emergency response time and ongoing firefighter training emerged as top priorities, alongside maintaining modern equipment and ensuring timely service delivery. The feedback also underscored concerns related to staffing, apparatus costs, and long-term sustainability. Residents want to see continued investment in core emergency services while also encouraging a broader role for the department in community risk reduction, wildfire readiness, and senior support. These survey results have informed the strategic part of this plan and reflect a community that values both service excellence and operational accountability. A detailed summary of the full survey findings is included in Appendix D.

Section 3

Risk Assessment

EMG | Emergency Management Group

SECTION 3: RISK ASSESSMENT

Industry best practices support an approach to Fire Prevention and Community Safety through the lens of Community Risk Reduction (CRR). A CRR Plan is a multifaceted approach to mitigating or minimizing the impact of an emergency on the community through program design and delivery. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1452 "*Guide for Training Fire Service Personnel to Conduct Community Risk Reduction*" includes identifying the component parts of risks and identifying actions to effect change through the different phases of an emergency.

The CVFS has not yet undertaken a formal Community Risk Assessment (CRA), a critical process for aligning emergency services with the actual needs and vulnerabilities of the community. A comprehensive CRA, as outlined in *NFPA 1300: Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development*, provides a structured methodology for identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing risks within the community. Without this assessment, CVFS may be operating based on assumptions rather than data-driven insights, potentially leading to gaps in service delivery and resource allocation.

Continuous improvement is an essential strategic concept when determining program efficiency and effectiveness. To evaluate a program's impact, it is essential to maintain detailed records for statistical reporting and to support data-driven decision-making. Reviewing program efficiency and effectiveness on an annual basis and incorporating lessons learned into changes to the program is part of a cycle of continuous improvement, further aligning with industry best practices such as the Centre of Public Safety Excellence.[4]

3.1 CVFS Risk Assessment

The absence of a CRA means that CVFS lacks a foundational understanding of the specific hazards and vulnerabilities present in the Creston Valley. This gap can hinder the department's ability to effectively deploy resources, advocate for necessary funding, and implement targeted risk reduction strategies. Moreover, without a CRA, the department may face challenges in justifying operational decisions and investments to stakeholders and the community at large.

[4] International Association of Fire Chiefs, "Center for Public Safety Excellence – Continuous Improvement", accessed April 2025, https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/center-for-public-safety-excellence-(cpse)

Key Risks in the Creston Valley

Wildfire Threats

The Creston Valley is situated within a forested region, making it susceptible to wildfires. Hotter and drier summers have increased the frequency and intensity of wildfires in the area, posing significant risks to life, property, and the environment.

Post-Wildfire Hazards

Following wildfires, the region could face elevated risks of landslides, erosion, and flooding, particularly in areas with steep terrain and water-repellent soils.

Demographic Vulnerabilities

Creston has a median age of 57.5 years, significantly higher than the provincial median. This aging population may have increased vulnerability during emergencies due to mobility issues and other health-related factors.

Wildland-Urban Interface

The proximity of residential areas to forested lands increases the risk of wildfires impacting homes and infrastructure. Fuel loads in these interfaces can exacerbate fire spread if not properly managed.

The CRA provides a structured approach to analyzing risks within a community and developing targeted strategies to mitigate them. Conducting a CRA is not just a best practice; it is a critical step in ensuring that fire and emergency response efforts are aligned with the actual risks present in the community.

Without an accurate understanding of the fire risks, hazardous materials, medical emergencies, and other threats facing the community, the CVFS may lack the strategic insight necessary to deploy personnel and resources effectively. This can lead to longer response times, inadequate coverage in high-risk areas, and an overall reduction in public safety. More critically, without a CRA, fire service leadership lacks the necessary evidence to advocate for appropriate funding, staffing, and equipment upgrades, which can put both firefighters and the community at greater risk.

3.1.1 CVFS Community Risk Assessment

The justification for the cost of conducting a CRA lies in the long-term benefits it provides. While there is an upfront investment, the insights gained from a CRA allow for better decision-making, improved resource allocation, and proactive risk reduction initiatives. A well-executed CRA can identify cost-saving opportunities by ensuring that funding is directed toward the most pressing needs rather than being allocated based on outdated data or assumptions. By

investing in a CRA, the CVFS can avoid the much greater financial and operational costs associated with preventable emergencies, legal liabilities, and reputational damage resulting from an ineffective response strategy.

NFPA 1300 Article 4.2.3 states that strategies for risk reduction shall be placed into the following categories:

- Avoid the Risk – Eliminate the hazard.
- Mitigate the Risk - Reduce probability or impact of the risk.
- Accept the Risk – Take no actions.
- Transfer the Risk – Transfer the risk to another party.

The most effective approach to reducing injuries, fatalities, and property damage from fire begins with public education, inspections, and enforcement. The Fire Prevention Program focuses on these critical aspects of fire safety, beginning with a comprehensive Community Risk Assessment (CRA) that identifies and mitigates potential hazards.

Investing in a CRA will not only improve emergency response outcomes but also support CVFS in securing funding, guiding policy development, and fostering community trust. Given the evolving risk landscape in the Creston Valley, initiating a CRA should be a top priority for the department.

3.1.2 Adopting Risk-Based Approach

The adoption of a risk-based approach to fire service delivery, grounded in the Community Risk Assessment process, has become a key component of fire service planning across Canada. In Ontario, for example, this approach is not only recommended but also legislated. Ontario Regulation 378/18, made under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, requires all municipalities to complete a CRA and use it to inform decisions about fire protection services. This mandate reflects a broader shift in Canadian fire service philosophy: municipalities must proactively identify and prioritize risks to ensure that service levels are both evidence-based and community-specific. While not yet a legislative requirement in British Columbia, the same principles of risk-informed planning are essential to building an effective and accountable fire

service. A CRA provides a detailed understanding of local fire and life safety risks, serving as the foundation for developing targeted strategies in public education, fire prevention, and operational readiness.

To ensure the Community Risk Assessment (CRA) is a dynamic framework guiding service delivery, the CVFS will require dedicated leadership to oversee its ongoing development and implementation. To address this, EMG will provide a recommendation for a Deputy Chief position. This role is envisioned to provide the strategic capacity needed to champion the CRA process, coordinate data collection, and lead the development of comprehensive Community Risk Reduction (CRR) strategies. Establishing this position will help ensure that risk assessment and reduction remain central to CVFS operations and future planning.

These CRR initiatives are not reactive; they are proactive and preventative and designed to reduce the occurrence and severity of emergencies. Through early identification of hazards and targeted mitigation planning, the CVFS can reduce the frequency of structure fires, hazardous material incidents, and other high-risk events. These actions enhance public safety, protect critical infrastructure, reduce liability exposure, and preserve municipal assets, all while lowering the long-term costs of emergency response.

Additionally, a structured and well-documented CRA and Community Risk Reduction (CRR) framework helps shield the CVFS from litigation and reputational damage. In the event of a serious incident, the ability to demonstrate that known risks were identified and mitigated can be critical in satisfying the municipality's duty of care. Without this, there is potential for significant legal and financial consequences. The proposed Deputy Chief position would ensure compliance with national standards such as NFPA 1300 and support best practices in municipal emergency management and risk governance.

This new position proposal aligns directly with the CAO's organizational restructuring vision, which emphasizes the need to:

"Allocate responsibilities strategically among senior officers in the Fire Department to enhance capacity" and recognizes that "*with the addition of Emergency Management, [the Fire Chief] requires a slight shift in strategic focus."*

Currently, both the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief are operating at over capacity, with limited time to engage in proactive planning or risk oversight. The absence of dedicated leadership in this area leaves the department vulnerable to missed opportunities, reactive decision-making, and service gaps in high-risk areas.

The proposed Deputy Chief position would fill this critical gap by supporting and enhancing the Fire Chief's evolving role in emergency management. It would ensure that CVFS not only fulfills its current obligations but also builds a forward-looking, resilient model of fire service leadership that is prepared to meet emerging risks, regulatory expectations, and the community's growing needs.

The proposed Deputy Chief position would fill this critical gap by supporting and enhancing the Fire Chief's evolving role in emergency management. It would ensure that CVFS not only fulfills its current obligations but also builds a forward-looking, resilient model of fire service leadership that is prepared to meet emerging risks, regulatory expectations, and the community's growing needs. Expecting the Fire Chief or Assistant Fire Chief to independently develop and maintain a formal Community Risk Assessment is impractical and unsustainable given their current operational demands. Their existing responsibilities already extend across emergency response, administration, training, and personnel management, leaving limited capacity for the level of analysis, coordination, and strategic oversight that a robust CRA process requires.

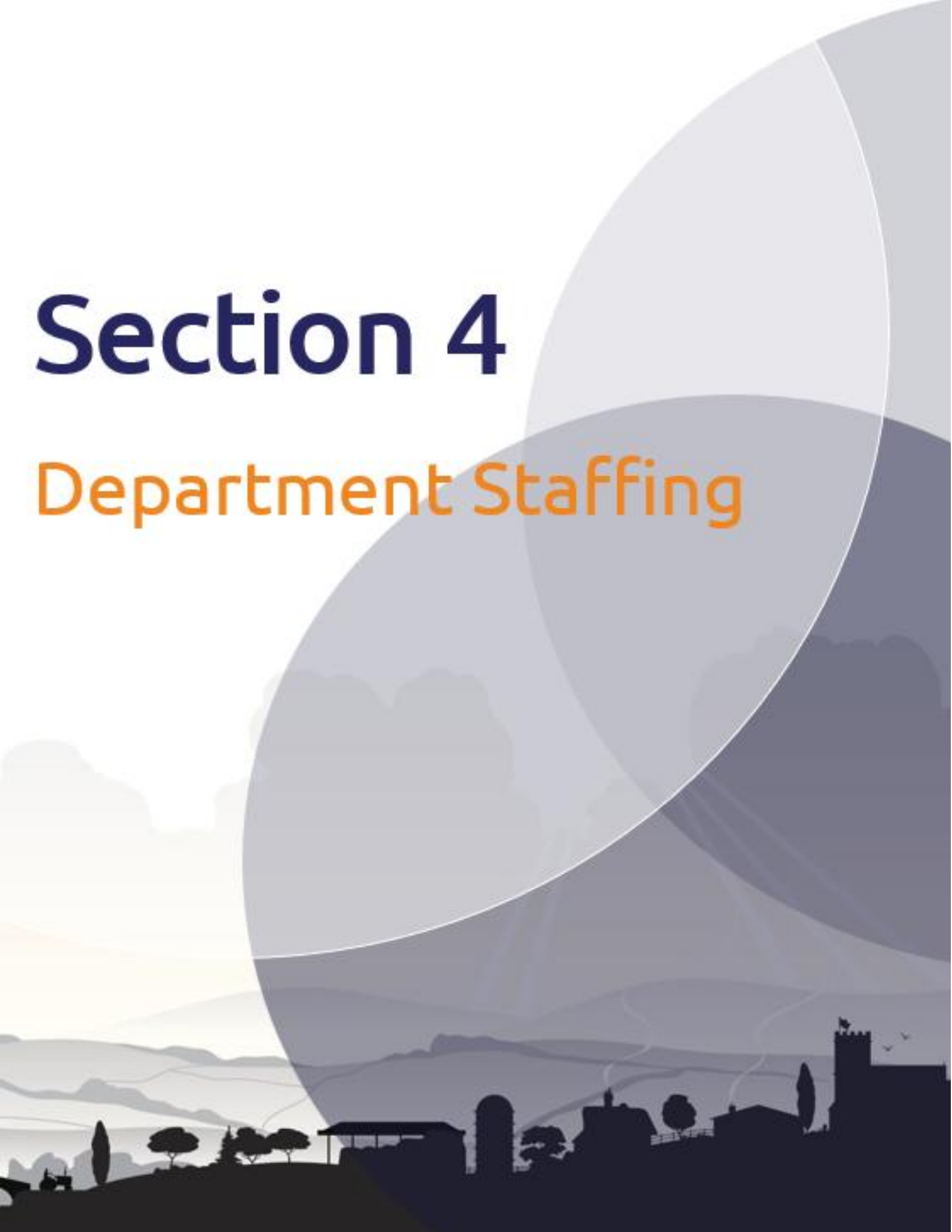
Establishing a Deputy Chief position is not simply about adding capacity; it is about embedding sustainability, legal defensibility, and strategic foresight into the core of CVFS. It represents a proactive investment in the future of public safety, one that ensures risk is not only identified but effectively managed, mitigated, and communicated through a structured leadership framework. Additional details regarding this position proposal will be addressed in Section 4.

Section 3 - Recommendations

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
2	Conduct a formal Community Risk Assessment (CRA) Plan for the CVFS aligned with NFPA 1300: Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A structured CRA will identify key risks within the communities and enable the CVFS to proactively reduce fire and emergency risks by identifying local hazards, targeting prevention efforts, and aligning resources with the greatest areas of community need.

Section 4

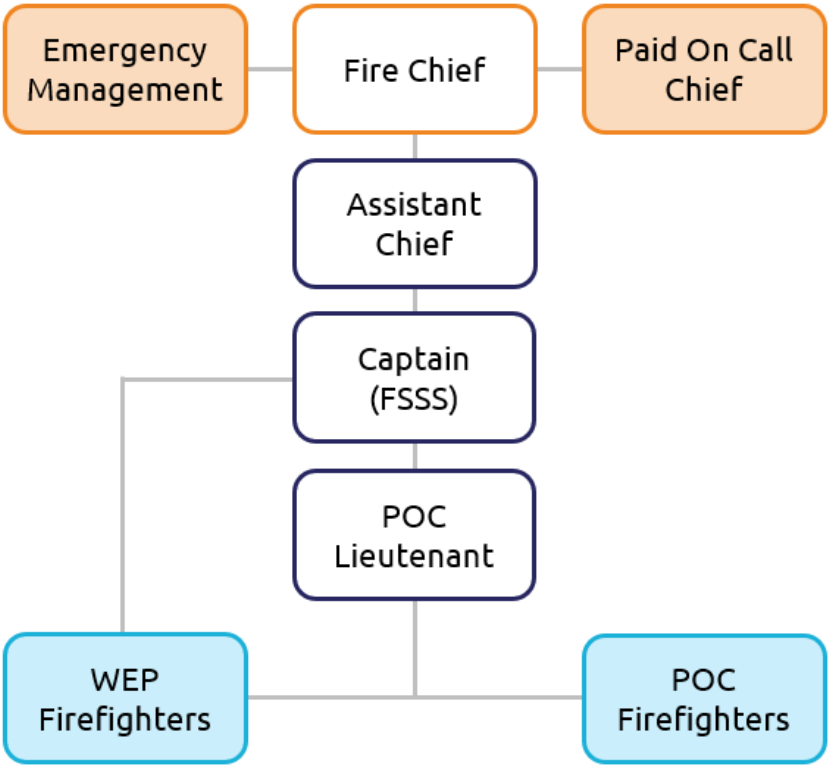
Department Staffing



SECTION 4: DEPARTMENT STAFFING

4.1 Administration Division

The Administration Division within the CVFS consists of the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, two Fire Service Support Supervisors and an Administrative Assistant. These roles are identified within the current organizational chart.



The Administrative Assistant works under the direction of the Fire Chief at CVFS at the Creston Emergency Services Building (CESB). This is a full-time position at the CESB that provides daily support to the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and both Fire Service Support Supervisors, while also performing other functions related to finance, bylaw, and Emergency Management.

Key responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant include, but are not limited to:

- Responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests as required.

- Maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding sensitive personnel and departmental information.
- Demonstrating a strong understanding of both administrative and operational aspects of the fire department.
- Managing payroll and financial records, including support for budgeting and calculating payroll for paid-on-call firefighters and WEP firefighters.
- Organizing and maintaining departmental documents and other essential records.

As part of the CVFS FMP process, all senior staff job descriptions, including those of the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, and Fire Service Support Supervisors (Captains), were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed. This review was a critical step in assessing whether existing roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures accurately reflect the current and future needs of the department, the community, and the service model within which CVFS operates.

Multiple factors prompted the review and an analysis of the feedback from staff, including the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, and Fire Service Support Supervisors indicated that there is recognition of resources being strained. Many duties assigned on paper had evolved significantly in practice, often due to operational necessity rather than strategic planning. As a result, staff at all levels reported feeling overextended, with essential responsibilities such as fire prevention, inspections, public education, and WEP supervision not receiving the attention they require.

The review also considered how each role aligned with best practices in comparable fire departments across BC, particularly those of similar size, structure, and staffing models. The findings revealed that several duties assigned to CVFS Fire Service Support Supervisors, including policy development, media relations, disciplinary authority, and high-level program oversight, are more typically found in Chief Officer roles. Conversely, critical tasks such as firefighter mentorship, WEP supervision, and frontline leadership were not consistently emphasized or supported by available capacity. The existing Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Service Support Supervisor roles also exhibited overlap, leading to inefficiencies in day-to-day operations.

As part of this assessment, EMG also referenced the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) Red Book, which provides a set of best practice guidelines and sample position descriptions commonly used across the sector. It is important to note that while the Red Book offers a valuable baseline, it is not intended to serve as a prescriptive template. Adding an extensive list of roles and responsibilities without careful contextual adaptation can overburden personnel,

diffuse accountability, and create role ambiguity that hampers operational efficiency. In light of these concerns, EMG conducted a review of the current Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, and Captain job descriptions to ensure they are realistic, clearly defined, and aligned with strategic goals, and sustainable workload expectations. The existing misalignment of duties impacts the effectiveness and clarity of existing roles, contributing to staff fatigue and a growing list of deferred priorities. Without a structured realignment, the risk of burnout exists, operational gaps become bigger, and reduced service quality would exist.

To address these issues, each job description was reviewed through four key lenses:

1. Role Clarity: Ensuring each position has a clear, focused scope of responsibilities that reflects current and anticipated service delivery needs.
2. Workload Sustainability: Evaluating whether duties assigned to each role can be reasonably performed within regular work hours and with available resources.
3. Chain of Command: Clarifying supervision, decision-making authority, and operational accountability to improve coordination and reduce duplication.
4. Alignment with Industry Norms: Comparing each role to regional and provincial benchmarks to bring CVFS in line with similar fire service models.

Based on the analysis of the job descriptions and feedback, adjustments are being proposed to create a more balanced and efficient leadership structure. This includes introducing a Deputy Chief position to fire inspections, prevention and public education responsibilities, redefining the Assistant Chief's focus on operations, and re-aligning the Fire Service Support Supervisors' role to concentrate on, training delivery, daily operations and direct support of WEP firefighters. These updates will help ensure that CVFS's leadership model is modern, more resilient, and capable of meeting the growing demands of fire service delivery, all while supporting the health, clarity, and effectiveness of the people in those roles.

4.1.1 Fire Chief

The Fire Chief at CVFS carries a comprehensive mandate, overseeing both the operational and administrative functions of the department. The Fire Chief's responsibilities span emergency response, personnel management, training, budgeting, inter-agency coordination, and regulatory compliance. However, despite the depth and breadth of the role, it has become increasingly clear through observation and direct conversation that the current structure leaves little room for strategic leadership or long-term planning. The Fire Chief is consistently

immersed in the day-to-day demands of the organization, responding to emergencies, managing career and paid-on-call staff, and addressing administrative requirements with limited support.

To improve organizational efficiency and better manage workload, the Fire Chief has been working closely with the Assistant Chief to clarify roles and eliminate duplication of efforts. While this collaboration is necessary and commendable, the reality is that both individuals remain stretched beyond sustainable capacity. The position's scope now exceeds what is reasonable for a two-person command team to manage effectively. Regardless of whether the root issue is time management or sheer workload volume, the result is the same: the department requires an additional Chief Officer to support operations, increase administrative bandwidth, and allow senior leadership to focus on strategic development and risk reduction initiatives.

4.1.2 Assistant Fire Chief

The Assistant Fire Chief (AFC) plays a critical role within the CVFS, managing a broad portfolio that includes administrative oversight, operational coordination, and primary responsibility for the department's fire prevention and public education programs. Despite this defined scope, the AFC is operating under significant workload pressures. With constant demands from both emergency response duties and administrative obligations, there is little available time to implement and maintain a proactive, structured fire inspection program. Fire prevention, while listed as a core responsibility, often becomes reactive rather than preventative due to limited capacity.

The Assistant Chief is frequently pulled in multiple directions, responding to calls, attending meetings, preparing reports, managing personnel, and attempting to fulfill inspection duties, often without the time or resources to fully address any one area. Without additional leadership support, the department's ability to meet its fire prevention mandates, ensure bylaw compliance, and reduce long-term community risk will remain compromised.

4.1.3 Fire Service Support Supervisor (Captain)

The Fire Service Support Supervisor plays a vital role in the day-to-day operations of the CVFS, providing leadership, supervision, and operational support. It is important to note that the Fire Service Support Supervisor holds the rank of Captain with the CVFS. Their core responsibilities include supervising WEP firefighters, managing hall duties, responding to incidents as the

company officer or incident commander, and performing administrative functions that support overall department operations and training delivery.

To streamline administrative processes and reduce workload at the Captain level, CVFS has begun transitioning many routine administrative tasks to the department's administrative assistant. While this shift has seen some early success, certain challenges remain, and ongoing refinement is required.

Operational restructuring is underway, with a focus on assigning defined portfolios; training for one Captain, and operations for the second Captain. Though early in development, this initiative aims to minimize duplication of effort and increase efficiency. However, there is a recognized risk that planning and coordination functions traditionally held by Chief Officers could be unintentionally delegated down to the Fire Service Support Supervisor, adding to their workload and blurring role clarity.

Supervision of the WEP firefighters is a significant component of the Captain's role. The next intake of WEP participants will be split into two crews of three, aligned with specific Captain schedules and rotated periodically to ensure balanced exposure and leadership. Presently, the WEP operate Monday through Friday during daytime hours, with a Fire Service Support Supervisor rotating through supervision based on the department's 4-on-4-off shift schedule.

Although WEP firefighters contribute meaningfully to departmental capacity and manpower, a notable gap has been identified in ongoing training and development following the initial onboarding phase. This is primarily due to call volume and limitations in supervision. The move toward seven-day coverage and smaller, more flexible WEP crews is intended to improve this dynamic, allowing for more focused development, mentorship, and better workload distribution across the organization.

4.2 Purpose and Strategic Value of Proposed Deputy Chief Role

The proposal for a Deputy Chief (DC) position within the Creston Valley Fire Service is a strategic, cost-effective, and forward-looking step toward strengthening leadership capacity, operational consistency, and long-term sustainability. This role is well-aligned with the Town of Creston's 2025 Organizational Restructure, which emphasizes divisional autonomy, proactive risk reduction, leadership development, and high-performing service delivery across a broader Protective Services mandate.

As part of the restructuring, the Fire Chief position has been elevated to a Director of Protective Services role, encompassing oversight of Fire and Rescue Services, Emergency Management, Climate Readiness, Fire Code Enforcement, and Public Safety Education. While this shift enhances strategic integration, it simultaneously creates a significant gap in day-to-day operational leadership, tactical coordination, and program execution. The Deputy Chief position addresses this gap by providing focused oversight of key service areas, relieving operational pressure on the Director (Fire Chief), and enabling a more balanced and sustainable distribution of responsibilities across the organization.

The need for this role is further supported by the 2024 BD Carruthers & Associates organizational assessment, which recommended the strategic redistribution of senior officer responsibilities to mitigate risk and enhance leadership bandwidth. The Deputy Chief would immediately assume leadership over fire prevention and inspection programs, public education, operational consistency, and risk-based service planning, areas currently underserved due to the expanding demands on the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief. The Assistant Chief, in contrast, would continue to lead internal operations, assume responsibility for firefighter training, and supervision of the Fire Service Support Supervisors and the Work Experience Program (WEP), forming a dual-leadership model that supports both strategic oversight and frontline engagement.

One of the most critical yet currently unmet needs is the development of a comprehensive Community Risk Assessment (CRA) and a corresponding Community Risk Reduction Program. These functions are foundational to evidence-based planning and prioritization of public safety. Given current workload constraints, the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief are not in a position to undertake this work to the level required. While hiring a consultant is one option, a more sustainable and fiscally responsible approach would be to embed this responsibility within the Deputy Chief's role. The Deputy Chief would not only lead the CRA process but also develop a long-term risk reduction strategy while coordinating closely with the CVFS emergency management portfolio. This alignment ensures that prevention, preparedness, and public education are not only connected but embedded into the department's operational identity and leadership role in emergency management, which will have a positive impact on the CVFS.

This leadership structure not only clarifies internal roles but also enhances the department's ability to be proactive, community-focused, and adaptable. The Deputy Chief would be well-positioned to lead initiatives in firefighter wellness, volunteer engagement, and operational standardization, areas often sidelined in a reactive environment. In doing so, the CVFS would shift from responding to challenges, as is currently the case, to anticipating and mitigating them.

From a succession planning standpoint, the Deputy Chief role addresses a critical vulnerability identified in the CAO's restructuring framework: the absence of a formal leadership development and continuity plan. By establishing a clear, scalable command structure, comprising the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Chief, the CVFS can grow its internal talent, preserve institutional knowledge, and reduce dependency on external recruitment for senior leadership roles. Both the Assistant and Deputy Chief positions would serve as logical successors to the Director of Protective Services, reinforcing organizational resilience and long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, as the department continues to experience increasing call volumes, expanding public safety mandates, and growing regional collaboration, it is realistic to project that additional full-time leadership positions will be needed in the years ahead. Establishing the Deputy Chief role will provide a foundation for future growth and reflect the Town's commitment to strategic planning, prudent financial management, and effective service delivery.

The introduction of a Deputy Chief significantly strengthens the position of the Fire Chief. By delegating day-to-day oversight of operations, prevention, education, and training to other Chief Officers, the Fire Chief is better positioned to focus on long-term strategy, regional coordination, and, more importantly, with the RDCK and ongoing organizational development. This improved span of control enhances leadership effectiveness and positions the CVFS to continue delivering high-quality, community-centred fire protection. The Deputy Chief role is not merely an operational necessity; it is a strategic investment in the future of the fire services in the Creston Valley.

4.3 Comparable Fire Departments

4.3.1 Comparable Fire Services – Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) provides fire services to the community of Creston, as well as to Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Arrow Creek/Erickson/Erickson and the Lower Kootenay Band through five individual Fire Service Agreements (FSA). As different models for service provision are explored in order to capitalize on efficiencies and effectiveness, it is important to poll other organizations and to consider industry trends and/or norms.

Eight fire service organizations were asked to complete questionnaires in order to support data analysis related to the creation of the CVFS Fire Master Plan. Five responses were received. The responses included both qualitative and quantitative data.

4.3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The respondents shared what worked well, along with specific notes about the services.

TABLE #1: KEY INSIGHTS FROM FIRE SERVICE COMPARISONS

Fire Department	Service Type	# Fire Service Agreements	What Works Well
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	Municipal	4	The 10-year agreement provides stability of service provision.
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services	Regional	4	Each department has its own budget and bylaw. Community funding and taxes stay within the community. Some share expenses but cost sharing must be transparent.
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services	Regional	2	Good cost for level of service provided to the communities.
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	Regional	1	Provide the same service to both communities. Administration and decision-making are made solely by the Regional Fire Chief.
Township of Langley Fire Department	Municipal	0	Four mutual aid agreements. Shared resources increased service to residents. Focus on providing standardization in service delivery.

It is noted by Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services that the cost of providing a service rises as distance from the fire station increases. Similar to the model in place with CVFS, they do not have a standardized formula for analyzing costs and fees. Fire inspections and fire investigations are not provided outside of the municipality, resulting in a disconnect between the service provided to each of the four additional communities, and the level of life safety both for firefighters attending an incident, and for residents of the community.

The Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services advised that their service spans two electoral areas. Similar to CVFS, with four FSA for the additional communities they manage multiple budgets, and multiple budget requests. The smaller departments have greater funding challenges.

The Comox Valley Regional District provides fire protection services within a fire protection area. Outside of this there are some residential areas that do not have enough residents to make establishing a service or contract realistic.

The Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue includes Rossland, Warfield, Genelle, Trail, Montrosse, Fruitvale, and Electoral Areas A and B. The provision of the same level of service provides a high degree of standardization and greater ease of administration and operation. Standardization is a model that many fire services including the Township of Langley Fire Department are targeting, to provide more efficient and effective services to their communities.

4.3.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data that can be measured in a numerical format is considered to be quantitative. Measurable data is imperative when comparing like for like, but also for identifying core differences. This supports the quantitative data and the story that it tells.

TABLE #2: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	23,000	$5,584,853	$140,000	6.4%
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	1,800	$669,000	$180,000	0.25 per $1,000 assessed

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	900	$447,000	$120,000	0.39 per $1,000 assessed
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	165	$473,000	$150,000	0.86 per $1,000 assessed
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	800	$331,000	$107,000	1.22 per $1,000 assessed
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	8,000	$1,210,250	$160,000	0.4911
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	3,000	$580,000	0	0.4056
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	700	$310,440	$2,500,000	0.6355
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	850	$5,623,021	$2,253,821	67.20 per $100,000 assessed
Township of Langley Fire Department	400	$27,981,807	-	-

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their financial information is included for further consideration.

TABLE #3: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Denman Island	1,300	$531,305	$9,000	0.6328
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Hornby Island	1,300	$705,900	$30,000	0.6795
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Fanny Bay	700	$260,000	$454,500	0.7767
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Union Bay	850	$849,825	$6,300,000	0.9572

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Bates Huband	400	$67,000	0	0.4217
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Rural Cumberland Contract w/Village of Cumberland	700	$260,305	0	0.6955

The annual incident count is an important factor to consider. The data below reflects 2024, providing key insights alongside the number of fire stations serving the area and their staffing levels.

TABLE #4: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – INCIDENTS, STATIONS, STAFFING

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	23,000	2,400	1	32
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	1,800	145	1	26*
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	900	84	1	24*
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	165	30	1	24*
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	800	38	1	18*
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	8,000	356	1	43
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	3,000	170	1	25
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	700	11	0	10
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	850	2,070	6	81
Township of Langley Fire Department	400	12,684	7	206

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their data is included for further consideration.

TABLE #5: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS, STATIONS, AND STAFFING

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Denman Island	1,300	137	1	35.8
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Hornby Island	1,300	184	1	31
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Fanny Bay	700	46	1	15
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Union Bay	850	107	1	21
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Bates Huband	400	0	0	0
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Rural Cumberland Contract w/Village of Cumberland	700	48	0	0

TABLE #6: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – STAFFING AND APPARATUS DETAILS

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	32	1 FC 1 DC 6 Cpt 6 POC 18 FF	9	2 Pumper 1 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 2 Bush 1 Side x Side

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	26*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 18 POC 1 BC	10.5	1 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 3 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	5.5	2 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	4	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Rescue 1 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	18*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 3 Cpt 12 POC	3	1 Pumper 1 Tanker 1 Rescue
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	43	1 FC 1 DC 1 AC 40 POC	5	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue Pumper 1 SPU

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	25	25 POC	2	1 Pumper 1 Tanker
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	10	10 POC	1	1 Aerial
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	81	1 FC 1 DC 5 Cpt 10 FF 63 POC 1 Admin	21	8 Pumper 1 Aerial 5 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 1 Light Air Support 3 Command 1 River Rescue
Township of Langley Fire Department	206	1 FC 2 DC 4 AC 24 Cpt 95 FF 80 POC	26	9 Pumper 3 Squads 8 Tankers 3 Rescues 1 SPU 2 Quints

Note: The Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services model has a shared Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief amongst the four fire stations.

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their data is included for further consideration.

TABLE #7: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL STAFFING AND APPARATUS DETAILS

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Denman Island	35.8	.8 FC 35 POC	6	1 Pumper 3 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 Other
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Hornby Island	31	1 FC 30 POC	6	2 Pumper 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Fanny Bay	15	15 POC	3	1 Pumper 1 Tanker 1 Rescue
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Union Bay	21	1 FC 20 POC	4	2 Pumper 1 Rescue 1 Other
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Bates Huband	0	0	0	0
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Rural Cumberland Contract w/Village of Cumberland	0	0	0	0

4.4 Fire Inspections

The *Fire Safety Act* requires municipal councils to have a risk-based compliance monitoring system. A risk-based compliance monitoring system requires that all inspectable properties be evaluated and categorized for risk. A fire inspection and monitoring schedule needs to be determined for each occupancy to determine the frequency of inspections.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) provides guidelines for assessing risk.[3] "General Risk" for fire inspections consider a building's occupancy type as detailed in the British Columbia Building Code.[4]

TABLE #8: OFFICE OF THE FIRE COMMISSIONER – GENERAL OCCUPANCY RISK TABLE

Group/Division	Occupancy Type	Risk
Group A, Division 1	Theatres, Television Studios	Low
Group A, Division 2	Library, Restaurant, Community Hall	Low/Moderate
Group A, Division 2	Church	Moderate
Group A, Division 2	Pubs	High
Group A, Division 3	Arenas, Pools, Rinks	Low
Group A, Division 4	Open Air Stadiums, Grandstands	Low
Group B, Division 1	Police Station w/Detention	Moderate
Group B, Division 2	Hospitals, Assisted Living/Care Facilities (pre 2012 BCBC)	Moderate
Group C	Apartments, Condos, Group Homes	High
Group D	Offices, Banks	Low
Group E	Grocery, Hardware, Sales	Low
Group F, Division 1	High Hazard Industrial	High
Group F, Division 2	Medium/Low Hazard Industrial	Moderate
Group F, Division 3	Low Hazard Industrial	Low
Group V	Vacant Buildings	Determined by Municipality

As well, assessing "Specific Risk" of an occupancy further takes into account both static and dynamic risk factors. These include age of building, geographic location, construction type, access, water supply, specific use, building systems, state of repair of the building, presence of hazardous good or processes, owner's willingness to maintain compliance, enforcement history, change in ownership, and occupant characteristics.

An industry best practice is NFPA 1730 "*Standard on Organization and Development of Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, and Investigation, Public Education Operations*

which provides additional methodology for rating occupancies. A timeline of one to three years is typical for occupancies classified as high-risk, moderate-risk and low-risk.

TABLE #9: NFPA 1730 – POTENTIAL FIRE INSPECTION FREQUENCY

Assessed Total Risk Determination	Frequency
Low	Once every three years
Moderate	Once every two years
High	Annually
Critical Infrastructure	Determined by Municipality

The municipality should determine the General Occupancy risk based on the OFC table provided above, as well conduct an initial inspection to assess the Specific Risk of each occupancy. Frequency of inspection could then be determined using the Frequency Risk Matrix found below.[5]

A decision must be made as to how the risk-based compliance monitoring program will be completed. Fire inspections need to be completed by fire inspectors as endorsed by Mayor and Council. However, the Program may include fire safety assessments conducted by the building owner or their authorized agent. A fire safety assessment is an assurance that no fire hazards exist and that there is no life safety risk to occupants. If required by the municipality, the building owner or authorized agent must complete an assessment and submit it for review and acceptance within a designated time frame. If not completed, the municipality may conduct a fire inspection for a fee.

TABLE #10: FREQUENCY RISK MATRIX

General Occupancy Risk	Specific Risk (Based on Inspection – Static and Dynamic Factors)		
	Low	Moderate	High
Low	Primary Assessment – Annually Secondary Inspection – Every Three Years	Primary Assessment – Annually Secondary Inspection – Every Two Years	Primary Inspection – Every Two Years Secondary Assessment – Annually
Moderate	Primary Assessment – Annually Secondary inspection – Every two years	Primary Inspection – Every two years Secondary Assessment – Annually	Primary Inspection – Annually Secondary Assessment – Annually
High	Primary Inspection – Every Two Years Secondary Assessment – Annually	Primary Inspection – Annually Secondary Assessment – Annually	Primary Inspection – Annually Secondary Assessment – Annually

Examples:

- A "Group C Occupancy" is a General Risk Category of "High". Based on inspection it may be a residential building with newer life safety systems and reliably mobile occupants which could be rated as a Specific Risk "Low". Based on the above table the Primary frequency should be a Fire Inspection conducted by a Fire Inspector every two years, or alternately a Fire Safety Assessment could be conducted but it would be on an annual basis.

- A "Group E Grocery Store" is a General Risk Category of "Low." Based on inspection it may have a high occupancy load, complicated life safety systems, and a history of complaints and non-compliance which could rate it as a Specific Risk "High." Based on the above table the Primary frequency should be a Fire Inspection conducted by a Fire Inspector every two years, or alternately a Fire Safety Assessment could be conducted but it would be on an annual basis.

Notes:

Inspection refers to an inspection carried out by a Fire Inspector.

Assessment refers to a fire safety assessment conducted by the owner or owner's authorized agent.

The *Fire Safety Act* also provides specifics on training for fire inspectors and fire investigators. Training standards are available through the OFC.6 There is also a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) as a challenge tool for training. Training or PLAR should be completed by July 31, 2025.

4.4.1 Fire Prevention and Related Bylaws

The Town of Creston has municipal bylaws that regulate, prohibit and impose requirements in relation to expectations for the services it provides. Provisions of this information provide transparency for the community and for CVFS personnel as they deliver service.

The Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021 is the bylaw that relates to the protection of persons and property through fire prevention and hazard control in the Town of Creston. This bylaw is authorized by Council through the *Community Charter*.

There is an expectation that the Owner and/or Owner's representative of a premise complies with the provisions of this bylaw, and all of the requirements of the provincial codes. The current *BC Fire Code* and the provincial *Act*. Bylaw No. 1931 currently references the old *Fire Services Act*. This will need to be updated to the new *Fire Safety Act*, along with new details of the *Act* and provisions that are no longer in effect, such as the Local Assistant to the Fire Commission program.

Bylaw No. 1931 includes fire prevention and hazard control such as smoke alarms, smoking, storage tanks, refuse containers, vacant or fire-damaged buildings, and combustible materials. Review of plans, details authorization for plan review and inspection of new construction, including requesting that the Owner provide building pre-incident fire plan information. Means of egress, emergency lighting, emergency planning, cooking equipment, suppression systems, hydrants, sprinkler systems, extinguishers, and fire watch are included. Enforcement of the bylaw details recommendations, orders and issuing of bylaw notices.

The fine schedule is detailed in Bylaw Notice Enforcement Amendment Bylaw No. 1933, 2021. The Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1973 includes various fees related to the provision of services. The table below provides a description of the various bylaws relevant to the CVFS. Updates are required in general for administrative purposes and to align with the new Fire Safety Act. As well, consideration should be given to streamlining the various documents so that the fees and fines are located in a similar manner, allowing for easy determination of administrative procedures and responsibilities

TABLE #11: REGULATORY BYLAWS – CRESTON VALLEY FIRE SERVICES

Bylaw	Description	Fees and Fines	Updates Required
Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, 2021	Regulate, prohibit, and impose requirements in relation to the management, operation, and continuation of Fire Protection Services for the Town of Creston	Fees for Services and Cost Recoveries Described in Appendix A Fees for FD Service Described in Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1763 Schedule 6 Fines Detailed in Bylaw No. 1933	Update to Align with new *Fire Safety Act* Review Appendix A and Bylaw No. 1763 Schedule 6, and Bylaw No. 1933 for overlap and omission
Bylaw Notice Enforcement Amendment Bylaw No. 1933, 2021	Amend the Bylaw Notice Enforcement Bylaw No. 1760, 2011 "Schedule A – Designated Bylaw Contraventions and Penalties for: Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, 2021 Open Burning Bylaw No. 1929, 2021 Inspection and Testing of Fire Prevention Equipment Bylaw No. 1930, 2021 Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021 Alarms Bylaw No. 1932, 2021	Fines for the Bylaws Noted in the Description	Update Part 4 to align with new *Fire Safety Act* and updates required to Bylaw No. 1928 and 1931 Include Bylaw No. 1928 Appendix A Include Rental Standards of Maintenance Bylaw No. 1951

Bylaw	Description	Fees and Fines	Updates Required
Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021	Regulate, prohibit, and impose requirements in relation to the protection of people and property through fire prevention and hazard control in the Town of Creston	Fines Detailed in Bylaw No. 1933 Summary Conviction Fine $2,500 to $10,000	Update to Align with new *Fire Safety Act*
Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1763, 2011	Establish fees and charges for services and information	Fireworks Permits and Fees Schedule 6 Fire Services Permits and Services Schedule 6	Consider streamlining fees and fines
Fireworks Regulation Bylaw No. 1778, 2012	Regulate and prohibit the possession of fireworks and limit the discharge of fireworks	Fees Detailed in Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1763 Schedule 6 Summary Conviction Fine $2,500 to $10,000	Schedule F Permit Application
Inspection and Testing of Fire Equipment Bylaw No. 1930, 2021	Regulate the inspections and testing of Fire Protection Equipment in the Town of Creston	Summary Conviction Fine $2,500 to $10,000	Update to Align with new *Fire Safety Act*

Bylaw	Description	Fees and Fines	Updates Required
Rental Standards of Maintenance Bylaw No. 1951, 2022	Establish a minimum standard of maintenance for rental units and residential properties in Creston for the health, safety and protection of tenants and existing rental stock; the protection and enhanced standard of living the rental community; and improved regulation of residential rental businesses.	None	Could be included in Bylaw No. 1931 and 1933
Open Burning Bylaw No. 1929, 2021	Regulate, prohibit, and impose requirements respecting open fires in the Town of Creston	Permit Fee FD Response Fee Summary Conviction Fine $2,500 to $10,000	Update to Align with new *Fire Safety Act*

4.5 Current State of Fire Inspection Program

Creston Valley Fire Services, as a municipal fire service, is mandated by the *Fire Safety Act* to have a risk-based compliance monitoring system. CVFS is under contract with the RDCK to provide fire inspection services "upon complaint" to Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, and Arrow Creek/Erickson. The provision of fire inspection services "upon complaint or request" aligns with the expectation that the *Fire Safety Act* places on regional districts.

TABLE #12: CONTRACTED FIRE PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SERVICES

	Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister	West Creston	Arrow Creek/Erickson	Lower Kootenay Band
Fire & Life Safety Education	y	y	y	y	y
Fire Investigation	y	y	y	y	y
Fire Inspections Upon Complaint or Request	y	y	y	y	n

	Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister	West Creston	Arrow Creek/Erickson	Lower Kootenay Band
Pre-Incident Fire Planning	n	n	n	n	n
Enforcement*	y	y	y	y	n

Creston Valley Fire Services must determine the inspectable properties within the Town of Creston, rate them for General Risk, and also inspect them to determine Specific Risk. Once each occupancy is categorized, it should be charted on the Frequency Risk Matrix, resulting in the determination of either a Fire Inspection or a Fire Safety Assessment schedule. Data similar to below should be completed for each service delivery area.

TABLE #13: TOWN OF CRESTON – INSPECTABLE PROPERTIES

Group/Division	Occupancy Type	Quantity of Inspectable Properties	General Risk
Group A, Division 2	Church, Hall, Library	10	Low/Moderate
Group A, Division 2	Restaurants, Pubs, Schools	30	Moderate/High
Group B, Division 1	Police Station w/Detention	1	Moderate
Group B, Division 2	Hospitals, Assisted Living/Care Facilities (pre 2012 BCBC)	9	Moderate
Group C	Apartments, Condos, Group Homes	50	High
Group D/E	Offices, Banks, Grocery, Hardware, Sales	55	Low
Group F, Division 1	High Hazard Industrial	5	High
Group F, Division 2	Medium/Low Hazard Industrial	5	Moderate
Group F, Division 3	Low Hazard Industrial	10	Low
Group V	Vacant Buildings	5	High
Total Inspectable Properties		180	

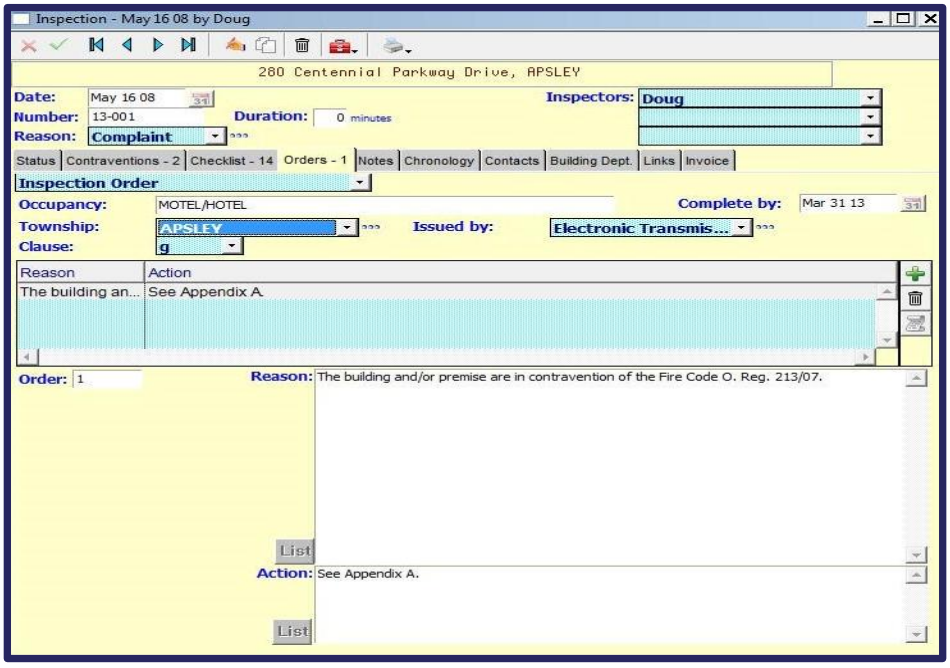
Creston Valley Fire Services does not currently perform a regular proactive fire inspection program. The Assistant Fire Chief is the Fire Inspector and Public Fire and Life Safety Educator (PFLSE). They are trained as an OFC Fire Investigator Level 1. They do not have NFPA 1031 "*Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector and Plan Examiner*," nor NFPA 1035, "*Standard on Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, Youth FireSetter Intervention Specialist and Youth FireSetter Program Manager Professional Qualifications*" certification. The NFPA standards are considered to be industry best practices. They are more expansive training programs that typically include practical components to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities.

The Town of Creston Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021 provides clarity of expectations for the community and those performing inspections. Inspection records over five years result in an average of nine routine inspections per year. This is less than 1% of the inspectable properties in the Town of Creston.

TABLE #14: TOWN OF CRESTON – COMPLETED INSPECTIONS 2020-2024

Completed Inspections	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Routine Inspections	14	3	9	14	7
Complaint Inspections					2
Business License Inspections	6	14	6	11	9
Other (Request)		10	4	1	
Total Inspections	20	27	19	26	18

The implementation of a digital inspection and records management program should be an active part of the CVFS inspection program. Inspections conducted on a hand-held device can minimize data entry time, errors, and capitalize on efficiencies and effectiveness. Numerous programs are available on the market. CVFS currently uses a records management system (RMS) referred to as FirePro or FP2.7. Digital inspection records are linked to property records and should also be linked to pre-incident fire plans.



The Fire Prevention and Community Safety Division does not have the personnel resources required to deliver its mandated services. The Assistant Fire Chief is currently spending approximately 20% of their time on the Fire Prevention and Community Safety portfolio. Additional time must be allotted to this portfolio to ensure a risk-based compliance monitoring system is implemented and achieved. Additionally, training and education must be provided to support this position.

4.6 New Development, Buildings and Businesses

Creston Valley Fire Services does not regularly review plans for new development, buildings, life safety systems, or new businesses. Currently, upon request, the Fire Chief provides advice to the Building Department related to the needs related to Fire Department access.

The Assistant Fire Chief conducts business license inspections in coordination with the Town of Creston Inspector. The CVFS should capitalize on the opportunity to review plans and perform inspections on new occupancies and businesses to ensure compliance with the *BC Fire Code* and the Town of Creston Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021. These types of inspections also provide an opportunity to update CVFS RMS, update pre-incident fire plans (PIP), and conduct building familiarization. It should be noted that conducting reviews and inspections reflects positively on Fire Underwriters Survey insurance ratings.

4.7 Pre-Incident Fire Planning

Pre-incident fire planning supports the preparedness, prevention, mitigation, and response components of an emergency. Preparedness is approached through a survey of the occupancy, including its general and specific risks. Details of the occupancy are documented along with diagrams and photographs. NFPA 1620 "*Standard for Pre-Incident Planning*" is a continuous improvement approach to risk and is considered an industry best practice.

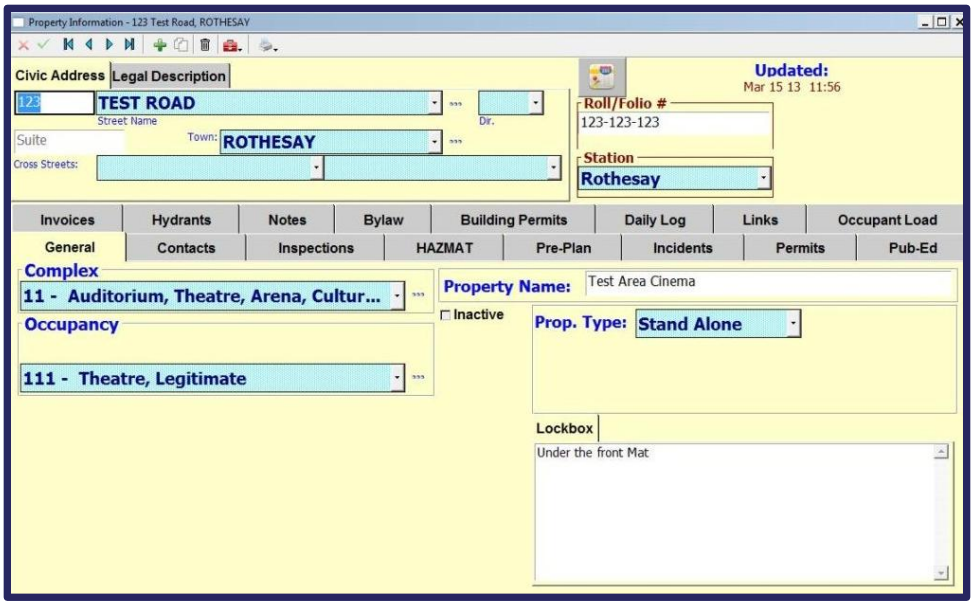
The NFPA 1620 standard recommends that every property in a jurisdiction should be preplanned. This is considered to be a gold standard, which is challenging to achieve. At a minimum, aligning with the risk-based approach to occupancy inspections should be considered, which would result in each inspectable property in the inspection area having a pre-incident plan (PIP). Pre-incident plans can also be created for construction sites, occupancies with hazardous materials and processes, and properties in the wildland urban interface.

Grants for building Pre-incident Plan (PIP) programs have been available in the past and should be considered as potential funding sources. Offering this service as part of Fire Service Agreements could also generate funds to cover those additional costs of building PIPs.

Digital PIPs that are linked to property records and available upon dispatch provide easy access from the mobile data terminal on the fire apparatus. Numerous programs are available on the market, including FirePro or FP2 which is already being used by CVFS.

Creston Valley Fire Services does not have a PIP program. This is also not identified as a service delivery for Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, or Arrow Creek/Erickson. An up-to-date PIP gives an Incident Commander the data to support building their Incident Action Plan. Fire crews can also use PIPs during site familiarization and for training. Conducting a PIP site inspection to either create or update a plan also provides an opportunity to liaise with the owner or owner's representative to identify and remedy hazards and educate through teachable moments.

Having a PIP program supports community and firefighter safety through the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. This is also an area of focus for the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS). Implementing a PIP program could positively impact insurance rates and reduce economic risk for the community.



The FP2 program is comprised of modules that can be purchased in packages or customized depending on unique needs. Property records in FP2 can provide visual notice of special alerts, hazardous materials, and pass property pre-plan information directly to dispatch. CVFS should

prioritize a PIP program for its service areas using FP2 to collect building data and ensure connection to the PIPs through dispatch during an incident.

4.8 Enforcement Support

An integral component of any inspection program is a support system to ensure compliance with hazardous violations when coaching through education is ineffective. Authority is provided in the *Fire Safety Act* for a municipality to create a fee and fine schedule via the municipal bylaw system. Failure to conduct and complete a fire safety assessment may result in enforcement action, such as a fine. Additionally, a fire inspection may be conducted by a Fire Inspector for a fee. Serious non-compliance with fire inspection orders is supported through the OFC using warrants and administrative monetary penalties (AMPs). The OFC may issue AMPs for serious, repeated or deliberate cases of non-compliance with the *Fire Safety Act*.

Creston Valley Fire Services' fines and fees should be reviewed for alignment with the *Fire Safety Act* and updated in the:

- Town of Creston Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1763, 2011 “Schedule 6”;
- Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, 2021“Schedule A” - Designated Bylaw Contraventions and Penalties; and
- Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931, 2021.

4.9 Targeted Public Education

Public education is delivered through various functional service areas of the CVFS. Fire prevention and community safety focus on fire safety messaging, FireSmart focuses on wildfire preparedness and prevention, and Emergency Management has its own messages for the community. Consideration should be given to opportunities to align and capitalize on multiple delivery paths for targeted messages. Additionally, to draw on the insights from the new Modernized Emergency Management Program and integrate Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety into fire safety and emergency practices.

It is essential for a public education program to address the unique risks faced by the community, including the development of equitable programs for the Lower Kootenay Band (LKB). It would be appropriate to provide education aligned with the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC)[9] and with the Levels of Service Standard for Fire Protection Services".[10]

The Level of Service Standard states that fire prevention messaging at the household level should include:

- "Installing, testing and replacing smoke alarms.
- Teaching children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do when they hear one.
- Ensuring that all household members know two ways to escape from every room of your home and know the family meeting spot outside of your home.
- Establishing a family emergency communications plan ensures that all household members know whom to contact if they cannot find one another and have a muster location to meet during the emergency.
- Practicing escaping from your home at least twice a year. Press the smoke alarm test button or yell Fire to alert everyone that they must get out.
- Making sure everyone knows how to call 9-1-1 or local emergency contacts.
- Teaching household members to stop, drop and roll if their clothes catch fire.
- Knowing what roads to follow in case the site/residence needs to be evacuated.
- What transportation is available or not."

Public education delivered by the CVFS include fire safety topics such as smoke alarms, home fire safety tips, fire escape plans, lithium battery storage, and cooking safety. Topics with school children include fire escape plans, smoke alarms, home hazards, cooking safety, and calling 911. Fire safety is delivered to private schools, station tours for youth groups, fire extinguisher training, and escape planning.

Creston Valley Fire Services' fire apparatus carries smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, as well as spare batteries. Firefighters may install a device or replace a battery upon request. A proactive free smoke alarm program does not currently exist. Some municipalities will provide this service free of charge to seniors and others who may be equity, mobility challenged or have a need. An SOG should be in place to provide guidance for CVFS personnel attending a home that does not have functioning alarms, including the signing of a liability waiver. Documentation of this service should be maintained in the RMS.

TABLE #15: TOWN OF CRESTON – PUBLIC EDUCATION 2020-2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Child Seats					2
Fire Extinguishers					3
Fire Station Tours		5	4	6	10
School Daycares	9			5	
First Aid/CPR			1	3	4
First Nations		2	3	3	5
Fire Prevention Week		1	3	2	
Other	6	31	16	15	20
Total Number of Events	15	39	27	34	44

Creston Valley Fire Services should determine an annual public education program targeting the risks to the community. Operating guidelines and training for firefighters should ensure standardized delivery of fire safety messages. The industry best practice for training as a Public Fire and Life Safety Educator is detailed in NFPA 1035 "S*tandard on Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist and Youth Firesetter Program Manager Professional Qualifications*". Consistent record keeping of the events, including type of event, attendees, and targeted risk, ensures that strategic decisions about programs can be made on an annual basis supported by data-based decision making.

4.10 Fire Cause and Origin Investigations

The *Fire Safety Act* is the provincial legislation that provides the CVFS with the direction for training, duties, and powers of Fire Investigators. The Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, and the Fire Services Support Supervisor (FSSS) conduct fire investigations. They are qualified as OFC Level I Fire Investigators. Fire investigation is a specialty skill that requires training, education and experience.

Ongoing education is an integral component of building experience for fire investigations. Organizations such as the International Association of Arson Investigators[5] the Canadian

[5] international Association of Arson Investigators, "BC-IAAI Chapter", accessed April 2025, https://www.bc-iaai.com/

Association of Fire Investigators,[6] and the National Association of Fire Investigators[7] offer training courses and peer development experiences. An industry best practice is NFPA 1033 "*Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator*" certification which should be considered as a target or goal. In British Columbia, a variety of local and provincial resources are available to support fire investigators. These include opportunities for ongoing education, hands-on training, and peer networking, as well as access to programs that align with recognized industry standards such as NFPA 1033. Investigators in BC can access both online and in-person training options, practical skill development, and certification pathways to ensure they meet or exceed the professional qualifications required for fire investigation roles.

NFPA 921 "*Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations*" is the industry best practice for conducting fire investigations. CVFS Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 2.15 entitled "Fire Cause Investigation Process" provides details to assist the Incident Commander with determining the level of fire investigation that is required and an outline of the fire investigation process. The SOG is thorough and is a valuable reference tool. SOG 1.24 "Gas Monitoring Detectors – Maintenance and Use" specifically references actions to be taken during a fire investigation. SOG 1.35 "Respiratory Protection During Fire Investigations" clearly dictates the use of self-contained breathing apparatus during all fire investigations including why and anticipated hazards. For clarity, additional SOGs should specifically reference fire investigations procedures including:

SOG 1.16	Personal Protective Equipment
SOG 1.12	Incident Rehabilitation
SOG 1.18	Post Incident/Training Decontamination Process

The *Fire Safety Act* requires that a fire investigation be completed within 30 days. CVFS also maintains records of fire investigations. The fire investigation report contains the facts to ascertain the cause, origin and circumstances of the fire. The OFC maintains a database with records of submitted fire investigations. Data collected helps to determine trends and through reporting could help support data-based decision making when examining community risks and targeting program design to reduce risks. Records of fire investigations are accessible to the

[6] Canadian Association of Fire Investigators, "CAFI", accessed April 2025, https://www.facebook.com/CAFINational/

[7] National Association of Fire Investigators, "NAFI", accessed April 2025, https://www.nafi.org/

public in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 165*,[14] by emailing a request to the Town of Creston.

TABLE #16: TOWN OF CRESTON – FIRE INVESTIGATIONS 2020-2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Dollar Loss	198,277	1,219,234	3,418,950	1,843,401	5,023,507
Value Saved	4,009,000	53,771,950	41,383,500	29,069,511	35,419,090
Injuries/Fatalities	0/0	0/0	0/0	3/1	4/1
Vehicle Fires	3	10	5	3	7
Structure Fires	17	18	25	35	35
Outside/Misc	17	17	18	23	14
Total Investigations	16	49	29	47	58

Some fire services recover costs for fire investigations when incidents occur as a result of non-compliance with codes and standards. This fee may be a flat fee or an hourly fee. There are also opportunities to cost recover for lost or damaged equipment. The Fire Service Bylaw 1928 "Appendix A" includes these powers. As well, the Fees and Charges Bylaw 1763 "Schedule 6" includes details, along with the Bylaw Notice of Enforcement Bylaw No. 1760.

Opportunity to cost recover directly to the user of the service enhances the capacity of service provision and reduces the need to spread the costs over the greater tax base. Ensuring that these cost recovery procedures take place would require additional administration responsibilities, and potentially changes to the Fees and Charges Bylaw, Contravention and Penalties Bylaw, Fire Services Bylaw, and Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw.

4.11 Fire Prevention and Community Safety Program Constraints and Challenges

Dedicated staff time is required to develop and implement a comprehensive fire prevention and community safety program that aligns with both community needs and the obligations outlined in Fire Service Agreements. Establishing a structured program will ensure consistent delivery of inspections, code compliance, and risk reduction. Using a table like the one below can help estimate the annual time commitment necessary to deliver an efficient and effective fire inspection service.

TABLE #17: ESTIMATED TASK TIME BY OCCUPANCY TYPE (IN HOURS)

Occupancy Type	Inspection Time	Administration Time	Travel Time	Total Task Time
Church, Hall, Library	2	.25	.25	2.5
Restaurants, Pubs, Schools	1	.25	.25	1.5
Police Station w/Detention	2	.25	.25	2.5
Hospitals, Assisted Living/Care Facilities (pre 2012 BCBC)	2	.25	.25	2.5
Apartments, Condos, Group Homes	1	.25	.25	1.5
Offices, Banks, Grocery, Hardware, Sales	.5	.25	.25	1
High Hazard Industrial	1.5	.25	.25	2
Medium/Low Hazard Industrial	1	.25	.25	1.5
Low Hazard Industrial	.5	.25	.25	1
Vacant Buildings	.5	.25	.25	1

TABLE #18: ESTIMATED INSPECTION TIME/YEAR FOR TOTAL INSPECTABLE PROPERTIES

Occupancy Type	# of Occupancies	Total Task Time	Frequency of Inspections per Year	Total Inspection Time Required
Church, Hall, Library	10	2.5	1	25
Restaurants, Pubs, Schools	30	1.5	2	90
Police Station w/Detention	1	2.5	1	2.5
Hospitals, Assisted Living/Care Facilities (pre 2012 BCBC)	9	2.5	2	45
Apartments, Condos, Group Homes	50	1.5	1	75
Offices, Banks, Grocery, Hardware, Sales	55	1	1	55
High Hazard Industrial	5	2	2	20
Medium/Low Hazard Industrial	5	1.5	1	7.5
Low Hazard Industrial	10	1	1	10
Vacant Buildings	5	1	12	60
Total	180			390 Hours

As detailed in the table below, the actual time a person is available at work is estimated to be 1,570 hours per year. The chart identifies the hours required for a fire inspection program and supports the recommendation of a new position to oversee this program.

TABLE #19: ESTIMATED HOURS EACH PERSON IS ACTUALLY AVAILABLE AT CVFS

Description		Calculations	Totals
Hours/Year Per Person		40 hrs x 52 weeks/yr	2080 Annual Hrs at 100% Availability
Vacation and Statutory Leave	10 vacation + 12 Stat holidays = 22 days/yr	22 days/yr @ 8 hrs/day	176 Hours (Deduct)
Sick Leave		Average 10 days/yr @ 8 hrs/day	80 Hours (Deduct)
Annual Training		10 days/yr @ 8 hrs/day	80 Hours (Deduct)
Subtotal Personnel Hours Available			1744 Hours
Less Uncertainty Factor of 10%			174.4 (Deduct)
Estimated Hours Personnel Available			**1570 Hour/Year**

Using the below table, it is estimated that the anticipated workload of a comprehensive Fire Prevention and Community Safety program with 100% Fire Inspections and 0% Fire Safety Assessments would require 1,048 hours, which would require .66 of an FTE.

TABLE #20: ESTIMATED ANNUAL TIME COMMITMENT BY FUNCTIONAL AREA

Functional Area	Estimated Annual Time Commitment
Routine Fire Inspections Town of Creston	390
Follow-up Fire Inspections (5% x 430 x 1.5 hours)	33
Complaint Fire Inspections *Estimate* (10 x 4 hours x 1 staff)	40
Building Plan Review – Future Opportunity 5 plans/year reviewed x 3 hours/plan	15

Functional Area	Estimated Annual Time Commitment
Pre-Incident Fire Planning (Estimate 200 over 4 years) 50 plans/year x 4 hours/plan	200
Fire Safety Plan Review – 5 plans/year x 2 hours/plan	10
New Occupancy Inspection/Life Safety Demonstrations/Business License Inspection - 20 inspections/year x 1.5 hours/inspection	30
Public Education 45 events x 2 hours x 1 staff	90
Fire Investigation (*Estimate)* 50 investigations x 4 hours x 1 staff	200
Enforcement & Administration – Future Opportunity .75 hours/week x 1 staff x 52 weeks	40
Total Estimate Annual Time Commitment	1,048
Total Staff Required (1,048/1,570 = .66 Personnel)	.66 of an FTE

4.12 Fire Prevention Finance and Budget

The operating budget for the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Division in 2025 was approximately 0.54% of the overall CVFS operating budget. This division budget covers a small amount of training, equipment maintenance, and consumables related to the fire extinguisher training prop.

TABLE #21: FIRE PREVENTION OPERATING BUDGET 2021 - 2025

Year	Fire Prevention Program Operating Budget	Fire Department Operating Budget	Percent Of Overall Fire Department Budget
2021	$10,015	$1,299,000	**0.77%**
2022	$10,015	$1,284,000	**0.78%**
2023	$10,015	$1,339,000	**0.75%**
2024	$8,250	$1,565,000	**0.53%**
2025	$8,250	$1,518,000	**0.54%**

As detailed within this section, it is clear that CVFS is not meeting its service delivery mandates in the area of Fire Prevention and Community Safety. CVFS needs to determine the best way to

fulfill its mandate, meet the community's needs, and do so within an acceptable budget. A combination of Fire Inspections and Risk Assessments may be a good option. Regardless, it will require additional staffing allocations and an increase to the operating budget.

Some cost recovery may be accessible as supported by bylaws. Cost recovery could include Fire Inspections, processing of Fire Safety Assessments, fines for non-compliance, plan review fees, and fire investigation fees. Through Fire Service Agreements, Fire Prevention Services are provided to the areas of Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Arrow Creek/Erickson, and the Lower Kootenay Band. A determination should be made as to how much of the funding from those FSAs relates to Fire Prevention Services. Those funds from the FSA should be allocated to the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Division. The tracking of program costs should be maintained in sufficient detail to enable the Division to track and report its performance, thereby supporting a model of continuous improvement.

The following recommendations would support the redevelopment of the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Division and its services to the community.

4.13 Training-Full-Service Operations Delivery

The CVFS operates as a Full-Service Operations fire service for the Creston Valley, delivering a comprehensive scope of structural firefighting and emergency response services. In alignment with the British Columbia Structure Firefighter Minimum Training Standards (2024), Full-Service departments are required to demonstrate capability in both exterior and interior fire suppression, operate effectively in Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) environments, execute technical fireground operations, and manage complex incidents through a structured Incident Command System.

To meet these expectations, the CVFS has strategically aligned its training, equipment, personnel development, and operational practices with provincial Full-Service standards. This alignment ensures not only compliance with recognized benchmarks but also reinforces the department’s commitment to firefighter safety and public protection.

All CVFS firefighters are trained to NFPA 1001 Firefighter Level I and II, equipping them with the necessary competencies for interior fire attack, search and rescue, ventilation, salvage and overhaul, hazardous materials response at the operations level, and Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) deployment. Company Officers strive to be certified to NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Level I, providing tactical leadership, scene coordination, and personnel supervision. The Fire Service

Support Supervisors and Fire Chief hold NFPA 1041 Fire Service Instructor Level I certification, ensuring instructional quality and assessment integrity.

The CVFS delivers a structured and robust training program designed to meet or exceed the competencies outlined in the *British Columbia Training Standards Competency Ladder*. This program encompasses both initial certification and ongoing maintenance training to ensure operational readiness and regulatory compliance. Training is delivered by in-house instructors and assessors through a combination of regular skills refreshers, scenario-based exercises, and targeted professional development sessions.

The department maintains comprehensive training records in accordance with *WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 3.23*. These records include course completion documentation, instructor validation, and retraining schedules. Personnel are assigned only to roles for which they are certified, and regular performance evaluations help identify and address emerging training needs in a proactive manner.

As a Full-Service department, CVFS has developed a suite of Operational Guidelines (OGs) aligned with *WorkSafeBC Part 31: Firefighting*. These guidelines govern critical operational procedures, including interior fire operations, SCBA use, accountability systems, Mayday protocols, firefighter survival techniques, and the deployment of Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs). Oversight of risk management and regulatory compliance is provided by the Fire Chief and delegated officers, who are responsible for ensuring practices remain aligned with evolving standards and fire service best practices.

To further strengthen organizational safety and accountability, the implementation of a formalized Risk Management function is recommended. This function would oversee key areas, including training program governance, safety system integrity, and documentation processes. The department actively complies with OHS regulations related to personal protective equipment (PPE), respiratory protection, equipment safety, and emergency scene coordination. Internal audits, hazard assessments, and the work of the joint health and safety committee all contribute to a culture of continuous improvement, operational diligence, and organizational resilience. With the EMG recommendation to add a Deputy Chief position to the administration team, the responsibilities for ensuring compliance and oversight of safety and training would fall within the scope of the Assistant Fire Chief.

In addition to its structured training program and comprehensive operational guidelines, the CVFS ensures that its apparatus, staffing, and equipment are appropriately resourced to support Full-Service-level emergency response. The department maintains a fleet equipped for interior operations, including fire engines with Class A pumping capacity, aerial devices as

required for urban and commercial response, and water tenders to support rural fire suppression efforts.

Staffing levels are designed to meet the operational demands of interior fire attack, in alignment with *WorkSafeBC Regulation Section 31.23*. This includes adherence to time-limited interior operations and the two-in/two-out requirement, ensuring safe and compliant deployment of crews into IDLH environments.

The CVFS consistently demonstrates a clear and sustained commitment to upholding the operational standards expected of a Full-Service fire department in BC. Through its investment in training, leadership development, and operational readiness, the CVFS delivers professional, effective, and accountable emergency services to the residents of the Creston Valley.

4.14.1 Firefighter Training Expectations

The CVFS has an unwritten expectation that firefighters complete between 60 to 70 training hours annually, with training following the standards identified in NFPA 1001 Level 2. Firefighter training is documented using FirePro, where hours, topics, and sign-in sheets are recorded to maintain accurate training records.

Training sessions incorporate both classroom-based instruction and hands-on practical exercises, ensuring a well-rounded approach to firefighter development. However, maintaining consistency and attendance poses challenges, particularly for paid-on-call (POC) firefighters. Balancing full-time employment, family responsibilities, emergency call responses, and training commitments is a demanding task. Currently, training is scheduled weekly on Thursday nights, with additional full-day training sessions held quarterly. While this schedule works well for those with standard Monday-to-Friday workweeks, the department is exploring alternative training structures to accommodate a broader range of firefighter schedules.

4.13.2 Specialized Training and Certification

Firefighters receive training in various technical rescue disciplines, including auto extrication, rope rescue, and medical response. Medical training is provincially licensed, while auto extrication and rope rescue align with NFPA 1006 standards. Although formal accreditation is not always pursued, the department provides 30 to 40 hours of training annually to ensure competency in these skills.

4.13.3 Officer Development and Leadership Training

The department follows the BC training standard for promotional requirements. Leadership and officer development training is primarily delivered by external agencies, with Fire Officer (FO) Levels I and II being available, mostly through online programs for those wanting to pursue this educational path. As this is an option, more can be done to encourage and direct those aspiring to be officers to take online training programs.

Currently, there is no formal coaching or mentoring program for officer development. Senior officers may provide informal shadowing opportunities for new officers, but this process lacks consistency and structured knowledge transfer. Performance evaluations for officer readiness are also informal, relying on discussions among senior officers rather than standardized assessments.

The need for structured leadership development and succession planning within the CVFS has been identified as a strategic priority. At present, there are no formal development plans in place to prepare future officers, nor has a comprehensive assessment been conducted to identify potential leadership gaps over the next five to ten years.

The CAO's Organizational Review Report also highlighted the absence of a formal succession plan as a key vulnerability within the Town's protective services portfolio. The limited capacity among full-time staff continues to challenge the department's ability to dedicate sufficient time and resources to strategic initiatives, including leadership development, officer mentoring, and structured promotional processes.

Although there are currently no immediate plans to implement a formal officer promotion framework, incorporating such a system into the department's future work plan would establish a transparent and merit-based pathway for advancement. Doing so would strengthen organizational resilience, support internal talent development, and ensure continuity of leadership in both planned and unplanned transitions.

4.14 Training for POC Firefighters in West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, and Canyon Lister

POC firefighters across all locations are expected to meet the same training requirements as those at the Creston Fire Hall. They attend weekly training sessions and participate in quarterly

full-day training events. Additionally, WEP firefighters are required to attend all weekly sessions and complete additional courses such as pump/driver operator training.

While there is no designated training officer for the department, all officers are responsible for leading training sessions. The Fire Chief currently oversees the department's training program. Training records for POC firefighters are documented using FirePro, ensuring consistency in tracking progress.

POC firefighters are required to complete medical First Responder training, with Creston Hall personnel needing to be fully licensed. While NFPA 1001 certification is encouraged, some firefighters may operate as exterior-only personnel.

4.14.1 Challenges and Training Consistency

Maintaining training consistency across multiple fire halls remains an ongoing challenge. POC firefighters must balance their training commitments with work and personal responsibilities, which can impact attendance and retention.

While all fire halls train to the same standard, specific resource needs exist. For example, auto extrication training is primarily provided at the Creston Hall, requiring firefighters in that jurisdiction to engage in more frequent training to maintain proficiency. Additionally, while all firefighters are required to have First Responder-level medical training, this program is not available in all fire hall locations. To address these challenges, the department should consider:

- Implementing a structured mentoring program to improve leadership development and succession planning.
- Establish a formal officer promotional process to create clear advancement pathways.
- Enhancing training accessibility for firefighters with varying schedules.
- Strengthening medical training programs to ensure proficiency across all fire halls.

By taking a proactive approach to training and leadership development, the CVFS can ensure its firefighters are well-prepared to meet the demands of emergency response while fostering future leaders within the organization.

4.15 Recruitment and Retention

The volunteer fire service in Canada faces significant challenges in both recruitment and retention of firefighters, and the Creston Valley Fire Service is no different. Currently, the department lacks a formal recruitment process, accepting applications year-round with hiring typically conducted in the fall. Over the past four years, this approach has resulted in the hiring of 10 to 16 individuals annually; however, within 12 months, the number dwindles to four or five, and after two years, only one or two remain.

Retention strategies for the CVFS have included basic life and disability insurance for firefighters and their families, annual long-service awards recognizing milestones starting at five years, and specialty awards such as Firefighter of the Year, Fire Chief's Award, and First In, Last Out.

The absence of a proactive and structured recruitment process poses several risks to CVFS. A high turnover rate can lead to a shortage of experienced personnel, which can compromise the department's operational effectiveness and response times. New recruits often join with enthusiasm, eager to learn about firefighting operations, but many quickly realize the significant time commitment required to attain the necessary training to meet departmental standards. This can lead to frustration and, in some cases, result in members leaving within a few years of joining.

The continuous cycle of recruiting and training new members places a heavy strain on existing resources. Veteran firefighters often bear the burden of mentorship while maintaining their operational duties, leading to increased stress and potential burnout. If not addressed, these challenges will further exacerbate retention issues, making it increasingly difficult to sustain a strong and experienced firefighting force.

These concerns are reflected in national trends identified in the 2024 CAFC Great Canadian Fire Census, which reports a decline in firefighter numbers across Canada. The census highlights that volunteer firefighter numbers have decreased from 89,595 to 87,372, and overall firefighter numbers have dropped from 125,991 to 123,608. Additionally, the data shows that call volumes have risen nationally from 1.96 million in 2023 to 2.16 million in 2024, with medical-related incidents comprising the largest percentage of calls.[8] These statistics underscore the urgent

[8] Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. The State of Fire and Emergency Services in Canada: Results of the Great Canadian Fire Census 2024. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, 2024.

need for sustainable recruitment and retention strategies to maintain operational effectiveness.

Implementing a formal, proactive recruitment strategy can yield numerous benefits. A well-structured process allows the department to target and attract candidates who are not only qualified but also align with the organization's values and long-term goals. This alignment can enhance team cohesion and job satisfaction, leading to improved retention rates. Additionally, a consistent influx of dedicated personnel ensures that the department maintains a robust and capable workforce, ready to respond effectively to emergencies.

While developing and maintaining a comprehensive recruitment and retention program requires an initial investment, the long-term financial benefits are substantial. Reducing turnover decreases the costs associated with hiring and training new personnel. Moreover, experienced firefighters are more proficient and require less oversight, leading to operational efficiencies. Investing in firefighter development and well-being is crucial for enhancing overall productivity, training efficacy, and emergency incident attendance. Implementing comprehensive wellness programs that address both physical and mental health can lead to a healthier fire service, thereby reducing medical leave and associated costs.

Addressing mental health is equally vital. Due to the nature of the profession, firefighters are at an increased risk for mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. A study published in January 2024 found that 38.8% of firefighters reported drinking at hazardous levels, and hazardous alcohol use was significantly associated with several mental health indicators. This supports the concern about high rates of mental health issues among firefighters.[9] A variety of mental health programs have been implemented across Canada with the objective to ensure that every firefighter has access to a recognized mental health awareness training program within their fire department. An investment in a team based and peer driven wellness program can reduce compensation claims, reduce absenteeism and improve retention.

4.15.1 Recruitment Strategies

A sustainable recruitment and retention strategy is essential for the long-term viability of CVFS. By fostering a positive organizational culture that emphasizes professional development,

[9] National Library of Medicine (2025) Alcohol Misuse and Correlates with Mental Health Indicators among firefighters. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39511710/

recognition, and work-life balance, the department can create an environment where firefighters feel valued and motivated to commit long-term. Engaging with the community and local schools and non-profits can also establish a line of future recruits who are invested in serving their community. Furthermore, adopting flexible scheduling and offering career advancement opportunities can address diverse needs and aspirations, making the CVFS more attractive to a broader audience.

The challenges of recruitment and retention within CVFS are not unique to the department but reflect broader national trends. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that balances immediate needs with long-term sustainability. By implementing structured recruitment processes, investing in personnel development, and fostering a supportive work environment, CVFS can enhance its recruitment and retention effectiveness to ensure its readiness to serve the community in an evolving fire service landscape. For the Creston Valley Fire Service to successfully recruit and retain firefighters, strategic and modern communication methods must be employed to engage the community and attract the right candidates.

4.15.2 Social Media and Digital Platforms

To enhance recruitment efforts, CVFS should leverage social media and digital platforms to increase visibility and engagement. Showcasing the firefighter experience through short videos, testimonials, and participating in community events can create an authentic and compelling narrative. For example, WEP firefighters could document their training journey, day-to-day duties, or reflections on what they have learned, while the Fire Service Support Supervisor and POC members might share behind-the-scenes insights, safety tips, or highlight team achievements. These firsthand stories that are shared across social media platforms humanize the department and help connect with younger demographics who may be interested in serving their community. By utilizing these platforms strategically, CVFS can engage with a broader audience, generate interest in firefighting, and create a stronger connection between the department and the community.

4.15.3 Community Engagement and Public Relations

Building a strong connection between CVFS and the community is essential for effective recruitment. People are more likely to volunteer when they feel engaged and personally invested in their local fire department. One way to foster this connection is through open house events which typically occurs during Fire Prevention Week. However, there are advantages to hosting a spring or fall open house where the public can tour the fire station and meet firefighters. For example, a BBQ where free hot dogs are given out allows members of the

public to be present with firefighters in a fun environment where they can ask questions about the fire department.

These events create an interactive and welcoming environment that demystifies firefighting and sparks interest in potential recruits. Similarly, attending local events, fairs, and school career days allows the CVFS to showcase volunteer firefighting opportunities to a broader audience while engaging with those who may not have previously considered joining.

Beyond in-person events, the CVFS can leverage media and immersive experiences to strengthen community ties. Offering ride-along opportunities where a potential recruit can attend the fire station on training nights to observe and ride along to an emergency. This opportunity will require time and energy, but it gives prospective recruits firsthand exposure to firefighting, helping them understand the role before committing.

4.15.4 Offer Flexible Opportunities

A significant barrier to recruitment is time commitment, which can discourage potential candidates who may otherwise be interested in serving. To address this challenge, CVFS should consider implementing flexible and inclusive opportunities that accommodate different schedules and skill sets. For example, offering flexible scheduling options, such as allowing volunteers to commit to weekend shifts or specific daytime response hours can make firefighting more accessible to individuals with full-time jobs, family obligations, or other commitments. By making participation more adaptable, CVFS can broaden its recruitment pool and attract individuals who might not have considered volunteering under traditional scheduling models. This may challenge the traditional training day schedule, but change is necessary. As noted earlier, the Canadian fire service is experiencing a significant decline in volunteer firefighters, and new strategies are needed to reverse this trend.

Some individuals may not be able to wear self-contained breathing apparatus but may have other strengths to offer the CVFS. Beyond operational firefighting, CVFS can look at specialized roles that allow recruits to contribute in ways that align with their skills and interests. Not everyone needs to enter frontline firefighting; some can assist with fire prevention, public education, administrative duties, or logistics and support teams. This breaks the mold of traditional recruitment practices and may open the door to underrepresented groups. By promoting an inclusive and diverse volunteer base, CVFS can enhance its operational resilience while ensuring that more community members have the opportunity to serve in ways that suit their abilities and availability.

4.15.5 Community Partnerships

The Creston Valley Fire Services must actively cultivate partnerships with local organizations to broaden its reach and attract a diverse pool of volunteers. A key strategy is engaging with local businesses to encourage employer support for staff members who volunteer as firefighters. Employers should be assured that their employees will have the opportunity to return to work promptly after an incident whenever possible. While post-incident equipment replacement and cleanup are essential for maintaining operational readiness, these tasks often require only a small number of firefighters. By strategically managing post-incident duties, CVFS can help expedite the return of POC firefighters to their workplaces, minimizing disruptions for both the department and local employers.

Offering incentives for businesses that support volunteer firefighting can create a win-win scenario**.** Employees gain valuable skills and experience, while businesses demonstrate a commitment to community safety. Employers can receive public acknowledgment through fire department websites, social media, and local events, enhancing their reputation as a community-minded business. Whether large corporations or small independent businesses it's widely recognized that strong community involvement isn't just goodwill, it's smart business that strengthens brand reputation and customer loyalty.

Engaging with service clubs like the Rotary Club, Lions Club, and Chamber of Commerce can also amplify recruitment efforts, expanding their networks to promote the benefits of volunteering. The CVFS should schedule annual presentations to service clubs as it enhances the community engagement, CVFS image and fosters a community-driven approach to recruitment, reinforcing the idea that the CVFS is a shared responsibility that benefits everyone.

4.15.6 High School Community Service Program

Introducing a high school mentorship or community service program in partnership with the CVFS could serve as a strategic recruitment initiative while strengthening community ties. By offering students the opportunity to engage in meaningful volunteer work, such as assisting with public education campaigns, participating in fire prevention initiatives, or supporting non-emergency department activities. The program can spark early interest in the fire service as a career or volunteer pathway. Exposure to the culture, values, and responsibilities of the fire department can help develop future paid-on-call or career firefighters from within the community, particularly when combined with mentorship from current members.

This initiative can also foster civic pride, leadership skills, and a deeper understanding of emergency services among youth. In smaller communities like Creston, where the recruitment pool may be limited, early engagement is a proactive strategy to build a sustainable, homegrown pipeline of future firefighters. Establishing strong partnerships with local schools, and potentially offering structured community service credits or certificates, would enhance the program's value and accessibility.

WEP firefighters are uniquely positioned to strengthen connections with youth by demonstrating what hard work, discipline, and commitment can achieve in pursuit of a fire service career. Their presence offers a relatable and inspiring example for young people, showing that becoming a firefighter is a goal within reach. WEP participants benefit from the opportunity to serve as role models, reinforcing their own sense of purpose and leadership as they work toward their professional goals.

4.15.7 Enhancing Retention

Retention must be a focus to maintain a strong and committed fire service. To keep new recruits engaged and motivated, CVFS should recognize and celebrate them publicly. Featuring new members on social media and at community events not only builds pride but also reinforces their sense of belonging within the department. Acknowledging their commitment early on helps create a culture of appreciation, making recruits feel valued from the start.

The paid-on-call model offers a fiscally responsible approach to fire service staffing, helping to significantly reduce personnel costs when compared to a fully career department. By relying on trained paid-on-call firefighters, the Creston Valley Fire Service can maintain effective emergency response capabilities while avoiding the higher salary and benefit expenses associated with full-time staffing. Additionally, the financial efficiencies gained through this approach allow for a greater portion of the budget to be invested in critical areas such as equipment upgrades, firefighter training, and facility enhancements. This not only strengthens day-to-day operations but also supports the long-term sustainability and resilience of the fire service.

However, the paid-on-call model is not without its challenges. Recruitment and retention of qualified and committed individuals can be difficult, particularly in smaller or rural communities where the pool of available candidates may be limited. The model also relies heavily on the availability and flexibility of members to respond to emergencies at unpredictable times, which can place strain on volunteers balancing fire service duties with personal and professional responsibilities. Furthermore, the training demands are significant, ensuring that all members

are adequately certified and prepared to perform complex and high-risk tasks can require considerable time, coordination, and resources. Maintaining a consistent level of readiness and competency across a diverse and part-time team also presents operational challenges, particularly when responding to high call volumes.

To mitigate these risks, it is essential that compensation, honorariums, and benefit structures are regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect the responsibilities, training requirements, and contributions of paid-on-call firefighters. Fair and competitive compensation is a key factor in both attracting and retaining members and signals the organization's commitment to valuing and supporting its personnel. Addressing these considerations, alongside continued investment in training, leadership, and member engagement will be critical to ensuring the long-term effectiveness of the paid-on-call staffing model within the CVFS.

4.16 Health and Wellness

Fire service personnel are its greatest asset. Protecting those personnel assets is a hot topic not only amongst personnel but also with Fire Chiefs, Union Executives, health care practitioners, and industry professionals. Creston Valley Fire Services (CVFS) Policy 2.00 "Occupational Health and Safety Program" provides that the safety and health of its members is its most important business consideration.

Occupational health and safety (OH&S) is mandated through WorkSafeBC. OH&S is further legislated federally by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.[1] The Government of Canada also provides links on workplace harassment and violence,[2] managing stress, psychological safety, fatigue, and ergonomics. The CVFS supports OH&S and a workplace free from discrimination, bullying and harassment through policy and operating guidelines. To the credit of the CVFS, they have a policy relating to "Respectful Workplace." The policy aligns with the Workers Compensation Act, WorkSafeBC OH&S Regulation, Canadian Human Rights Act, and the British Columbia Human Rights Code.

Risk Management is a proactive approach aimed at identifying problems or hazards that could cause injury or loss. Once identified they are assessed, allowing for solutions or control measures to be implemented. The fire ground is recognized as being an inherently risky operation. SOG 1.05 "Personnel Risk Management" commits to extending every possible effort to balancing member's safety and welfare in relation to the protection of life and property.

SOG 1.05 shares that activities that present a significant risk to the safety of CVFS personnel shall be limited to situations where there is a realistic potential to save endangered lives. Risk

management requires planning, organizing, directing and controlling resources and activities. A standardized framework for risk management at emergency operations and training is detailed in SOG 2.29 "Risk Management Statement."

Creston Valley Fire Services, SOP 1.01 "New Member Health and Safety Orientation" ensures that all new members have standardized procedures and training related to their health and safety at the workplace. An orientation checklist ensures that important program components are not missed. Numerous CVFS operating guidelines together with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and national and provincial legislation approach health and wellness from a strategic multi-pronged approach.

4.16.1 Health and Safety Committee

WorkSafeBC is a provincial agency in British Columbia that is responsible for workplace health and safety. Employers are required to be registered and pay premiums to WorkSafeBC resulting in the provision of coverage for employers and workers. It is a no-fault insurance system offering compensation and support for work-related injuries and diseases. With a focus on prevention, WorkSafeBC also provides workplace site inspections, and enforcement of the *Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Regulation*.[10]

Creston Valley Fire Services SOP 0.04 "Preamble Responsibilities of Workplace Health and Safety" speaks to the responsibilities that everyone has in the workplace. The Town of Creston as well as the Fire Chief have a role to play in keeping the workplace safe, and personnel have rights to a safe and healthy workplace.

Annual training including accident investigation is mandated by WorkSafeBC[5] and is supported by Policy 2.00 "Occupational Health and Safety Program" and SOP 1.02 "Occupational Health and Safety Incident Investigation." Annual educational leave of eight hours per year is to be provided to JHSC members to attend OH&S training. Training must be received as soon as possible, and no later than six months after appointment. Various organizations offer training.[6]

The Town of Creston has a management representative that is currently undertaking JHSC training. There currently is not a worker representative. A replacement must be determined,

[10] WorkSafeBC, "Searchable OHS Regulation and Related Materials", accessed April 2025, https://www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation

and they must undertake the mandated training. Also, CVFS must ensure that there at least four members of the JHSC and that at least two of them are worker representatives.

4.16.2 Physical Health

Physically, the job-related performance needs of the fire service can be strenuous. On the job performance is complicated further by periods of administrative tasks then extreme exertion. The physical abilities of the CVFS personnel supports their own physical health and wellness, but also the services that CVFS provides to the communities that it serves. The expectation is the personnel are fit for duty.

When a new member is hired, they are required to submit a medical clearance from a physician. There is no additional fitness tests required. Ongoing physical fitness testing is also not performed, although members who are on duty have dedicated fitness training time allotted. Some considerations to support the physical demands of the job include physical assessments to provide baseline and ongoing monitoring, cancer screening, and cardiopulmonary screening. Providing a variety of equipment that supports the functional duties. Educational sessions such as for diet, sleep, biomechanics, back health, stress management, and mindfulness.

Creston Valley Fire Services provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for its personnel. The Plan offers online support and resources related to lifestyle, health, family, money and the workplace. Scheduled sessions may be provided with a counselor via a live chat. The Plan also includes immediate family members.

NFPA 1851 “Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting” provides guidance for establishing a program to reduce the safety risks and potential health risks associated with poorly maintained, contaminated, or damaged personal protective equipment (PPE). A requirement of NFPA 1851 is that an organization shall develop written procedures that minimize the exposure of the public and firefighters to contaminated PPE. Decontamination after a fire, fire investigation as well as training is a necessary function to ensure physical health and safety.

The health and wellness of CVFS personnel is further protected by department standard operating procedures (SOP’s) and standard operating guidelines (SOG’s). SOG 1.16 “Personal Protective Equipment” describes that appropriate PPE must be worn on emergency incidents and training. SOG 1.17 “Personal Protective Equipment Cleaning and Inspections” ensures PPE is inspected, cleaned and maintained in a safe manner. SOG 1.19 “PPE Worn in the Fire Hall”

provides direction to ensure that PPE is not worn in the Fire Hall living quarters or offices so as to reduce exposure of residue contaminants left on PPE.

SOG 1.17 provides procedures that include gross decontamination at the incident or training, replacement clothing, cleaning, inspection of PPE, reporting of damaged PPE, deep-cleaning schedule, and a 36-month contracted cleaning, inspection and repair. This aligns with WorkSafeBC *OH&S Regulation Part 9* and NFPA standards.

The industry best practice for decontamination of PPE is NFPA 1585 "*Standard on Exposure and Contamination Control*." SOG 1.18 "Post Incident & Training Decontamination Process" establishes a procedure for dealing with post incident and post training decontamination of PPE. It is noted that a decontamination hose is to be used to remove debris (gross decontamination), and that personnel performing decontamination procedures shall wear gloves, respiratory protection and/or PPE for the suspected hazard. Contaminated PPE shall be contained at the scene (bagged) then transported for decontamination by means that reduce further exposure to members. Contaminated PPE is not to be transported in the crew compartment of fire apparatus unless properly contained (plastic bag).

NFPA 1584 *"Rehabilitation Process for Members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises"* provides details including implementing preliminary exposure reduction activities, hazard control zones, reducing contamination and respiratory protection. SOG 1.18 applies the same principles for decontamination protection to personnel providing rehabilitation (rehab) or changing air cylinders.

Criteria and procedures for establishing rehab at an incident are detailed in SOG 1.12 "Incident Rehabilitation." Rehab is established by the Incident Commander (IC) or if appointed, a Rehab Manager, when incident duration, weather extremes or working conditions lead to fatigue, ineffectiveness and/or unsafe work practices. Purpose, protocols, siting factors, and documentation are included.

Many tasks at an incident have the potential to affect the health and wellness of personnel. The IC at an incident is the Safety Officer until one has been appointed. SOG 2.08 "Incident Safety Officer" identifies the procedures for appointment, and the role and responsibilities of the Incident Safety Officer (ISO). The ISO identifies critical factors at an incident such as risk, building specific information, smoke, hazardous emergency and the status of the firefighters. They perform an initial size up and provide the IC with an assessment of the risks at the scene.

4.16.3 Fire Halls

It should be noted that the West Creston Fire Hall has maintenance issues that could affect the physical health of personnel. The West Creston Fire Hall is an older repurposed building that was to be a temporary solution. It has pigeon feces throughout and no running water.

The Canyon-Lister Fire Hall is well-maintained. While the Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall has a functioning diesel extraction system, the installation of the diesel extraction system at the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall is on hold. The Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK) is conducting a study to find solutions and a consistent approach to the issue. More information may be found in the section on facilities.

4.16.3 Mental Health and Wellness

Mental health and wellness are as important as physical health and wellness. It is reported that upwards of 70% of Canadian employees have expressed a degree of concern with psychological health and safety in the workplace.[7] Further, the work environment that the fire service creates may result in an increased risk of exposure to personnel making them much more susceptible to occupational stress injuries, mental health injuries and physical injuries. In the fire service, proactive actions to reduce or eliminate risks must be addressed to assist personnel to prepare for duty, respond, and recover through training, education, support, treatment, and rehabilitation. It is considered an industry best practice to support the physical and mental health of all fire service personnel through resilience of their health and well-being.

CAN/CSA-Z-1003-13 "*Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace*"[8] is a national standard considered to be an industry best practice. The national standard approaches human interaction in the workplace considering working conditions and the associated management practices. It is a voluntary standard that supports the mental health of workers through prevention and promotion of wellness.[9] It is a documented and systematic approach to creating and sustaining a psychologically safe workplace. The CSA Group together with Mental Health Commission of Canada have produced an Implementation Guide to the National Standard with an aim to improve productivity, financial performance, risk management, recruitment and retention.

The reported key benefits to employers who provide a Psychological Health and Safety Management System (PHSMS)[10] include:

- Enhanced organizational effectiveness and continual improvement

- Improved worker recruitment and retention
- Organizational excellence
- Sustainability of human capital
- Improved worker engagement and morale
- Improved creativity and innovation
- Reduced workplace conflict and grievances
- Reduction in worker turnover and absenteeism
- Reduction in disability and injury rates

The CSA-Z-1003 considers that employers need to determine their needs and address gaps in their program before developing or redeveloping their PHSMS. Active participation is required from both the organization and its personnel.

The Resilient Minds Program[12] is mental health awareness training designed for the fire service. This Program is supported by the Canadian Mental Health Association. A train-the-trainer model is available over a 4-day period that results in a peer delivery program that is approximately 8-10 hours in length and addresses psychological injury, stress, trauma, and resilience. CVFS has one member who is certified to deliver the Resilient Minds Program to its personnel. There is an additional trainer with Castlegar Fire.

SOP 5.10 “CISM Program” recognizes the harmful effects of stress caused by disasters, mass casualties, and other critical incidents. The CVFS CISM Program is designed to provide immediate and on-going services to personnel to assist in minimizing the effects of critical incident stress. The CISM Team tasks are included, as well, how the process is initiated along with the types of incidents that automatically trigger a defusing. The CISM process of debriefings and demobilization are detailed. Follow up protocols include individual intervention, defusing follow up, debriefing following, potential for a second debriefing, anniversary follow up, demobilization follow up and follow up with the CISM team by the CISM Coordinator to ensure the teams members themselves are safe and coping well. CISM binders are located in all Fire Halls and include:

- Contacts and phone lists
- Defusing, debriefing and walk & talk information

- Defusing and debriefing handouts
- Stress management information
- CISM guidelines
- Records and forms

Creston Valley Fire Services has SOG 5.11 “Notification of Serious Injury or Line of Duty Death” and SOG 5.12 “Line of Duty Death” to ensure compassionate and timely notification of next of kin and ensure that the appropriate people are in place and available. SOG 5.12 provides a guideline to follow.

Creston Valley Fire Services uses a wellness platform called Cordico Wellness.[17] This web-based application is customizable to the organization, allowing for access to all aspects of first responder wellness. It has many features, including a finder for counsellors, a wellness console, and a self-assessment tool for insights and guidance on personal issues. Personnel may download the app from the app store.

The Cordico Wellness app began as a Firefighter Society initiative. The administrator of the App is the president of the Firefighter Society. As a component of the health and wellness program, the efficiency and effectiveness of the Wellness App should be part of an annual review. As such it may make sense to be a shared responsibility with CVFS. Consideration should be given to including the App as part of the health and wellness portfolio.

Both the physical and mental health of personnel may be affected by excessive work duties. As a result of on-site interviews and meetings, it is noted that many personnel are working long hours. As well, the portfolios of the Chief Officers and full-time personnel are more than can be effectively or efficiently managed. Mandates are not being met, and there is a risk of burnout that could affect retention and future recruiting, and the physical and mental wellness of CVFS personnel.

Recommendations – Section 4

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
3	The job descriptions for the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief must be updated.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Updated job descriptions will ensure role clarity, reflect current operational expectations, and support effective leadership, succession planning, and accountability within the CVFS.
4	The job description for the Fire Service Support Supervisor (FSSS) must be updated with the fire service rank of Captain being identified in the job description.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Identifying Captain within the Fire Service Support Supervisor (FSSS) job description will better reflect the role's operational responsibilities, align with industry standards, and support a clearer leadership structure within the department.
5	Establish a second Assistant Fire Chief position within the Creston Valley Fire Service to provide dedicated oversight of fire inspections/prevention, risk management and operational leadership.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Salary	Introducing a second Assistant Fire Chief will strengthen the department's leadership capacity, relieve workload pressures on current senior staff, and ensure consistent attention to critical areas such as risk management, risk reduction and fire inspections.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
6	Adopt a tiered leadership model within the Creston Valley Fire Service to distribute responsibilities across strategic, tactical, and operational levels, supported by the creation of an Assistant Fire Chief position.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	A tiered leadership structure will reduce workload pressures on senior leadership, improve operational oversight, and enhance span of control, while also creating clear pathways for leadership development, succession planning, and sustainable program delivery across all fire service functions.
7	Develop and implement a formal, proactive recruitment and retention strategy that includes structured intake processes, wellness initiatives, and ongoing support for firefighter development and mental health.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A well-designed recruitment and retention strategy will reduce turnover, strengthen team capacity, and improve long-term operational sustainability by attracting committed members, supporting their well-being, and creating a more resilient fire service culture.
8	Implement a structured, community-engaged recruitment strategy that incorporates modern communication tools, flexible participation models, and partnerships with local organizations to attract a diverse and committed applicant pool.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	By aligning recruitment efforts with community engagement, flexible scheduling, and professional development opportunities, CVFS can build a more resilient volunteer base and foster long-term commitment in an increasingly competitive and evolving fire service environment.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
9	Determine the risk-based compliance monitoring system for the Creston Valley Fire Services including the General and Specific Risk of each public building. The compliance monitoring system may include combination of Fire Inspections and Fire Safety Assessments in order to determine the Frequency of Inspections.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated requirement of the Fire Safety Act that must be adopted by Town of Creston Council.
10	Declare the person(s) or class of persons designated as fire inspector and fire investigator and ensure that the appropriate training certification is completed.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated requirement of the *Fire Safety Act* that must be adopted by Town of Creston Council.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
11	Conduct and complete the annual Fire Inspection Program for the Town of Creston. Include consistent plan reviews and new business inspections. Include enforcement support.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated by the *Fire Safety Act*. Supports the life safety of the community and the CVFS personnel. Industry recognized best practice.
12	Develop and deliver a Pre-Incident Fire Planning Program. Consider including this service delivery in future Fire Service Agreements.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Supports the life safety of the community and the CVFS personnel. Industry recognized best practice.
13	Provide staffing level that is sufficient to meet the needs of the delivery of the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Increase in Annual Operating Budget for 1.0 FTE Assistant Fire Chief	Division is currently understaffed and unable to complete mandated inspections and move the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Program forward.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
14	Determine and deliver an annual Fire and Life Safety Educational Program to the Town of Creston, Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Arrow Creek/Erickson and the Lower Kootenay Band. Provide training and education to support the delivery of the program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Contracted service as per the Fire Services Agreements. Supports the life safety of the communities. Industry best practice is NFPA 1035 "S*tandard on Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist and Youth Firesetter Program Manager Professional Qualifications*".
15	Update bylaws to align with new Fire Safety Act.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931 reference old Fire Service Act. Legislative mandates of the *Fire Safety Act* should align with CVFS bylaws.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
16	A worker's representative for the Joint Health and Safety Committee needs to be appointed and they need to complete the mandated training within six-months.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated by WorkSafeBC. Supports the Health and Wellness of the CVFS.
17	Develop a Health and Wellness Program complete with measurable goals, strategic objectives, and realistic timebound tasks. Ensure record keeping and annual program reviews. Along with a detailed operating budget for the program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Industry best practice and align with national standard. Supports strategic thinking and continuous improvement. Supports program review and a model of continuous improvement.
18	CVFS should establish and maintain consistent, visible recognition practices that celebrate firefighter contributions, achievements, and service milestones throughout the year	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time (minimal cost for service milestones)	Regular recognition reinforces a culture of appreciation, boosts morale, and supports retention by making firefighters feel valued for their ongoing contributions and commitment.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
19	Offer flexible scheduling and create diverse volunteer roles to improve accessibility, attract a wider range of candidates, and support long-term firefighter retention.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Flexible scheduling and diverse volunteer roles accommodate varying lifestyles and interests, making it easier for members to contribute meaningfully and remain engaged over the long term.
20	Conduct a comparative review of Paid-on-Call (POC) compensation across similar departments to ensure CVFS offers a competitive and equitable pay structure.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Operating budget adjustment	A compensation structure aligned with industry norms supports recruitment, improves retention, and reinforces the value of Paid-on-Call members within the organization.
21	CVFS should be formally included in the development review process for new subdivisions, rezoning, and large commercial or industrial projects.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Early involvement in development planning ensures fire protection services are appropriately integrated into growing areas and infrastructure demands.
22	The CVFS should develop a formal succession planning framework to support leadership continuity and internal career progression.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A structured approach to succession planning will help identify future leaders, reduce operational risk during transitions, and strengthen long-term organizational stability.

Section 5

Fire Suppression Services

SECTION 5: FIRE SUPPRESSION SERVICES

5.1 Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) Overview

The CVFS represents a collaborative initiative between the Town of Creston and the RDCK to deliver cohesive fire protection and emergency services across the Creston Valley. This integrated service model encompasses four fire halls located in West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon Lister, and the Town of Creston, working collectively to provide consistent and efficient emergency response throughout the region.

Through the CVFS framework, CFR provides fire protection services to:

- The municipal boundaries of Creston
- Portions of RDCK Area B (Erickson)
- Portions of RDCK Area C (e.g., West Creston)

Additionally, CFR maintains automatic aid agreements with the Canyon-Lister and Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Departments, ensuring comprehensive coverage and mutual support across the region.

The Creston Fire Rescue Services offers a range of services, including:

- Fire suppression for commercial, residential, and wildland incidents
- Fire prevention programs and public education
- Regular inspections of commercial and public buildings to ensure compliance with the BC Fire Code
- Training programs aligned with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001 Level II standards, ensuring firefighters are well-equipped to handle various emergencies.

Established in late 2022, the CVFS is a relatively new model of regional fire protection. As it continues to evolve, Creston Fire Rescue remains central to its success, providing stability, operational leadership, and a model for collaborative fire protection across the Creston Valley.

5.1.1 Fire Suppression

Bylaw No. 1928 outlines the service levels for Creston Fire Rescue and confirms alignment with the BC Fire Service Minimum Training Standards (the "BC Playbook") by designating CFR as a Full-Service department. This classification indicates CFR's capacity to deliver a broad range of emergency services, including interior fire suppression, rescue operations, and other specialized responses—CVFS operates at the Full-Service level, ensuring consistent, high-level emergency response across the region.

The bylaw states that the Fire Chief, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, determines the fire protection and assistance response services the department provides, subject to budget approval and Council direction. However, it also mandates that Creston Fire Rescue Services must provide fire suppression, fire prevention, Fire Code enforcement, fire investigation, fire inspections, and services ancillary to these functions.

Additionally, the bylaw confirms that Creston Fire Rescue Services operates in accordance with Provincial Training Standards, including maintaining records of firefighter training and ensuring compliance with the required competency levels. This aligns with the BC Playbook, which establishes training requirements based on a fire department's declared service level—whether exterior, interior, or full-service operations.

Firefighting and fire suppression duties are identified in Bylaw 1928 definition of *Fire Protection and Assistance Response*. Although not specifically identified, these duties can include - Structural Firefighting, Wildland and Urban-Interface Firefighting, Vehicle Fire Suppression, and Fire Suppression in Hazardous Environments

5.1.2 Auto Extrication

The Creston Valley Fire Services provides highway rescue services within municipal boundaries and along key transportation routes. Coverage extends south on Highway 21 to the United States border, east on Highway 3 to Irishman's Creek (approximately 50 km), west on Highway 3 to the Salmo-Creston summit (approximately 50 km), and north on Highway 3A to Akokli Creek (approximately 40 km).

Road rescue services including automobile extrication using equipment commonly referred to as the "Jaws of Life" are provided to the Town of Creston and Electoral Areas A, B, and C through a regional service established under RDCK Bylaw No. 1142 (1995). This bylaw ensures

that specialized road rescue support is available across municipal and rural boundaries. The Town of Creston Fire Service is the designated provider, responding to incidents within the Town as well as in portions of the surrounding electoral areas. Funding is shared among participating jurisdictions through property taxation, with revenues directed toward maintaining the personnel, equipment, and training necessary for operational readiness. Since 2014, the Town of Creston has received an annual allocation of $50,000 to deliver this service, an amount that has not increased in over a decade, despite rising operational costs and growing expectations. This necessitates a review of the road rescue services for the Town and the RDCK, both in terms of operational sustainability and future capital replacement needs.

Over the past few decades, auto extrication has evolved into a highly specialized and critical aspect of emergency response. Modern vehicles are constructed with advanced lightweight materials designed to improve fuel efficiency and safety. However, these materials often require specialized cutting and stabilization techniques during rescues. Additionally, the proliferation of advanced airbag systems, computer-controlled security features, and sophisticated fuel systems demands that firefighters remain well-versed in the latest vehicle technologies and extrication methods.

The rise of electric vehicles (EVs) has introduced a new layer of complexity to auto extrication. High-voltage battery systems, which can pose severe electrical hazards, require responders to approach these incidents with heightened caution. EVs often have reinforced frames to protect battery packs, making traditional cutting tools less effective in certain areas. Moreover, the risk of thermal runaway—a condition where damaged batteries can ignite or explode necessitates specialized knowledge in handling EV fires and performing safe extrications.

To keep pace with these advancements, firefighters must undergo continuous training and stay updated on the latest extrication techniques, vehicle designs, rescue tools and emerging technologies. The combination of evolving automotive engineering and the integration of EVs underscores the need for a highly skilled and adaptable fire rescue team capable of managing increasingly complex vehicle emergencies.

Advancements in extrication tools and techniques continue to enhance life-saving efforts, allowing firefighters to adapt to the ever-evolving challenges presented by modern vehicle designs. Ongoing training and hands-on experience with the latest rescue technology are critical to ensuring successful outcomes in motor vehicle emergencies.

5.1.3 Technical Rope Rescue

As the role of firefighters continues to expand CVFS is increasingly relied upon to provide a range of specialized rescue services beyond traditional fire suppression. One of these critical services is technical rope rescue, which is often required in conjunction with highway rescue responses when vehicles leave the roadway and descend steep embankments. Additionally, firefighters are frequently called upon to assist in rope rescue operations when individuals find themselves stranded in hazardous terrain and require emergency extraction.

Technical rope rescue involves both low-angle and high-angle operations, depending on the severity and complexity of the incident. Low-angle rescues typically occur on slopes where rescuers can maintain some level of footing, whereas high-angle rescues require full rope support due to steep or vertical terrain. These operations demand specialized training, precise coordination, and the use of advanced rope systems to safely extricate individuals from difficult environments.

The bylaw specifically recognizes technical rescue responses, including vehicle extrication, as part of the department's mandate. This formal recognition underscores the importance of maintaining a high level of preparedness, training, and capability to ensure that CVFS can effectively respond to complex rescue incidents and continue safeguarding the community.

5.1.4 Hazardous Materials Response (HAZMAT)

With highway truck traffic and a railway running through the heart of Creston, the risk of a hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incident is a constant concern. A release of hazardous substances, whether from a vehicle collision, a railway derailment, or an industrial accident can pose significant threats to public safety, the environment, and property.

Creston Valley Fire Services firefighters are trained to the NFPA 472 Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents, Operations Level (now referenced as NFPA 1072). This training aligns with the department's mandate under Bylaw No. 1928, which authorizes fire protection and assistance responses, including the inspection, monitoring, and advising on hazardous materials storage and handling.

There are three different training levels identified by the NFPA standard.

NFPA 472 Awareness

This foundational training prepares emergency responders to identify the presence of hazardous materials, establish initial scene safety measures, and relay essential details to specialized hazardous materials teams. It is considered the baseline qualification for anyone who may be involved in responding to a HazMat event.

NFPA 472 Operations

At the Operations Level, firefighters receive training that builds on Awareness-level knowledge and prepares them to take defensive actions at hazardous materials incidents. These responders are trained to evaluate hazards, set up safety perimeters, and initiate spill control and decontamination efforts. Their focus is on limiting exposure, safeguarding lives and property, and reducing environmental harm until specialized HazMat teams arrive. Operations Level personnel can manage vapor suppression, control minor leaks, and apply early containment techniques using tools like absorbent materials, containment booms, and diking systems. This level of training equips the CVFS with the operational readiness to mount a coordinated and competent response to local hazardous materials emergencies in a defensive capacity.

NFPA 472 Technician

Building on Operations Level training, Technician-level responders are qualified to perform advanced, offensive strategies to contain and control hazardous materials incidents. This includes tasks such as stopping leaks at the source or conducting complex decontamination procedures. However, the CVFS does not currently pursue Technician-level certification.

There are no federal or provincial regulations that dictate the level of HazMat response a municipality must provide. However, the Province of BC offers guidance through the British Columbia Hazardous Material Response Plan (2013). This document states that local governments, along with their emergency services, are responsible for providing operational support within their available expertise and resources, as long as it falls within their mandate.

The responsibility for determining the appropriate level of HazMat response rests with the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), which, in this case, is the Town of Creston. This decision should be based on the specific hazards and risks present within the area. A key component of developing an effective HazMat response program is ensuring that service levels align with a

comprehensive Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA). A regional HRVA should thoroughly assess the risks associated with hazardous materials, including transportation, industrial storage, and potential spill scenarios, to guide planning and resource allocation.

In the 2014 Strategic Plan[11] one of the medium recommendations identified was to look at addressing dangerous goods issues (rail, road) at a regional level, develop plan and response. The objectives from this recommendation included:

- Assess what risks exist moving through the region by road and by rail.
- Assess what risks exist in the area.
- Develop plans on the identified risks.
- Review appropriate training levels for Creston Department members and for other responding departments (automatic aid).

To date no progress has been made on addressing dangerous goods emergencies from a regional level.

The CVFS utilizes the NFPA standards as their benchmark. Accordingly, two standards exist for response to HazMat incidents; the *NFPA 472: Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents* and *NFPA 1072: Standard for Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Emergency Response Personnel Professional Qualifications.*

Establishing measures to ensure the timely assembly of an Effective Response Force (ERF) at hazardous materials incidents should be the primary focus. An ERF is defined as the minimum number of firefighters and equipment that must reach a specific emergency incident location within a maximum prescribed time. To achieve this, three key components serve as fundamental assessment tools for evaluating response capacity and performance for the CVFS response: availability, capability, and operational effectiveness. These elements collectively determine the team's readiness to respond efficiently and effectively to HazMat emergencies.

- Availability — The degree to which the resources are ready and available to respond.

[11] Mitchell, D. & Associates Ltd. Creston Fire Rescue Department Strategic Plan 2014. 2014, 15.

- Capability — The ability of deployed resources to manage an incident.
- Operational Effectiveness — A product of availability and capability. It is the outcome achieved by the deployed resources or the ability to match resources deployed to the risks to which they are responding.

Due to the increasing transportation of hazardous goods via highways and railways, the potential for large-scale incidents is a concern. The CVFS adherence to these NFPA standards ensures firefighters are equipped to manage the complexities of hazardous materials responses while prioritizing public safety and environmental protection.

5.1.5 Medical First Responder

Firefighters receive First Responder training and are provincially licensed to provide basic medical care to residents and visitors in Creston, Erickson, and Arrow Creek/Erickson. As outlined in Bylaw No. 1928**,** Creston Fire Rescue is authorized to deliver medical first responder services as part of its broader emergency response mandate. This training enables firefighters to assess patients, administer life-saving interventions, and provide critical support until BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) paramedics arrive. Their role is essential in bridging the gap between the onset of a medical emergency and advanced medical care, ensuring timely and effective response for the community.

Saying this, First Responder services are not available for Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister and West Creston, which identifies that the same level of service is not readily available to the rate payer.

5.2 Accredited Superior Tanker Shuttle Service (STSS)

A tanker shuttle service is a widely used firefighting method employed in areas lacking a reliable water supply. This operation involves using tanker trucks to transport water from sources such as hydrants or ponds to the fire scene, where the water is discharged into a portable tank (commonly called a *porta tank*).The process ensures a continuous water supply as tanker trucks cycle between the water source and the fire scene.

The Superior Tanker Shuttle Service (STSS) accreditation is granted by the FUS and recognizes a fire department's ability to provide a water supply in areas lacking hydrants, equivalent to municipal hydrant protection in the eyes of insurers.

To qualify:

- Residential Accreditation requires the delivery of 200 Imperial Gallons Per Minute (IGPM) (approximately 1,000 LPM) within five minutes of the first pumper's arrival, sustained for two hours.
- Commercial Accreditation requires 400 IGPM (approximately 2,000 LPM) within ten minutes of arrival, also sustained for two hours.
- Accreditation can lead to substantial reductions in fire insurance premiums for residents and businesses, making it an attractive goal for rural fire departments.

Achieving STSS accreditation is a complex and resource-intensive process that goes beyond routine fire department operations. It demands a high level of organizational commitment, planning, and preparation. To meet the standards established by the FUS, departments must engage in rigorous pre-planning. This includes identifying reliable year-round water sources, evaluating access routes, and designing shuttle operations that can consistently meet the specified water flow and timing requirements across various distances.

Departments seeking accreditation must be prepared to invest in critical infrastructure, which may include the installation of dry hydrants, the acquisition of high-capacity portable water tanks, enhancements to pump and hose systems, and the procurement of tankers that are properly sized and configured for shuttle operations. These components must function seamlessly to ensure an uninterrupted water supply for two hours.

The FUS outlines clear expectations for departments seeking accreditation, requiring them to maintain documented SOPs, detailed training records, and evidence of past incidents where tanker shuttle operations were successfully deployed. This comprehensive approach ensures that a department not only has the right equipment and plans in place, but also the practical ability to execute them effectively under real life conditions.

5.2.1 STSS Operational Considerations and Trade-Offs

While STSS accreditation can provide measurable benefits, most notably reductions in fire insurance premiums and increased public confidence in local fire protection, it is important to recognize that these benefits come with operational trade-offs. Achieving and maintaining this designation demands a significant investment of time, training, and resources.

These competing demands require careful CVFS consideration. The CVFS and more importantly, the Fire Chief must evaluate whether the pursuit of STSS aligns with the overall strategic priorities and risk profile. For some of the RDCK communities, the insurance savings may outweigh the trade-offs. For others, especially those with complex service areas or constrained resources, the focus may be better placed on enhancing operational readiness across a broader spectrum of emergency response functions.

Adding the responsibilities of attaining the STSS accreditation, along with the gap in the community risk assessment, fire prevention leadership, and strategic development to the existing workload of the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief is not practical at this time. Both roles are already stretched managing core operations, training, and organizational oversight. Without additional leadership capacity, these essential priorities will remain underdeveloped.

Before pursuing this designation, it is essential that CVFS place priority on mapping and establishing reliable water sources that can sustain rural fire suppression operations. Together, these gaps reinforce the need for the proposed Deputy Chief role, not only as a leadership solution, but as a strategic investment in risk management, accreditation readiness, and the long-term effectiveness of the CVFS.

5.3 Dispatching and Communications

Dispatch and communications are part of a telecommunications system designed to be accessed by the community and its fire service to facilitate the provision of emergency services. Effective communication is imperative to the public when they are in need. A system the begins with a call to 9-1-1 through to dispatch tones being activated in the closest fire hall to their incident needs to be timely and effective.

Effective communication is crucial for firefighter safety, efficiency of operations, and successful incident management. SOG 2.05 “Communication with ICS Procedures” details the importance of enhancing safety through consistent use of communication protocols and language when using the fire department radio systems. A properly functioning radio system enables tasking, critical information sharing, and is an essential vital lifeline in an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) environment.

5.3.1 Radio System

The Local Government Act [RSBC 2015][12] provides the authority for the Creston Valley Fire Services (CVFS) to enter into service contracts. The same authority supports the provision of fire and rescue dispatch services between the Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK) and the Regional District of Fraser Fort George (RDFFG).

The Regional District of Central Kootenays is responsible for the infrastructure of the radio system. The radio system is a single dispatch channel on a repeater system. The Creston Valley including Canyon-Lister and Wynndel-Lakeview use the repeater at Mount Thompson. Both Canyon-Lister and Wynndel-Lakeview have a duplex radio repeater on their fire stations. The repeater is connected to dispatch via an internet radio over internet protocol (ROIP) connection and secondary connection that depends on location (telephone, cellular or satellite).

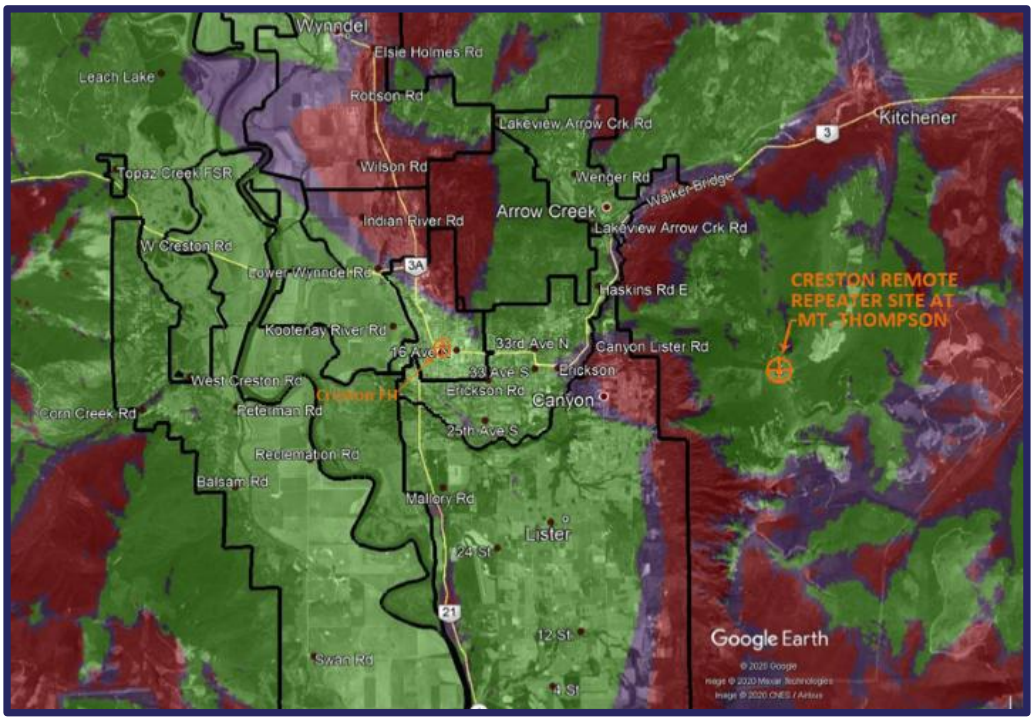
The Mount Thompson repeater tower operates using alternating power (AC) power with a battery backup system, which is managed by the RDCK. As well, a generator is provided on site by the owner of the property. Testing and servicing of the generator is the responsibility of the owner of the property. Assurance of the operation of the backup for the communications system should be provided on a regular basis.

The radio system uses Internet Protocols (IP) analog connectivity. The backup system would be the landline telephone network. The continuity and resiliency of the system is evaluated in accordance with NFPA 1225 “Standard for Emergency Services Communication”. Currently the CVFS has simplex and repeater radios that are analogue. The radios communicate with each other, the base station, and the Fire Operations Communications Center (FOCC).

Currently, there are gaps in radio coverage along the main highway. Coverage is concentrated around the urban areas. The RDCK has plans to relocate a tower in Yak, which is east of Canyon-Lister. The relocation of the repeater is expected to improve coverage for road rescue services. The timeline for the upgrade to service depends on the availability of funding. Plans for this vital communication service must be prioritized.

[12] Province of British Columbia, “Local Government Act [RSBC 2015], accessed April 2025, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/r15001_00

FIGURE #3 - REMOTE SITE REPEATER ON MOUNT THOMPSON/PREDICTED TWO-WAY RADIO COVERAGE MODELLING



***Note**: Green = Good, Purple = Marginal, Red = Poor/No Coverage*

CVFS does not currently have Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) in their apparatus. Creston Valley Fire Services received a grant for the MDT's in the amount of $45,000 through the Local Government Managerial Association (UBCM) Next Generation 911 2023 Grant. CVFS has not begun the process of planning for the MDT upgrades in the apparatus. The upgrade to MDTs with Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) should be prioritized to recognize efficiencies and effectiveness of tracking of response times and improve communications.

The current method for tracking apparatus response and accessing CAD is through iPads using Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) cards. This method is effective, but it requires satellite connectivity, which can be challenging in some areas.

The RDFFG is in the process of upgrading its CAD system from Fire Department Management (FDM) to Hexagon-on-Call.[13] Through software and licensing, Hexagon will be able to interface

[13] Hexagon, "Hexagon On Call" accessed May 2025, https://hexagon.com/products/hxgn-oncall-dispatch

with MDTs, computers and iPads. Costs for the purchase of licenses and annual fees are dependent on the number of licenses required. The expected timeline for the implementation of Hexagon is approximately 18-months. This system also relies on cellular connectivity to access IP to receive data.

Cellular coverage in the Kootenays is inconsistent. The federal government is responsible for following through and ensuring that there is complete cellular coverage. The status of cellular coverage expansion is unknown.

The current lifespan of the handheld radios is 15-20 years. Replacement and repairs are maintained through the annual operating budget. The current handheld radios have the capacity to utilize IP aligning with the needs for NG 911 operations. Other municipalities within the region use the same radio infrastructure but are on different frequencies eliminating potential crosstalk if multiple incidents were occurring in those jurisdictions. The current radios do not have the capability to communicate with other agencies, and there are no plans for the future. CVFS also has a mobile repeater that is not currently being used.

IamResponding[14] is a web-based application that alerts and provides incident information to the user. In addition to be notified of new incidents by pager, CVFS personnel have access to IamResponding on their cellular devices. While the system works well it is not relied upon as a primary method of communication for incidents. Also, individual accounts are required for Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, and Creston which results in firefighters not being notified about incidents not related to their immediate area. While this reduces excessive alerts, it also reduces situational awareness for the Creston Valley as a whole.

Information relative to the specific incident is also accessed in the fire apparatus using an iPad. Real-time response data includes a mapping feature with the incident location, as well as other apparatus that are responding and their location. Having current information provides a higher degree of situational awareness supporting better outcomes and safer crews.

The implementation of upgraded telecommunications systems moving to IP along with the implementation of NG 911, it is reasonable to expect that there would be gaps between the current status and future needs of CVFS. A detailed needs

[14] IamResponding, "Transformative Situation Awareness", accessed April 2025, https://www.iamresponding.com/

assessment, or service review, should be conducted of the radio communications system in the region.

5.3.2 Dispatch System

Fire and rescue dispatch services are provided regionally through contract to the RDCK. The RDCK in turn, has a contract for this service with the RDFFG. The Regional District of Fraser Fort George operates the Fire/Rescue Emergency Dispatch and Communications Service from Fire Hall No. 1 in the City of Prince George, referred to as the Fire Operations Communications Centre (FOCC).

The FOCC operates as a Secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) which receives 9-1-1 calls from the Primary PSAP and other sources. The Primary PSAP that receives the initial 9-1-1 call from the public, is E-Comm located in Vancouver. The backup FOCC is operated by Campbell River Fire Department on Vancouver Island. The current contract between the RDCK and the RDFFG expires December 31, 2028.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1225 "Standard for Emergency Services Communications" is the industry best practice. NFPA 1225 covers professional qualifications for personnel, training officers, supervisors, and managers. Communications centers, wiring, operations, telephones, dispatching systems, in-building communications enhancement systems, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, testing, records, security, and public alerting systems are detailed. Included are performance operating procedures:

- 90 percent of events on emergency lines are answered within 15 seconds; and
- 95 percent are answered within 20 seconds.
- Where events are transferred the expectation is that the transfer process does not exceed 30 seconds 90 percent of the time.

To monitor compliance with the above noted performance time expectations, NFPA 1225 requires that the provider measure and report their performance monthly. The RDFFG does not currently have access to the call answering statistics for Creston, as they are the secondary PSAP for 9-1-1 calls. Currently the call processing data related to CVFS is challenging to obtain and may need to be accessed in coordination with the PSAP, E-Comm. Regular provision of performance statistics should be reviewed as a component of the service contract. The below table indicates performance for the emergency answering line not including the RDCK.

TABLE #23: FIRE OPERATIONS COMMUNICATION CENTRE - NFPA 1225 PERFORMANCE

Year	Emergency Line Answering (NFPA 1225 = 90% Within 15 Seconds) excluding the Regional District of Central Kootenay		
	Percent of Calls	Within/Seconds	Total Calls
2020	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0
2022	96.48%	9.00s	4883
2023	96.36%	10.00s	6072
2024	96.06%	9.00s	5658

In addition, NFPA 1061 "Standard for Public Safety Telecommunications Personnel Professional Qualifications" provides the minimum job performance requirements for Public Safety Telecommunications Personnel. NFPA 1061 speaks to a diverse array of related information including minimum staffing and call handling. The RDFFG uses an in-house competency-based management and quality improvement program.

The service that is provided by RDFFG has positive feedback. They are reported to be proactive in addressing issues and the dispatchers are professional and dedicated.

5.3.3 Next Generation 9-1-1

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 911)[15] is a mandated initiative to modernize Canada's telecommunications network. It will enhance public safety with quicker more accessible communications during emergencies. This update is a move from an analogue system to a modern digital IP based network supporting more efficient and reliable service. NG 911 will provide enhanced services through accuracy of location of mobile devices, communication with dispatch via text messages, and the ability to send and receive video and audio during calls which would allow for a better understanding of the situation being reported.

The transition to NG 911 is a shared responsibility between all levels of government and telecommunications service providers. The broad steps involve:

[15] Government of Canada, "Next Generation 9-1-1," accessed April 2025, https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/phone/911/gen.htm

- Telephone and cellular phone telecommunications companies have updated networks from analogue to digital.
- Provincial, territorial, and municipal governments must ensure emergency call centres are ready for the service.
- The deadline for the transition to NG 911 has been extended to March 31, 2027.[16]

The Province of British Columbia[17] is providing funding support to local governments for implementation and transition to NG 911. Funding in the amount of $60 million dollars is accessible through the Next Generation 911 Funding Program.[18] Funding is administered through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities on behalf of Ministry of Citizen's Services. The CVFS received a grant in the amount of $45,000 that is planned to upgrade to MDTs in frontline apparatus.

The RDFFG is in the process of upgrades for NG 911 in line with other providers. The onboarding process, testing and upgrades are dependent on outside service providers such as Telus and Solacom (a subsidiary of Comtech Telecommunications Corp).[19]

5.3.4 Dispatching and Communications Finance and Budget

The Creston Valley Fire Services has a line item in the annual operating budget allotted to communications equipment and maintenance. This includes radios, pagers, batteries, chargers and other accessories. In 2025, it amounts to $14,000 which is approximately 0.9% of the entire operating budget. The CVFS does not use capital funding for these purposes.

---

[16] Government of Canada, "Telecom Decision CRTC 2025," accessed April 2025, https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2025/2025-67.htm

[17] Province of British Columbia, "Next Generation 911," accessed April 2025, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/next-generation-911

Province of British Columbia, "Next Generation 911," accessed April 2025, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/economic-development/funding-and-grants/next-generation-911

[18] Union of British Columbia Municipalities, "Next Generation 911," accessed April 2025, https://www.ubcm.ca/lgps/next-generation-911

[19] Solacom, "Solacom Telecommunications", accessed May 2025, https://www.solacom.com

TABLE #24: OPERATING BUDGET – RADIOS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Operating Budget Descriptions	Operating Budget	Percent Of Overall Fire Department Budget
Communications Equipment and Maintenance (including radios, pagers, batteries, chargers and other accessories)	$14,000	
Fire Department Operating Budget	$1,518,000	0.9%

Creston Valley Fire Services contracts communications system services to the RDCK. The current annual cost of the contract to taxpayers is $51,605. The annual cost of the contract with RDCK and RDFFG is fixed through December 31, 2028, after which time a new contract would reflect the relevant costs of the current service. The cost to run the service is divided between participating organizations based on call volume.

Recommendations – Section 5

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
23	The Fire Chief must assess the CVFS needs, department capacities, and costs in terms of resources and planning to pursue the Superior Tanker Shuttle Service for the CVFS.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	This certification requires a thorough evaluation of apparatus capabilities, water sources, personnel, and deployment times. A detailed assessment by the Fire Chief ensures the CVFS fully understands the operational requirements, resource commitments, and financial implications before proceeding.
24	Conduct a Dangerous Goods Risk Assessment to identify DG on rail/road at the regional and local level and develop a community risk reduction plan.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A focused risk assessment enables the development of targeted community risk reduction strategies that enhance preparedness, safety, and regional coordination.
25	Develop a training schedule for the delivery of First Responder certification so this service is available to Wynndel Lakeview, West Creston and Canyon lister.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Providing First Responder certification to all fire service areas ensures a consistent level of emergency medical response across the region.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
26	The RDCK and the Town of Creston should review the Road Rescue funding model to determine the true cost of delivering the service.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	This will help address growing operational and capital pressures on the Town and ensure funding remains fair and sustainable.
27	The CVFS should upgrade to mobile data terminals in frontline apparatus.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Grant has been provided and costs to purchase will likely continue to increase. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication.
28	The CVFS should obtain regular reports on dispatch communications performance.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Industry best practice NFPA 1225 requires monthly evaluations. Reporting and program analysis supports cycle of continuous improvement.
29	The CVFS should conduct a needs assessment/gap analysis of the radio communications system and coverage of the Creston Valley.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Upgrade to NG 911is mandated. Radio communications gaps exist in the service area in particular the road rescue area.

EMG Emergency Management Group

Section 6

Facilities and Vehicles

SECTION 6: FACILITIES AND VEHICLES

6.1 Creston Emergency Services Building

On September 23, 2022, Creston opened the Creston Emergency Services Building, a 17,790 sq. ft. facility designed to enhance emergency response capabilities while prioritizing firefighter health and safety. The new firehall features three fire apparatus bays and one BC Ambulance Services bay, as well as a dedicated training facility for the community and the primary Emergency Operations Center in the event of an emergency or disaster. A critical improvement over the previous facility, the CESB ensures proper decontamination and hygiene for firefighters, incorporating spaces for PPE washing and showering after incidents to reduce exposure to harmful contaminants.

The facility was also designed with independent HVAC systems, keeping the admin area pressurized and segregated from the apparatus bay to prevent cross-contamination. Additionally, a direct capture exhaust system effectively removes vehicle emissions by expelling exhaust to the outside whenever apparatus are in motion. Supporting a modern fire service model, the CESB includes dormitories and living quarters, ensuring the WEP firefighters have on-site accommodations to enhance readiness and response efficiency. The CESB represents a long-term investment in public safety, firefighter well-being, and regional emergency preparedness.

6.1.1 Canyon-Lister Fire Hall

The Canyon-Lister Fire Hall, while functional and serving a vital role in the Creston Valley, faces several facility-related challenges that limit its operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Located in a rural area and supported by slightly over ten volunteers, the fire hall has undergone past expansions but still falls short of modern standards for fire station design, particularly in the operational areas. Although the upstairs portion housing the Fire Chief's office, training room, and member lounge has been renovated into a modern and comfortable space, the temperature during the summer months makes the space unbearable.

Due to its age, the fire hall does not comply with BC Building Code post-disaster design standards, a concern that becomes more pressing if future upgrades or additions are planned. The apparatus bays are congested, serving not only to house vehicles and equipment but also for storage, PPE lockers, and operational materials, creating safety and efficiency concerns. Due to space limitations, numerous pieces of apparatus are stored off-site at the West Creston Fire Hall, which could complicate emergency readiness.

There is no vehicle exhaust capture system in place, and no ongoing monitoring for air quality, both of which are required under WorkSafeBC regulations. During a stakeholder meeting on March 25, 2025, the consultant was advised that the RDCK has approved an engineering study to be conducted of its fire halls. There are initial concerns at the Canyon-Lister Hall that some structural issues may complicate the installation of a diesel extraction system. The deadline for

the engineering study was unknown during the writing of this document. A recent electrical upgrade was completed to meet the requirements for a diesel extraction system.

Current washrooms are shared with cleaning equipment and laundry, and a decontamination shower is not available on the apparatus floor. Storage overall is a significant issue, and it was evident that space is at a premium. There are two shipping containers located immediately adjacent to the fire hall for equipment storage.

While the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall currently supports its volunteer crew and provides a base for operations, it requires targeted investment to meet modern fire service standards. Improvements are needed to ensure firefighter safety, regulatory compliance, and the long-term sustainability of fire protection services in the region.

Details on the engineering study commissioned by the RDCK are lacking and it is unknown during the writing of this document whether the study included an in-depth inspection to determine the immediate and future needs for the fire hall for future facility funding decisions.

6.1.2 Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall

The Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall is a relatively modern, three-bay facility that generally meets the operational needs of the fire department. It includes a training and meeting area at the rear, supported by a washroom and shower located between the training space and the apparatus bays. A lean-to structure provides storage for a hose dryer and truck cap for the command vehicle. A storage room at the back of the fire hall was formally an enclosed patio which now serves for the storage of a snow blower, hose testers and other various pieces of

equipment. A new diesel extraction system has recently been installed will all three bays being connected to the system. There is a lack of organized storage areas, which results in cluttered floor space that could hinder access to apparatus and operational readiness.

Additionally, while the structure itself is non-combustible, some of the building's external features, including soffits, the lean-to, and the porch, are made from combustible materials that elevate risk during wildfire conditions. Improvements to these exterior components should align with FireSmart Canada's Critical Infrastructure guidelines given the fact that the fire hall is in close proximity to dense forest at the rear of the building.

Recent investment in the building with the attached storage room at the rear, paint and new industrial vinyl flooring in the training room have upgraded the fire hall. Holes in the front wood siding could pose future problems and further investment should be prioritized to minimize damage to the building.

6.1.3 West Creston Fire Station

Currently, a pumper truck is housed in the West Creston facility, which may give the impression of a fully operational and compliant fire hall. This perception could influence how insurance underwriters, residents, and stakeholders view the level of service available in the area. However, the reality is that the apparatus is stored in a building that does not meet current safety, environmental, or operational standards. While it provides basic shelter for the vehicle and equipment, the facility falls short of the requirements needed to support a safe and effective emergency response operation.

The West Creston Fire Hall is not a purpose-built fire station. It is a repurposed agricultural storage shed, originally designed for potato storage, that was adapted for emergency response use out of necessity. Its continued use as a fire hall presents significant concerns and underscores the urgent need for a more appropriate and sustainable solution.

A formal site visit conducted by EMG on March 25, 2023, identified significant deficiencies in workplace safety and operational conditions at the West Creston facility. Pigeon droppings were observed on the wall above the gear storage area, where a temporary poly barrier had been installed above the PPE lockers. This raised immediate concerns about potential contamination and the lack of adequate mitigation measures. Turnout gear, stored in gear bags, is currently located in an open space exposed to visible environmental hazards, posing an avoidable and preventable health risk to volunteer firefighters.

The facility is missing nearly all of the basic elements required of a functioning fire station. It has no running water, heat, ventilation, or washroom facilities. There is no exhaust extraction system, no designated decontamination area, and no separation between clean and dirty zones. The building does not meet the minimum requirements of the BC Building Code or WorkSafeBC occupational health and safety standards. As such, it fails to provide an environment that supports safe and effective fire service operations or protects the health and well-being of the volunteers working within it.

Despite the clear deficiencies, this facility is still considered "in service," and houses Engine 61 which creates a false assurance to the public and to insurance agencies that West Creston is covered by a functioning fire station. In reality, the apparatus is not supported by compliant infrastructure. There is no capacity to properly maintain, prepare, or operate equipment safely. However, those closest to the situation, namely the firefighters, recognize the significant operational limitations associated with the current setup.

The September 17, 2015, the West Creston Fire Protection Services Agreement between the Town of Creston and the RDCK includes several sections that refer to a New Fire Hall and operational readiness, as identified below;

> *1.11 "New Fire Hall" means the new fire hall to be established and operated by the Town, in cooperation with the Regional District, in the Fire Protection Area in accordance with subsections 2.l01 and 3.04.*
>
> *3.03(2) The New Fire Hall is expected to be operational within 18 months of the effective date of this Agreement, subject to sufficient volunteers being recruited within the Fire Protection Area and a suitable location being leased and developed. In the interim, before the establishment of the New Fire Hall, the Fire Department will provide Fire Protection Services solely or principally from its existing Town Fire Hall.*

3.04 In establishing the New Fire Hall, the Town agrees:

3.04(a) In cooperation with the Regional District, to use its reasonable best efforts to secure and maintain a lease for a fire hall facility within the Fire Protection Area suitable for housing equipment and apparatus for the provision of Fire Protection Services.

3.04(d) To equip the New Fire Hall with the apparatus and equipment considered necessary by the Fire Chief, in his or her discretion, to provide Fire Protection Services, but in any event comprising of not less than one pumper unit, with a minimum pump capacity of 1050 Imperial Gallons per minute, specified and constructed to meet the requirements of the Fire Underwriters.

The existing West Creston Fire Hall was originally intended as a temporary facility and has effectively become a permanent structure due to the prolonged uncertainty surrounding future construction of the new fire hall. This shift carries important implications for both operational planning and capital investment:

- Engine 61 is a 2001 Superior Pumper, which meet its 25-year service life January 2026.
- With no designated capital funding to replace this Pumper, the CVFS is unable to approach the FUS to advise them of a replacement date for the pumper.
- The continued use of Engine 61 may negatively impact the fire insurance rates for West Creston residents.

In fire service infrastructure, the distinction between temporary and permanent facilities is critical and should guide decisions around funding, safety, and service delivery. A temporary structure is typically established to address immediate needs. It is not designed or funded with long-term sustainability in mind and often lacks alignment with building codes, capital planning, or operational standards. These facilities serve as short-term solutions while a permanent replacement is developed.

In contrast, a permanent structure is built with the intent of sustained use. It is included in long-term capital planning, complies with relevant construction and safety standards, and represents an organizational commitment to continued service in the area. It also brings expectations of stability, reliability, and consistent operational support.

Treating a temporary structure as permanent without the proper investment, planning, or infrastructure creates ongoing risks and undermines both the effectiveness and credibility of

the service model. It is essential that decisions moving forward clearly define the intended purpose of the facility and align capital planning, operational standards, and community expectations accordingly.

Additionally, the West Creston Fire Protection Services Agreement states.

> *4.04 The Regional District agrees to be responsible to provide through taxation or borrowing any required capital funds for capital projects, including but not limited to: purchase of property, building of fire station(s) and fire apparatus, and development of Alternative Water Supply. Costs of borrowing for capital projects for the Fire Protection Area are costs borne by the Regional District. The Regional District also agrees that any costs associated with attaining voter approval to borrowing are costs borne by the Regional District.*

On September 14, 2024, the referendum for the West Creston Fire Protection Service were declared by the RDCK Chief Elections Officer. The proposed West Creston Fire Protection Area Service Establishment Amendment Bylaw and Loan Authorization Bylaw in Electoral Area C did not receive voter assent.

The questions asked to obtain the assessment of the electors were:

Are you in favour of the RDCK adopting both of the following bylaw?

- West Creston Fire Protection Area Service Establishment Amendment Bylaw No. 2912, 2024 which will permit the Regional District to increase the maximum allowable requisition for West Creston Fire Service S291 from $146,250 or $1.57/$1,000 of net taxable value of land and improvement within the service area, whichever is greater, to $393,831 or $2.5519/$1000 of net taxable value of land and improvements within the service area, whichever is greater, and

- West Creston Fire Protection Loan Authorization (Fire Hall, Water Tender & Frontline Fire Engine) Bylaw No. 2916, 2024, which will permit the Regional District to borrow an amount not to exceed $2,159,900 for the purpose of completing the construction of the West Creston Fire Hall and replacing frontline West Creston Water Tender and Fire Engine.

There was a 52% voter turnout for the referendum and with the results the proposal did not proceed. “The RDCK will now be looking at potential options for fire protection and response in the West Creston service area,” said Kelly Vandenberghe, RDCK Electoral Area C Director. “We

will be working with the Town of Creston and other stakeholders to determine these options. Once we have had these discussions we will communicate them to the community."[20]

From 2015 to 2023, the West Creston firefighters has been operating out of temporary structures, with no permanent facility in place. Notably, the consultant was advised that recently the RDCK has allocated $530,000 from gas tax and provincial grants towards construction of the new fire hall, while the West Creston community group has approximately $90,000 for the fire hall project.

For a new fire hall to be built and a pumper purchased; another referendum must be held. It is noteworthy at this point that a Tender truck isn't necessary as CVFS tenders from Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister and Creston automatically response to structure fires and wildland urban interface incidents under automatic aid.

Fiscal Responsibility and Planning Gaps

According to the consultant's findings, there is no evidence that a formal site analysis or fire station location study was conducted prior to the investment of approximately $750,000 into a foundation. This appears to reflect a gap in strategic planning and due diligence. No documentation has been made available to clarify the rationale behind the site selection, making it difficult to assess how the location was chosen in relation to service coverage or operational needs.

Volunteer fire departments in BC must be constructed in accordance with the BC Building Code, including the required seismic design standards, as fire halls are designated as 'Post-Disaster' buildings." The existing West Creston Fire Hall:

- Poses health risks to firefighters,
- Fails to meet building, fire, and safety codes,
- Erodes volunteer recruitment and retention, and
- Creates a false perception of adequate coverage for insurance purposes.

[20] Official Results Declared for West Creston Fire Protection Service Establishment Amendment and Loan Authorization Referendum," Regional District of Central Kootenay, accessed June 11, 2025, https://www.rdck.ca/official-results-declared-for-west-creston-fire-protection-service-establishment-amendment-an/.

Continued delays do nothing to mitigate the immediate risk posed by the current West Creston Fire Hall. The existing structure is not fit for use. It is unsafe, non-compliant, and places volunteers at ongoing risk. The continued use of this building for any fire service operation is indefensible from a health, legal, or ethical standpoint. While the structure may still provide basic shelter from the elements and limited use for cold storage, it is wholly unsuitable for supporting the operational needs, safety, and readiness of a fire hall.

There are three options the CVFS must consider regarding the West Creston Fire Hall.

- Find a new location for the Fire Hall.

  To maintain a fire hall presence in West Creston and ensure continued service delivery and firefighter readiness, a temporary and compliant location be secured immediately for the fire truck and equipment currently housed at the existing site. A suitable interim facility must be established without delay.

    - Heated, enclosed storage for apparatus and PPE.
    - Basic facilities for gear cleaning and secure access.
    - Safe, clean air and environmental protection from contaminants.
    - Operational access for response personnel.
    - Running water, washrooms and decontamination area.

- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine the long-term viability of maintaining a fire hall in West Creston.

  This option requires a detailed examination of both capital and operational costs associated with replacing the current facility. The analysis should consider whether the investment required to sustain a permanent fire hall in West Creston is justified by the service benefits, response requirements, and community needs. This includes evaluating the increased construction costs, ongoing staffing and equipment expenses, and whether alternative models of service delivery could meet risk management objectives more efficiently.

    - Recruitment for the West Creston Fire Hall is at a standstill as there is little to no desire for members of the community to volunteer and work in those conditions. The planning for the West Creston Fire Hall must be prioritized and re-evaluated before it fails entirely.

- Close the West Creston Fire Hall

  While not the most favorable outcome, the closure of the West Creston Fire Hall remains a viable option for consideration. If pursued, approximately half of West Creston would remain within 13 km of a fire hall and retain access to reduced insurance premiums associated with protected status. The remaining properties would fall outside this range, resulting in non-protected status and corresponding increases in insurance premiums. A fee for fire protection services would then have to be negotiated for West Creston.

  ***Note**: Please see Insurance Exposure for additional information*

Delaying action until another referendum is held to authorize RDCK borrowing for completion of the West Creston Fire Hall and acquisition of a compliant pumper truck would further postpone progress. In the meantime, continuing to house firefighters and equipment in an unsafe facility presents a significant operational risk and poses a reputational liability for the CVFS and the RDCK. Timely decision-making is essential to ensure firefighter safety, meet service standards, and maintain public confidence.

The electors in Electoral Area C, are at a crossroads; either it makes the hard but necessary decisions now to properly fund and operate the West Creston Fire Hall, or they make the difficult decision to wind down operations of the West Creston Fire Hall.

Leadership transitions in the RDCK, including the appointment of a new Regional Fire Chief in January 2025, bring opportunities for renewed focus and direction. However, the longstanding concerns surrounding the West Creston Fire Hall highlight the need for more coordinated planning and timely action. This moment presents an opportunity for the CVFS, RDCK and the electors to take decisive steps that align with best practices and reaffirm its commitment to firefighter safety and community protection.

The current challenges surrounding the West Creston Fire Hall highlight a critical moment for reflection, collaboration, and renewed planning. While past decisions may not have been supported by formal site studies or structured consultation, this is an opportunity to move forward with greater clarity and purpose.

The risks posed by the existing facility are well-documented, but so too are the possibilities for improvement. Whether the path leads to a new facility, a cost-effective alternative, or a difficult but necessary closure, what matters most now is that decisions are made transparently, collaboratively, and with the community's best interest at heart.

With coordinated planning and a focus on long-term resilience, the CVFS and RDCK can build a future that protects both people and place.

6.1.4 West Creston Recruitment Concerns

There are dedicated firefighters in the West Creston Fire Hall, but serious recruitment problems exist, problems that can be directly tied to the conditions in which its volunteer firefighters are expected to operate. Poor facilities erode morale, reduce commitment, and deter new recruits. Volunteers are being asked to risk their health and safety in an unsanitary, non-compliant, and demoralizing environment. Unfortunately, word gets around quickly, and there appears to be little appetite for people to join under the current circumstances.

The reality is that the West Creston Fire Hall is in a state of slow decline. However, this does not have to be its future. With a clear commitment to progress, through a new fire hall, compliant facilities, and a properly equipped pumper, there is a critical opportunity to reverse this trend. Investing in safe, modern infrastructure is not just about compliance; it's about restoring pride, attracting new volunteers, and securing the long-term viability of fire protection in West Creston. With the right steps taken now, there is every reason to believe the fire hall can thrive once again.

Insurance Exposure

The Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) provides standardized insurance grading guidelines that significantly impact property insurance premiums across Canada. One of the core benchmarks used in this system is the 8-kilometre distance rule, in conjunction with the availability of a Triple Combination Pumper—a fire apparatus equipped with a pump, water tank, and hose, compliant with ULC S515 or NFPA 1901 standards.

Properties situated within 8 kilometres by road of a fire station that responds with a certified Triple Combination Pumper, and where the fire department meets additional FUS criteria (including training, staffing, and water supply capabilities), may qualify for a "Protected" classification under Dwelling Protection Grade (DPG) 3A or 3B. This classification can result in substantially reduced insurance premiums.

Conversely, properties located beyond 13 kilometres or those served by departments lacking compliant equipment are typically designated as "Unprotected" (DPG 5), which can lead to significantly higher insurance costs.

However, some insurance companies in BC extend the standard proximity requirements for fire protection. While FUS recognizes properties within 8 kilometers of a fire station as "protected," certain insurers may consider properties up to 13 kilometers away as still receiving adequate fire protection. This extended distance can influence the Dwelling Protection Grade (DPG), potentially leading to more favorable insurance premiums for homeowners.

Given the potential impact on insurance premiums, it is advantageous to maintain a compliant fire department equipped with a triple combination apparatus within eight to 13 kilometers of residential and commercial properties. As insurance classifications can vary depending on distance and provider criteria, the presence or absence of a functional fire hall in West Creston will directly influence whether properties are considered protected, semi-protected, or unprotected.

Ultimately, the electors of Electoral Area C must determine whether they are willing to accept the insurance cost implications of not maintaining a fire hall in West Creston. This decision carries both financial and safety consequences that should be weighed carefully with full consideration of the long-term impact on the community.

With new leadership at the RDCK and funding contributions already committed, there is momentum to build upon. What's needed now is unified will: a collective effort to develop a long-term solution that reflects the values of the community, safeguards residents, and supports the dedicated volunteers who serve it.

Proactive planning is critical. Rather than reacting to future service gaps or infrastructure strain, CVFS should commit to a structured, data-informed review of fire station coverage within the next 7 to 10 years. This review would examine whether existing stations remain ideally located to serve evolving risk areas, or whether future adjustments, such as relocating a hall, adding a satellite station, or improving access routes are warranted. GIS mapping, growth projections, and volunteer availability data can all inform this assessment, helping to ensure service equity and operational efficiency across the region well into the future.

6.2 Fire Apparatus & Equipment

As of 2024, five apparatus within the CVFS fleet are 20 years of age or older and are therefore approaching or have exceeded their typical service life expectancy. These aging units represent a growing priority for replacement planning, particularly in terms of operational reliability and cost-efficiency.

The section below outlines the CVFS's major fire apparatus with high replacement costs, as identified in the department's apparatus replacement schedule. These units represent significant capital investments and include frontline engines, tenders, a ladder truck, and the primary rescue vehicle. Their expected replacement years and estimated costs are provided below to support long-term capital planning and asset management.

- 2010 Ferra (Engine 21) - The apparatus is equipped with a 1,050 GPM pump and a 1,000-gallon water tank. According to the replacement plan, the estimated cost for replacement is $650,000.

- 2001 Quint (Ladder 21) - Ladder 21, stationed at the CESB, is equipped with a 1,500 GPM pump and a 500-gallon water tank. It is included in the replacement plan with an estimated cost of $600,000 and is expected to have a service life of 29 years, with replacement scheduled for 2030.

- 2003 Sterling Water Tender (Tender 21) - Tender 21, stationed at the CESB, is equipped with a 3,000-gallon water tank and is included in the replacement plan with an estimated cost of $250,000. It is expected to have a full-service life of 29 years, with replacement scheduled for 2032.

- 1999 International (Rescue 21) - Rescue 21, stationed at the CESB, is equipped with a Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) and a fill station. It is included in the replacement plan with a projected cost of $380,000 and is expected to serve a full 28-year lifecycle, with replacement scheduled for 2027.

- 2001 Superior Pumper (Engine 61) - Engine 61, operating out of the West Creston Fire Hall, is equipped with a 1,050 GPM pump and is scheduled for a full-service life of 26 years, with replacement anticipated in 2026. The Apparatus Replacement document provided to EMG identifies a projected replacement cost of $500,000; however, the current replacement plan for Engine 61 remains undetermined.

- 2000 International Pumper (Engine 51) - Engine 51, operating out of the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall, is equipped with a 1,050 GPM pump and an 800-gallon water tank. It is scheduled for a full-service life of 25 years, with replacement originally set for 2025. The RDCK has received an extension on its service life from the FUS and the estimated replacement cost is $850,000.

- 2004 International (Engine 41) - This pumper, operating out of the Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall, is equipped with a 1,050 GPM pump and has an estimated replacement cost of $850,000. The Fire Underwriters Survey has granted a service life extension to 2029, based on its documented testing and maintenance history.

- Tender 51 (2011) - This tender has 1,600-gallon capacity with a 650-gpm pump. Freightliner (Rosenbauer)
- Tender 41 (2020) - Tender with 1,600-gallon capacity with 650 gpm pump.

Given the age and projected replacement costs of these units, planning for phased replacement over the next budget cycles is recommended to ensure operational reliability and minimize financial impact. This assessment underscores the importance of maintaining an up-to-date equipment replacement plan to support service continuity and firefighter safety. As part of this process, the CVFS should factor in current replacement values and anticipate substantial cost increases over time due to inflation, supply chain volatility, and evolving apparatus specifications.

A chart outlining today's estimated replacement costs for major apparatus has been provided to support future capital planning efforts.

TABLE #25: APPARATUS REPLACEMENT AND COST

Apparatus	Replacement Year	Estimated Replacement Cost Today
Engine 21 (2010 Ferra)	2030	$1.2-1.6M
Ladder 21 (2001 Quint)	2030	$2-2.5M
Tender 21 (2003 Sterling)	2032	$550,000-$650,000
Rescue 21 (1999 International)	2027	$800,000
Engine 61 (2001 Superior)	2026	$1.2-1.6M
Engine 51 (2000 International)	2030	$850,000
Engine 41 (2004 International)	2029	$850,000
Tender 51 (2011 Freightliner)	2031	$550,000-$650,000
Tender 41 (2020)	2040	$550,000-$650,000

To provide additional context, photos of all current CVFS apparatus are included in Appendix-E. These images offer a visual reference to support the descriptions and condition assessments outlined in this section.

6.2.1 FUS-Approved Apparatus Service Life Extensions

While the FUS outlines standard age-based thresholds for apparatus credit eligibility within the fire insurance grading process, it also provides a mechanism for extending the recognized

service life of apparatus beyond 20 years, under specific conditions. According to FUS guidelines, credit may still be granted for fire apparatus that exceed the 20-year mark provided the vehicle is in excellent mechanical condition and passes an annual service test conducted in accordance with *NFPA 1911 – Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Emergency Vehicles.*

These extensions are considered on a case-by-case basis, primarily in small or rural communities, where apparatus may experience lower call volumes and wear. For credit to be maintained in FUS fire protection grading:

- The apparatus must pass full-service testing annually through a recognized third-party agency.
- Detailed maintenance and service records must be available upon request.
- The department must demonstrate that the unit remains fully operational and compliant with safety standards.

FUS emphasizes that while such extensions offer operational flexibility for smaller departments, they are not a long-term substitute for scheduled apparatus replacement. Apparatus approaching or exceeding 25 years of service face significantly reduced grading consideration, and no credit is granted for those beyond 30 years under any condition.[21]

The CVFS has taken a proactive and compliant approach to extending the service life of key apparatus beyond the 20-year mark, consistent with guidance from the Fire Underwriters Survey. While FUS recommends retirement of apparatus after 20 years, it also permits municipalities, particularly smaller or rural jurisdictions, to request service life extensions provided specific conditions are met. These include passing annual third-party service testing in accordance with NFPA 1911, maintaining comprehensive maintenance records, and ensuring that apparatus remains in excellent mechanical condition.

This commitment to rigorous annual testing and preventive maintenance reflects a broader strategy of investing early to ensure apparatus reliability and safety. By prioritizing front-end maintenance, the department is able to extend the functional life of its equipment, reduce the risk of critical failures, and defer costly replacements, resulting in meaningful long-term cost savings. For example, extensions have been formally requested for Engine 51 in Canyon-Lister

[21] Fire Underwriters Survey. FUS Apparatus Replacement Schedule. 2020.

and Engine 41 in Wynndel-Lakeview, both of which remain in excellent mechanical condition due to consistent care and compliance with NFPA 1911 standards.

The maintenance program and extension requests to the FUS supports responsible asset management while reducing short-term capital strain, but it must be paired with clear long-term replacement strategies to maintain operational reliability and protect the community's fire insurance rating.

6.2.2 Apparatus Fire Pump Testing

NFPA 1911: *Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Emergency Vehicles.* NFPA 1911 specifically requires that all fire apparatus equipped with pumps undergo annual service testing to ensure the pump can perform at its rated capacity and that all related systems, such as the chassis drivetrain, pump transmission, and plumbing, are in sound working order.

To its credit, the CFVS conducts pump testing and commercial vehicle inspection annually. They follow the associated NFPA standards for testing of apparatus pumps, ladders, fire hose and SCBA annually.

6.2.3 Annual Equipment Testing

The Creston Valley Fire Services demonstrates an exceptional commitment to firefighter safety, regulatory compliance, and operational excellence by consistently adhering to annual testing and maintenance standards.

The department follows a proactive, rotational replacement strategy for critical PPE and operational gear, including SCBA units, fire hose, and turnout gear. Rather than replacing all items at once, which can result in substantial budget spikes—the department replaces a set number of units each year. This staggered approach ensures that equipment remains compliant with NFPA standards, supports firefighter safety, and minimizes operational risk, while also distributing costs more evenly across annual budgets. The result is a more sustainable and predictable capital planning model that avoids the financial burden of large-scale, one-time replacements.

Apparatus, ground ladders, fire hose, and SCBA units are routinely tested in accordance with NFPA 1911, 1932, 1962, and 1852, reflecting a culture that takes equipment readiness

seriously. This diligent approach ensures that equipment is safe, reliable, and capable of performing in high-risk environments, while also maximizing service life and protecting the investment of local tax dollars through responsible asset management.

As a result of this proactive maintenance and testing program, the CVFS benefits from reduced equipment downtime, fewer unexpected repairs, and greater confidence in emergency response capabilities. This approach not only enhances firefighter safety and performance but also reinforces public trust by demonstrating that assets are being maintained to a high standard and taxpayer funds are being managed responsibly

6.3 Training Facility

The Creston Valley Fire Service is equipped with a purpose-built, multi-storey training facility that directly supports the requirements outlined in the British Columbia Fire Service Minimum Training Standards, Structure Firefighters Competency and Training Playbook. This facility allows the department to deliver live and scenario-based training aligned with the Exterior, Interior, and Full-Service operational levels defined by the Playbook. The structure includes multiple levels, stairwells, confined spaces, and integrated features such as burn props and roof access points, enabling firefighters to safely and effectively train in realistic conditions that simulate residential, commercial, and industrial emergencies.

This type of facility provides CVFS with the operational capacity to meet essential firefighter competencies such as ladder deployment, search and rescue, ventilation, hose advancement, live fire training, and firefighter survival scenarios. The presence of this infrastructure not only facilitates consistent and compliant training but also supports skill maintenance and evaluation in alignment with the Playbook's annual skills confirmation requirements.

Having this resource in-house minimizes training costs and travel time, enhancing both safety and efficiency. The addition of a paved parking lot or an alternative durable surface at the training grounds further supports firefighter training by allowing for safe and stable apparatus positioning, improved hose deployment, and year-round usability regardless of weather conditions. A proper surface reduces wear on equipment, increases firefighter safety during drills, and provides a more realistic environment for simulating emergency responses. This investment will reflect CVFS's strong commitment to maintaining high standards of readiness and ensuring that its members are prepared to serve safely and effectively within their defined service level.

Training Facility

The capital expenditures presented in this FMP are directly informed by a combination of service growth, operational risk, and regulatory requirements. As the population continues to grow, particularly in Electoral Area A and the Town of Creston, so too does the demand for fire protection services. Increased call volumes place greater strain on apparatus, facilities, and personnel, accelerating wear and increasing training and staffing pressures. By planning for the phased replacement and expansion of apparatus, facilities, and equipment, the CVFS can ensure it continues to meet service expectations without compromising reliability or response capabilities.

In addition to growth pressures, many of the capital needs identified are driven by aging infrastructure and evolving regulatory standards. Apparatus and facilities approaching end-of-life not only become less reliable but also carry greater maintenance costs and safety risks. Further, compliance with provincial legislation, including the BC Fire Service Minimum Training Standards (Playbook) and Part 31 of the Workers' Compensation Act, necessitates ongoing investment in certified equipment, training facilities, and safe operating environments. These investments are not discretionary; they are essential to meeting legal obligations and maintaining operational readiness. Just as importantly, capital upgrades directly support firefighter safety, performance, and morale by ensuring frontline crews have the tools they need to respond safely and effectively. Strategic, staged investments reduce long-term financial impact while reinforcing the CVFS's commitment to public and firefighter safety.

Recommendations – Section 6

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
30	The RDCK should prioritize a comprehensive facility needs assessment for the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall and Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall as part of its ongoing engineering study process, with a focus on identifying structural deficiencies, safety compliance gaps, and long-term operational requirements.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time (upgrades to be determined)	A comprehensive facility needs assessment will ensure that both halls meet current safety standards, support long-term operational sustainability, and provide a clear foundation for informed capital planning and future investment decisions.
31	Develop a work plan with the RDCK to ensure that a diesel extraction system is installed in Canyon Lister fire hall before December 2025.	Immediate (0 to1 year)		Installing a diesel exhaust extraction system is essential to meet WorkSafeBC requirements, protect firefighter health, and ensure the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall remains a safe and compliant operating environment.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
32	The RDCK should evaluate the future of the West Creston Fire Hall by exploring all viable options—including relocation, reinvestment, or closure—through a structured analysis of service levels, capital requirements, operational viability, and community impact.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Undetermined	A structured evaluation of the West Creston Fire Hall is essential to ensure that future decisions are based on service needs, financial sustainability, and the long-term effectiveness of fire protection in the area, while balancing community expectations and resource allocation.
33	The training grounds are a vital asset for the Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) and should be supported with a dedicated operating and capital budget. To enhance year-round usability, safety, and accessibility for training activities and personnel, the RDCK and the Town of Creston should work collaboratively to pave the training grounds or implement an alternative durable surface.	Mid-Term (1 to 3 years)	Undetermined	A paved or durable surface enhances firefighter safety by reducing slip and trip hazards, minimizes wear on equipment, and ensures reliable access to the training grounds in all weather conditions—supporting consistent, effective, and safe training operations.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
34	The Town of Creston and RDCK should explore the feasibility of designating the CVFS training facility as a regional live-fire training hub to support broader RDCK fire department training needs.	Mid-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A regional training hub would reduce duplication of infrastructure, promote consistency in firefighter competencies, and provide cost-effective, high-quality training opportunities for departments across the RDCK.
35	CVFS should complete a fire station location and coverage review within the next 7–10 years to assess whether current infrastructure aligns with projected population growth and evolving service demands.	Long-Term (7 to 10 years)	Undetermined	A strategic review will help ensure continued compliance with NFPA 1720, support equitable response times, and guide future infrastructure investment based on data-driven analysis.

Section 7

Fire Service Agreements

EMG Emergency Management Group

SECTION 7: FIRE SERVICE AGREEMENTS

7.1 Fire Service and Mutual Aid Agreements

It is common for the fire service to provide or share services with neighbouring jurisdictions. As the fiscal climate of decreasing provincial-municipal transfers continues to put pressure on the funding of services at the local level, municipalities need to meet the challenge of providing services within available funding, including property taxes, and without reducing service levels. Combining forces with or providing services to other areas, or contracting services with other providers, is often performed to increase efficiency and cut or hold costs to a minimum.

Funding pressure has many municipalities and regional areas reconsidering how they provide and receive services. Forming larger municipalities through annexation and amalgamation is an effective avenue for achieving economies of scale in service delivery and potential cost reduction. While this has been a common approach in some areas of Canada, expanding municipal boundaries is not a proven methodology for cost savings in all service areas. It is complicated, and the cost of undertaking large-scale administrative process changes may outweigh the potential cost savings.[22]

An option that could be considered for fire service delivery is an Extra-Territorial Agreement. In British Columbia, Extra-Territorial Agreements are supported through the Local Government Act[23] and the Municipal Act[24] A process including a council recommendation, public notification and electoral approval would be required.

Through an Extra-Territorial Agreement, a municipality can extend its responsibilities outside its boundaries to share resources and services, acquire property, and form bylaws and resolutions that apply to the additional areas. This sharing of costs, resources, and expertise can lead to cost savings, improved efficiencies, and improved service delivery.

---

[22] Justice Institute of British Columbia, "Inter-Municipal Cooperation in the Fire Services," accessed March 2025, https://www.jibc.ca/sites/default/files/library/files/Inter-Municipal_Cooperation_in_the_Fire_Services_H_Siegmann.pdf

[23] Province of British Columbia, "Local Government Act [RSBC 2015] Chapter 1", accessed March 2025, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/r15001_02

[24] Province of British Columbia, "Municipal Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 323", accessed March 2025, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/rs/rs/96323_00

Extra-Territorial Agreements, sometimes referred to as Inter-Municipal Agreements, can also include the sharing of tax bases or tax revenues.[25] A challenge when considering tax sharing is ensuring that equity and accountability are addressed through fair sharing of costs and benefits across the communities while ensuring accountability to the consumers and taxpayers who pay for the services. The provision of service through an Extra-Territorial Agreement that includes sharing of revenues and expenses is a means to achieve greater standardization which should increase efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

In British Columbia, the Community Charter gives a municipality and its council authority to enter into service agreements with other local governments, regional districts, and Indigenous governments. Government-to-government agreements commonly facilitate the provision of services through a Municipal Type Service Agreement (MTSA). An MTSA that contracts fire service delivery is referred to as a Fire Service Agreement.

7.2 Fire Service Agreements

The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS), operated by the Town of Creston, provides contracted fire service through individual Fire Service Agreements with the Regional District of the Central Kootenays (RDCK) to the areas of Wynndel, Canyon-Lister, and West Creston, each of which have volunteer fire stations in their areas. There are also individual Fire Service Agreements for Arrow Creek/Erickson, and the Lower Kootenay Band, which do not have their own fire services.

TABLE #26 FIRE SERVICE AGREEMENTS IN EFFECT

Area/Jurisdiction	Duration	Expiry
Wynndel Lakeview	One Year Extension	December 31, 2025
Canyon-Lister	One Year Extension	December 31, 2025
West Creston	One Year Extension	December 31, 2025
Arrow Creek/Erickson	One Year Extension	December 31, 2025
Lower Kootenay Band	60 Months	December 31, 2028

[25] [4] ICURR Publications Toronto, April 1997, "Inter-Municipal Cooperation: Sharing of Expenditures and Revenues" accessed March 2025, https://www.muniscope.ca/resource/dm/153059602437472198.pdf?n=file_Intermunicipal_cooperation.pdf&inline=yes#:~:text=For%20this%20reason

The areas of Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, West Creston, and Arrow Creek/Erickson are all within the jurisdiction of the RDCK. These Fire Service Agreements have many similarities in scope of services. Contracted fire service is provided in accordance with the level of service specified by the Town of Creston Fire Service Bylaw.

TABLE #27: CONTRACTED FIRE SERVICES

	Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister	West Creston	Arrow Creek/Erickson	Lower Kootenay Band
Fire Suppression	y	y	y	y	y
Interface Fire Response	n	y	n	n	y
Fire & Life Safety Education	y	y	y	y	y
Fire Investigation	y	y	y	y	y
Hazardous Materials Response – Operations Level	y	y	y	y	y
Medical Aid	y	y	y	n	y
Ambulance Assistance	y	y	y	n	y
Technical Rescue including Auto Extrication and Rope Rescue	y	y	y	y	y
Mobile Water Supply	n	n	n	y	n
Fire Inspections Upon Complaint	y	y	y	y	n
Pre-Incident Fire Planning	n	n	n	n	n
Enforcement	y	y	y	y	n
Emergency Management	n	n	n	n	n

The Canyon-Lister agreement specifically includes Interface Fire Response under the reference to Fire Suppression. Interface Fire Response is not included in the other agreements. Provision of a mobile water supply is specifically included with the Arrow Creek/Erickson agreement but is not referenced in the other agreements. While not included in the definition of "fire protection services" in the above noted agreement, medical aid and ambulance assistance are provided in Arrow Creek/Erickson. These variations should be reviewed and realigned in future Fire Service Agreements, preferably in one standardized agreement.

The Wynndel-Lakeview and the West Creston agreements reference the enforcement of the Town of Creston Fire Services Bylaw. The Canyon-Lister agreement references the enforcement of the RDCK Operational Bylaw. Enforcement service should be clarified and standardized.

The Fire Service Agreement with the Lower Kootenay Band (LKB) is currently fulfilling the needs of both parties. For example, providing fire protection to LKB supports insurance requirements for the new construction of a Rehabilitation Centre on Indigenous Lands near West Creston.

TABLE #28: CONTRACTED ADMINISTRATION/OPERATIONS

	Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister	West Creston	Arrow Creek/Erickson
Operation & Maintenance of Apparatus & Equipment*	y	y	y*	n/a
Operation & Maintenance of Fire Hall	y	y	y	n/a
Develop, Operate & Maintain Alternate Water Supply	y	y	y	n
Administration of Canyon-Lister Structural Protection Unit (SPU)	y	y	n	n
Recruitment & Training New Members	y	y	y	n/a
Record Keeping & Reporting of Service Provided	y	y	y	n

In cooperation with the RDCK, the Town of Creston is to secure and maintain a lease for a Fire Hall for West Creston—the new Fire Hall was expected to be operational within 18 months of the effective date of January 1, 2015. The Fire Service Agreement with West Creston references that CVFS would be equipping the New Fire Hall with apparatus and equipment. The facility and the apparatus at the West Creston Fire Hall location have not been resolved. Details related to the West Creston Fire Hall are included in the Facilities Section of this report.

The Arrow Creek/Erickson agreement does not include reference to an alternate water supply, the Canyon-Lister SPU, record keeping or reporting. Consideration should be given to standardizing the service delivery for the RDCK contracts, notably record keeping and reporting.

TABLE #29: REGIONAL DISTRICT OBLIGATIONS

	Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister	West Creston	Arrow Creek/Erickson
Support and Fund the Development and Maintenance of Alternate Water Supplies	y	y	y	n
Provision of Certified Fire Apparatus	y	y	n	n/a
Provision of Fire Equipment	y	y	n	n/a
Lease Fire Hall to Town	n/a	y	n/a	n/a
Maintenance of Establishing Bylaws	y	y	y	y
On-going Current Property Data	y	y	y	y
On-going Current Map Data	n	y	y	y
Reasonable Ongoing Assistance by Request, i.e., Recruitment/Retention, Website Updates, Outreach, and Volunteer Recognition Events	y	y	y	n/a
Annual Notification to Residents/Property Owners of FD Contact Information, Services Provided, Maintenance Standard for Access,	y	y	y	y
Negotiations with Property Owners for Site Access, Easements, and Development of Alternate Water Supply	y	y	y	n
Provide Taxation or Borrowing for Capital Projects	y	n	y	n

The obligations that the RDCK has included in the Fire Service Agreements listed above vary. It would be reasonable for the residents and property owners of these areas to expect the same level of service.

The Fire Service Agreements between CVFS and Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, and West Creston are similar in nature due in large part to the existence of fire stations within those areas. An opportunity exists with the expiry of the current agreements, to create one agreement that includes the three areas, and should include Arrow Creek/Erickson as well. A common agreement should support clarity of service delivery expectations, as well support streamlined renegotiation in the future. Opportunity also exists to reconsider the form of

contract—Fire Service Agreement or Extra Territorial Agreement. Moving towards a streamlined “one fire service” model should be considered as a high priority for the value that it would provide in administration, decision-making, and efficiency and effectiveness of operational service delivery.

7.3 Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid Agreements

The CVFS does not have any mutual aid or automatic aid agreements currently.

Recommendations – Section 7

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
36	Standardize the individual contracts for fire service delivery to the RDCK into one common agreement.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Reduce costs of future renegotiation processes.
37	The provision of fire service by CVFS should be standardized into a "one fire service" model.	Short-term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Improve decision-making, program review and continuous improvement programs. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.
38	The RDCK and Town of Creston review, update, and formalize mutual and automatic aid agreements to ensure response alignment, shared resources, and current contact protocols.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)		Regularly updated agreements promote coordinated response efforts, clarify responsibilities, and improve operational interoperability across departments.

Section 8

Emergency Management

SECTION 8: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

8.1 Emergency Management Program

The Canadian approach to emergency management is multi-level, with support from many partners, organizations, and governments. Community members are responsible for their home escape and emergency plan, but also rely on the municipality, regional district, or Indigenous government's emergency management organizations. Further, depending on the scale of the emergency, the province may provide additional support and resources through its Emergency Operations Centre[26] and potentially the federal government[27] on a national level.

To prepare for emergencies and support its community, the Town of Creston has enacted the "Emergency Program Bylaw No. 1960, 2022" to establish an Emergency Management Organization (EMO). The EMO is tasked with developing and implementing Emergency Plans on behalf of the municipality, and also aligns with the Official Community Plan (as amended June 13, 2023):

Prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery are the component parts of an Emergency Management Program (EM Program). Each of the components of EM correlates to a phase during an emergency. A strategic approach to EM planning should be viewed through the lens of a cycle of continuous improvement and have a positive, lasting effect on a community.

8.2 Emergency Management Legislation

In November 2023, the Province of British Columbia adopted a new Modernized Emergency Management Legislation. This new *Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA)*[28] replaces

[26] Province of British Columbia, "Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness," accessed April 2025, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/emergency-management-and-climate-readiness

[27] Government of Canada, "Federal Policy for Emergency Management", accessed April 2025, https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/plc-mrgnc-mngmnt/index-en.aspx#wb-cont

[28] Province of British Columbia, "Emergency Disaster Management Act [SBC 2023] Chapter 37", accessed March 2025, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/23037

the previous *Emergency Program Act [RSBC 1996]*. EDMA includes the direction that local governments undertake a community risk identification process, like previous Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessments (HRVA), but with additional considerations:

- Identify the likelihood of hazards that would lead to emergencies and the potential consequences.
- Include sites of heritage value and people who may be equity denied and disproportionately impacted by effects of emergencies.
- Base risk assessments on studies, surveys, and include available Indigenous and local knowledge.
- Include the effect of climate change on the likelihood that the hazard may result in an emergency and expected impacts.
- The risk assessment should be informed by First Nations culture and knowledge, to support recognition of the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In British Columbia, this risk assessment is referred to as a Disaster Climate Risk Resiliency Assessment (DCRRA)[29].

The DCRRA supports a process that builds government-to-government relationships. The Indigenous Engagement Requirements (IER) Interim Guidance[6] document supports local governments to understand and implement the Indigenous engagement requirements that are required by *EDMA,* supporting the building of relationships through engagement, cooperation, consultation, and coordination.

8.3 Town of Creston Emergency Management Program

The *Emergency Disaster Management Act* requires that an EMO be established by the local authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). The EMO is responsible for providing oversight, leadership, and coordination of EM activities.

[29] Province of British Columbia, "New Emergency and Disaster Management Act - Risk Assessments", accessed March 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlB5UMqxdmQ

The Town of Creston has been providing its own EM Program since 2024, known as Emergency Management Creston. Previous to that, the service was contracted to the RDCK. Providing the service locally enables the municipality to ensure critical infrastructure, such as the wastewater treatment plan, is identified and included in hazard planning and future EM Plans. Providing its own service has allowed for an increase in community resiliency through better communication and education of its community members. The EM Program has its own new information portal em.creston.ca.[30]

The Fire Chief is the head of the EMO. There are two full-time staff members. The staff are responsible as noted in the following table.

TABLE #30: STAFFING OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CRESTON

Position	Responsibility
Emergency Management Director	Management and coordination of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities. Administration, develop and maintain emergency plans, develop and conduct emergency exercises, coordinate training, establish and maintain EOC, maintain public awareness program, liaise with interest and stakeholders. Member of the Emergency Management Planning Committee.
Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Coordinator	Coordination and facilitation of emergency management activities, operation of Emergency Operations Centre, develop and revise Emergency Plans, operate the emergency public information systems, public education, organize emergency training and exercises, and development of policies and procedures. Reports to the Fire Chief.

[30] Emergency Management Creston, "Together We're Ready", accessed April 2025, https://em.creston.ca/

Position	Responsibility
FireSmart and Climate Readiness Coordinator Intern	Developing the FireSmart program including public education, community resilience activities, developing climate and emergency management policies, and supporting mitigation and adaptation strategies to reduce risks from Climate Change. Works together with the Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Coordinator and reports to the Fire Chief.

As per the Town of Creston Emergency Management Bylaw No. 1960, the Creston EMO is comprised of:

- Creston Town Council – Executive Emergency Management Committee
- The Emergency Management Planning Committee, and
- The Emergency Management Director, Manager or Coordinator.

The Bylaw delegates powers and duties to the EM Director, with the exception that Council is responsible for declaring a State of Local Emergency (including rescinding the declaration), and to authorize the use of emergency powers. This 2022 Bylaw should be updated to reference the new *EDMA* instead of the previous *Emergency Program Act*.

As per the Disaster Response Plan 2023, the following table lists some of the hazards that could occur in Creston and the corresponding lead department or agency.

TABLE #31: HAZARDS IDENTIFIED IN DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN 2023

Hazard	Lead Department/Agency
Severe Windstorm	Engineering/Infrastructure Services
Critical Infrastructure Failure (bridges, overpass, reservoirs, pipelines)	Engineering/Infrastructure Services
Flooding	Engineering/Infrastructure Services
Landslides	Engineering/Infrastructure Services
Earthquakes	Engineering/Infrastructure Services

Hazard	Lead Department/Agency
Environmental Spills (other than unknown materials or hazardous chemical spills)	Engineering/Infrastructure Services
Hazardous Chemical Spills or Unknown Materials	Fire Service
Interface Fires	Fire Service
Plane Crash/Air Incident	Fire Service
Mass Casualty or Unfolding Significant Criminal Event	RCMP
Human Disease/Pandemic	Chief Administrator's Office
Technology Failure	Finance & Corporate Services

The hazards identified in the EM Plan are reasonable. However, they were not determined within the new framework of *EDMA*. A comprehensive process needs to be undertaken to complete a Disaster & Climate Risk and Resilience Assessments (DCRRA). A Disaster Risk Reduction Grant for $150,000 through the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund program of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)[8] has been awarded to address this gap, along with an additional allotment of $30,000 from the Town of Creston Council. The new DCRRA is expected to be completed in 2026. The grant covers the hiring of a consultant to develop the risk assessment. This work must be prioritized, completed and align with the EDMA.

Key staffing of the EOC, activation levels and examples of the type of event and minimum staffing required are detailed in the EM Plan. Roles and responsibilities for pre-event, event and post-event are included, as well as a listing of external agencies and relevant organization specific information.

TABLE #32: CRESTON EOC ACTIVATION 2020-2025

Year Activated	Reason
2020	Activated for COVID Pandemic
2021	None
2022	Activation for Extreme Heat/Cooling Centre
2023	Activation for Weather Emergencies Heat/Cold
2024	Two Weather-Related Activations for Heat/Cold
2025	Activation for Weather Emergency (Cold)

Some agency information in Part 6 is missing and should be completed as part of the annual review—Creston Air Search and Rescue, Creston Valley Airport Society, Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce, other volunteer organizations, School District 8.

The EM Plan is considered to be "a dynamic living document" requiring regular review and update. Training and exercising is integral to the planning and preparedness processes. Training includes on-the-job orientation, seminars and drills. A training matrix of online courses has been developed for staff. Beginning in 2025, in-person EM training will be occurring annually, along with cultural awareness training.

The EM Plan details that the Creston Emergency Response Plan will be exercised on an annual basis in order to validate its contents. The revision history listed in Appendix E of the plan reflects that new plans/binders were issued to EM Plan holders by the Town Manager in August 2023. Review and update of the EM Plan should occur after each activation and exercise.

Staff training is planned for 2025 including a tabletop exercise, and a three-day EOC activation exercise. EM Plans for specific hazards are not complete but will be identified and prioritized after the DCRRA has been completed. Relationships continue to be built with stakeholders, including the Lower Kootenay Band (LKB).

The future of EM Planning is in line with industry best practices.[9] Designing and implementing an EM Program is being approached strategically, as depicted in the table below.

TABLE #33: ELEMENTS OF A HIGH-QUALITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Preparedness		Progress
1	Emergency Manager	Yes
2	Program Committee	Yes
3	Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	In Progress
4	Emergency Response Plan (All Hazards Plan)	Yes
5	Plan Review	In Progress
6	Emergency Management Bylaw	Yes
7	Training	In Progress
8	Exercises	In Progress
9	Mutual Aid Agreement	No
10	Critical Infrastructure Protection	In Progress
11	Planning for People with Special Needs	In Progress
12	Engagement with Business Community	In Progress
Mitigation		**Progress**
13	Mitigation Plan	No
14	Warning System	In Progress
15	Public Education	In Progress
16	Dangerous Goods Routing Bylaw	No
17	Risk-Based Land-Use Planning	No
Response		**Progress**
18	Emergency Operations Centre	Yes
19	Incident Management System	Yes
20	Evacuation Planning	No
21	Emergency Shelter Arrangements	No
22	Volunteer Management	No
23	Community Emergency Response Teams	In Progress
24	Search and Rescue	No
25	Emergency Public Information	In Progress

Recovery		Progress
26	Recovery Plan	No
27	Continuity of Operations Planning	No
28	Damage Assessment	No
29	Debris Management	No
30	Rehabilitation	No

8.3.1 Emergency Management in the Creston Valley

The Town of Creston, in their OCP, acknowledges the importance of communication, cooperation, and collaboration amongst individuals, community groups, businesses and local government through building a sense of community throughout the Creston Valley.[10] In particular, there is recognition of policies for collaboration including:

- Working with the LKB on shared pursuit of reconciliation and relationship building.
- Continued cooperation and collaboration with adjacent local governments and stakeholders.

The Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK) operates its own regional EM Program that includes the primarily residential areas of Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, and Arrow Creek/Erickson. The RDCK EOC is located in Nelson and is considered to be a tertiary EOC location for the Town of Creston. There is not currently a desire to contract these EM Program services to the Town of Creston.

The LKB also operates its own EM Program. Both the RDCK and the LKB are reported to be engaged in updating their own risk assessments.

TABLE #34: CRESTON EOC LOCATIONS

EOC	Location	Post Disaster	Backup Power
Town of Creston Primary EOC	Creston Emergency Services Building 1505 Cook Street, Creston	Yes	Yes
Town of Creston Secondary EOC	Town Hall – Kaminoho Room 238 10th Avenue North, Creston	No	Yes
Regional Support EOC Tertiary	RDCK Emergency Operations Centre 333 Victoria Street, Suite 103, Nelson	Yes	Yes

A framework for Multijurisdictional Emergency Management Organizations (MJEMO)[31] is identified in *EDMA* to support cross-jurisdictional collaboration. This could include municipalities, regional districts, and Indigenous governing bodies. The benefit of an MJEMO is a holistic approach to community emergency management, working collaboratively through all phases of an emergency. If an MJEMO exists, those individual jurisdictions do not require individual EMOs.

The Town of Creston has been collaborating with the LKB on numerous FireSmart projects. The LKB has been invited to attend and collaborate with the EM Program Committee, with the expectation that they will become a member of the Committee. An example of consultation with the LKB relates to hydrology knowledge of the Lands.

Another area of collaboration with the LKB is as part of the ¢uku kqa·¢in (tsu ku ka tsin) which is the name for the prescribed and cultural fire committee. The ¢uku kqa·¢in is formed as a yaqan nu?kiy led initiative to bring fire back the Land. Members include: LKB, local industry, BC Wildfire, BC's Wildfire Risk Reduction, RDCK, the Town of Creston, Wildlife Management Area, and Creston Community Forestry Group. Planning is underway to train members to conduct prescribed burns as a team and identify areas of priority.

Large scale emergencies and disasters are rarely a localized event. Instead, major emergencies could potentially affect both the RDCK, the Town of Creston and the LKB. Looking at risk from a regional perspective is an industry best practice. There currently is no regional risk assessment. Consideration should be given to formalizing collaborative EM Program Management and conducting a regional risk assessment.

Emergency Social Services (ESS) are managed and provided by the RDCK. ESS utilizes a pool of community volunteers who are trained to response and support victims and those in need during an emergency. The Town of Creston has contracted the RDCK to provide ESS services. There is a challenge with obtaining ESS if the RDCK is already providing service and has depleted the ESS resources. The RDCK covers a large area, and a large-scale emergency could require a great deal of resources, potentially leaving no resources available for the Town of Creston.

[31] Province of British Columbia, "Multijurisdictional Emergency Management Organizations", accessed March 2025, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/legislation/fs-mjemo.pdf

The Town of Creston is aware of this potential service gap and the need to provide its own ESS in the future. The EM Program is currently building is structural foundation and prioritizing its actions. It is conceivable that this service would be provided locally in the next four to seven years.

8.4 FireSmart

FireSmart BC[32] is a provincial initiative reported to reduce the risks of wildfires to homes, communities, and forests. Scientific evidence supports that applying the principles of FireSmart to approaches to how the built environment is designed, the materials that are used, landscaping choices, personal behaviour on properties and more, increases the survivability of a home during a wildfire event.

The seven disciplines of FireSmart include: legislation and planning, education, development considerations, vegetation management, emergency planning, training, and inter-agency cooperation. Grants are available for fire departments to undertake projects and deliver programs related to the disciplines.

In 2022-2023, the Town of Creston was successful with its first FireSmart grant through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Again in 2024-2025. The Grant monies have funded many FireSmart Program initiatives, training opportunities, as well as an update to the Community Wildfire Resiliency Program in 2024.

The FireSmart Program that Emergency Management Creston delivers includes the organization of a Wildfire Preparedness Day in partnership with BC Wildfire, BC Wildfire's Risk Reduction Team, and the Creston Community Forest Group. Demonstrations and information sessions are planned around the community to share information about the Home Assessment Program. The Home Assessment Program has been rapidly increasing in popularity. Wildfire Mitigation Specialists support home Assessments and include two trained Fire Service Support Supervisors delivering Home Assessments. Educational materials have been prepared for classroom presentations and home assessment flyers. In partnership with the LKB, a new 2025 tree planting guideline is being prepared that includes recommendations on fire-resistive native species as well as information on invasive species. A consultant was also hired to perform fuel management.

[32] FireSmart BC,"What is FireSmart", accessed April 2025, https://firesmartbc.ca/what-is-firesmart/

The FireSmart Coordinator position is partially funded by the CRI Grant. Funding should be available for the next few years. The future long-term funding through the CRI Grant is unknown. A contingency plan needs to be determined to ensure that this important position is maintained.

8.5 Emergency Management Budget and Financial Implications

The 2025 operating budget for the EM Program is $242,472.00. It is reported that the current budget together with the grants is sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the EM Program. However, there currently is no budget to support either response or recovery from an emergency. Currently the option would be to use the general operating budget, or to use reserve funds. While the Province of British Columbia may provide financial support if a State of Local Emergency is declared, a contingency budget should be developed for response and recovery operations.

TABLE #35: ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET 2021-2025

Year	Emergency Management Program Operating Budget	Fire Department Operating Budget	Percent Of Overall Fire Department Budget
2021	*RDCK $70,000	$1,299,000	5.4
2022	*RDCK $70,000	$1,284,000	5.4
2023	*RDCK $70,000	$1,339,000	5.2
2024	$113,873	$1,565,000	7.3
2025	$242,472	$1,518,000	16.0

The Town of Creston was part of the RDCK EM Program until 2023, with approximately $70,000 being collected from taxpayers for this purpose. Those funds are still collected by the RDCK and as of 2024 are submitted to the Town of Creston for their own EM Program. The operational budget increase from 2024 to 2025 is due in large part to receiving an EM grant.

Since 2024, the Town of Creston has operated its own EMO. Emergency Management Creston has its own staff and its own line items in the Creston Valley Fire Services Operating Budget. Emergency Social Services (ESS) are contracted to the RDCK at a cost of approximately $10,000 to $15,000 annually.

The Town of Creston has been successful with grant applications in the past. Funding has been received for the FireSmart Program, including the installation of a backup generator at the reception centre, fuel mitigation, and a consultant to prepare a new risk assessment. A current application submission is in process for emergency operations centre equipment, training and exercising.

This section has provided a review of the present status of Emergency Management Creston, best practices in the industry, legislative impacts, along with suggestions for improvements. Assessments and improvements are ongoing, including a new risk assessment which will inform foundational EM Program documents, policy, bylaws, educational materials, as well as training and exercising. The following recommendations align with Emergency Management Creston's approach to the EM Program through a lens of continuous improvement.

Recommendations – Section 8

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
39	Update Town of Creston Emergency Management Bylaw No. 1960, 2022 and the Disaster Response Plan 2023 to reference and align with the new Province of BC *Emergency Disaster Management Act*.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	There is new provincial legislation. EM Bylaws and EM Plans should be part of an annual review. Agency information in Part 6 is incomplete. EM Plans should be updated, and a record kept after each exercise and/or activation.
40	Update risk assessment to align with the Disaster Climate Risk Resiliency Assessment methodology.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Requirement of the *Emergency Disaster Management Act*. Supports reconciliation with the Lower Kootenay Band. Grant funding has been accepted.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
41	Develop a regional risk assessment for the Creston Valley, and a collaborative framework for emergency management programming.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Supported by the *Emergency Disaster Management Act*. Provides streamlined and standardized service across an affected area. Supports reconciliation with the Lower Kootenay Band.
42	Review and update operating budget for Emergency Management Creston.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Provide funding for response and recovery operations via a contingency fund. Consideration for backup plan for funding FireSmart Coordinator position if Grant funding becomes unavailable.
43	Provide Emergency Social Services for the Town of Creston.	Mid-term (4 to 6 years)	Staff Time	Component part of an Emergency Management Program. Potential gap with service capacity for regional events.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
44	The Town of Creston and RDCK should develop a unified Emergency Management Plan that formally integrates CVFS into regional disaster response strategies.	Short Term (1-3 years)	Staff Time	An integrated plan ensures CVFS is effectively deployed during disasters and aligns emergency response roles with local and provincial expectations.
45	CVFS should expand FireSmart engagement through public workshops, property assessments, and annual community fuel mitigation targets.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Enhanced FireSmart activities reduce wildfire risk, improve community resilience, and support grant eligibility through the CRI program.

Section 9

Finance, Budgeting, Fees, & Capital Investment Plan

SECTION 9: FINANCE, BUDGETING, AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

9.1 Operating and Capital Budgets

The current financial management structure of the CVFS requires separate budget coding and expense tracking for each fire hall (Creston, West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister). Operational budgets are managed by the Fire Chief, while capital expenditures are governed by the RDCK. This has created a disconnect in authority and administrative efficiency.

Although the Fire Chief is responsible for overseeing CVFS operations valley-wide, the current budget structure creates unnecessary administrative complexity. While Creston and West Creston operate under a blended budget with internal coding, Canyon-Lister and Wynndel-Lakeview maintain fully separate budgets for wages, operations, and equipment. To manage shared costs, such as firefighter PPE, training, and wages, the administrative team must manually divide expenses across three distinct budgets using multiple GL codes. This process is estimated to consume approximately 2.5 days each month, or 30 days annually, placing a significant burden on staff time and complicating financial planning. While the structure supports area-specific tracking, it comes at the cost of efficiency and highlights the need for a more unified coding system that still allows the RDCK to maintain financial transparency without overcomplicating day-to-day operations.

An alternative approach to explore for improved financial efficiency and reduce administrative workload is to adopt a lump sum operating contribution model. Under this model, each participating service area, West Creston, Wynndel-Lakeview, and Canyon-Lister would provide an annual lump sum to the Town of Creston or the consolidated CVFS. These contributions would be established during the annual budget planning process, informed by historical spending, projected service needs, and inflationary factors.

The RDCK currently administers 16 separate fire protection services, including six through municipal contracts and one with a neighbouring regional district. The remaining 11 services operate across 17 fire halls. Adding to this complexity, the Town of Creston uses a different system for coding expenditures than the RDCK, which can create additional layers of reconciliation and reporting. By providing the Town of Creston with a lump-sum operating budget for CVFS, the Town would be empowered to manage its own financial coding and operational expenditures through a consolidated budget. This shift would not only streamline day-to-day financial administration but also reduce the workload currently placed on the RDCK

Regional Fire Chief and staff. Importantly, it would allow the RDCK to focus more directly on the departments it directly oversees, while easing operational oversight of the West Creston, Canyon-Lister, and Wynndel-Lakeview fire halls to the Town of Creston. Financial transparency and service-level accountability could still be maintained through internal sub-coding or reporting mechanisms, ensuring oversight for the RDCK.

Internal tagging or sub-coding is a simple way to track where money is being spent without having to create separate budgets for each fire hall. It works by adding a label to each expense, like a note that says, "this was for Wynndel-Lakeview" or "this expense relates to Canyon-Lister training.

Instead of setting up separate accounts for each fire hall, all training supplies could be recorded under one main account code. When the administration team enters a training-related expense, they simply attach a small tag, like "WYN" for Wynndel or "CLC" for Canyon-Lister. These tags do not change how the budget is managed day-to-day, but they allow the financial software to sort and report expenses by service area when needed. This keeps reporting clear for the RDCK while simplifying internal budget management. These tags allow staff to group and report expenses by location while still working from one consolidated budget. For example, one main account code would exist for, "Training Supplies", when administration would record a training invoice, they would apply a tag or sub-code like:

Wynndel-Lakeview	Canyon-Lister
TRN-240-WYN	TRN-240-CLC

Using internal tagging offers several practical benefits. It reduces complexity for staff by eliminating the need to manually divide invoices across multiple account codes. At the same time, it maintains transparency by allowing the RDCK to clearly see how funds are being used in each service area. With one central budget to manage, the system becomes easier to administer while still providing detailed reporting when needed.

To improve responsiveness and reduce delays in addressing facility and equipment needs through the capital budget, a practical approach would be to grant the Fire Chief limited authority to approve capital repairs and replacements up to a defined threshold, such as $10,000. Given that the Fire Chief already manages capital responsibilities for the Creston Fire Department, the Fire Chief is well positioned to assess priorities and make timely, informed decisions about the use of capital funds. Extending this same level of delegated authority across the shared CVFS capital budget would help streamline routine decision-making and

ensure operational accountability is more closely aligned with financial control, especially for smaller, time-sensitive projects.

As the CVFS continues to operate as an integrated regional model, it is important to acknowledge that both the RDCK and the Town of Creston have established financial policies and procedures that govern budget development, approval, and oversight. Within this context, it is recommended that both parties engage in focused discussions aimed at strengthening coordination on operating and capital budgets. These discussions should not only address administrative efficiencies such as the current coding structure, but also consider long-term financial planning, including strategies for managing cost escalation related to apparatus, equipment, and facility upgrades.

The current financial structure, which separates operating and capital budgets and places them under different levels of control, has become increasingly difficult to manage within a single, integrated fire service. The CVFS, now just over two and a half years into operating under this regional model, is experiencing natural growing pains as it transitions from individually managed departments to a unified valley-wide system. Administrative demands have increased, with staff spending significant time navigating separate budget processes, while capital requests are often delayed due to the Fire Chief's limited authority over smaller, time-sensitive needs. These challenges are expected for a young regional service, and they present an opportunity for both the Town of Creston and the RDCK to explore collaborative solutions that improve efficiency, streamline financial oversight, and better support long-term sustainability.

Given the increasing cost of fire service delivery and the capital-intensive nature of fire department assets, a proactive and collaborative governance model is essential to ensuring long-term sustainability. By fostering open dialogue and joint planning between all partners, the CVFS can strengthen its ability to deliver services that are cost-effective, responsive, and reflective of the needs of all electoral districts and operational areas. Establishing a shared forum for regular communication and strategic alignment will support stronger decision-making, enhance transparency, and ensure that both operational and capital priorities are anticipated and appropriately resourced. Most importantly, this approach creates the foundation for realizing the full benefits of a regional fire service, which is greater efficiency, consistency, and shared responsibility, while supporting a unified vision for fire protection across the Creston Valley.

Underlying many of the financial challenges outlined above is the need for a more cohesive and communicative governance structure, one that ensures operational leadership has a direct line to the decision-makers responsible for funding approvals and long-term planning. Financial management can be viewed as less about which organization holds the funds and more about

fostering open, consistent communication between all parties involved so the funds are readily available.

9.1.1 Grants and External Funding

To support long-term sustainability and strategic growth, the CVFS should continue its proactive pursuit of external funding opportunities, including provincial and federal grants. CVFS has already demonstrated leadership in this area, having successfully secured funding for critical initiatives that advance operational capabilities and community resilience. Notable examples include grants obtained through the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program, the Columbia Basin Trust – Community Readiness Program, and the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund. These funds have supported a wide range of projects such as FireSmart initiatives, disaster risk assessments, fuel mitigation efforts, backup power infrastructure, and Emergency Operations Centre enhancements.

This track record of securing financial support has not only enhanced CVFS's service delivery but also helped to offset local taxation, reinforcing its commitment to both operational excellence and fiscal responsibility. Continuing to build on this success will be essential as the service evolves and new capital and programmatic needs emerge.

Continued success in this area will require proactive planning, alignment with community safety goals, and readiness to meet application requirements as new programs become available.

9.1.2 Capital Budget Planning and Reserves

Fire apparatus represents one of the most substantial and essential capital investments for any fire department. Unlike smaller operational expenses, apparatus such as engines, aerials, and tenders carry high upfront acquisition costs, more commonly today exceeding $1 million for a pumper while $2.5-3 million for an aerial. These vehicles are not only central to frontline emergency response but also form the foundation of a community's fire protection capability and insurance grading.[33] Because of their cost, complexity, and replacement cycle[34], apparatus

[33] NFPA 1901 Appendix D-1: NFPA 1901 Appendix D-1: It is recommended that apparatus more than 15 years old that have been properly maintained and that are still in serviceable condition be placed in reserve status; be upgraded in accordance with NFPA 1912; and incorporate as many features as possible of the current fire apparatus standard

[34] The Fire Underwriters Technical Bulletin "Insurance Grading Recognition of Used or Rebuilt Fire Apparatus" identifies for a medium sized city that there is no credit in grading or reserve status for apparatus exceeding 20 years. Exceptions to age status may

planning must be integrated into long-term financial strategies and asset management frameworks. The U.S. Fire Administration and NFPA 1901[35] have consistently recognized apparatus procurement as one of the most financially significant components of fire department capital planning, requiring careful forecasting, preventative maintenance, and often, multiyear funding models. When not properly planned for, apparatus replacement can strain municipal budgets and delay critical equipment upgrades, putting operational readiness and firefighter safety at risk.

The cost of replacing fire apparatus has increased exponentially in recent years, placing added pressure on municipal budgets and long-term capital planning. Even prior to the introduction of recent international tariffs on fire trucks and components, fire departments across Canada have faced steep price escalations due to inflation, supply chain constraints, rising material costs, and evolving safety and performance standards. A clear example of this trend is Ladder 21, currently listed in the replacement plan at an estimated cost of $600,000. In today's market, however, the actual replacement cost of a comparable aerial apparatus would range from $2.5-3 million, representing more than a threefold increase. This disparity highlights the urgent need for updated asset valuations and forward-looking financial strategies that reflect the true cost of modern fire apparatus acquisition.

The Need for Collaborative and Realistic Capital Planning

The current apparatus replacement plan, while developed with good intentions, no longer aligns with the financial realities of today's fire service environment. Continuing to plan based on outdated figures exposes the service to future financial strain and risks compromising operational readiness when aging equipment must be replaced. To ensure service continuity and maintain a safe, modern fleet, CVFS must transition to a capital planning approach grounded in current, validated cost projections.

Equally important is the need for a collaborative governance model that brings all stakeholders, the Town of Creston, RDCK, and other participating partners to the table with a shared understanding of long-term capital responsibilities. A new governance structure would promote transparency, joint accountability, and informed financial decision-making, ensuring that the true cost of sustaining valley-wide fire protection is fully understood and supported across

---

be considered in a small to medium sized communities and rural centres conditionally, when apparatus condition is acceptable and apparatus successfully passes required testing

[35] NFPA 1901 Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus

jurisdictions. Strategic capital planning is not simply a budget exercise; it is a shared commitment to the safety, resilience, and sustainability of the communities served by the CVFS.

A modernized governance model provides the platform to turn that commitment into action. It also creates the conditions for the CVFS to strategically plan apparatus procurement across all halls, ensuring that purchases meet operational needs while promoting standardization, compatibility, and long-term cost efficiency across the fleet. A coordinated approach reduces duplication, simplifies training and maintenance, and strengthens the department's ability to respond cohesively across the region.

9.1.3 RDCK Fire Service Tax Rates and Implications for CVFS

The Regional District of Central Kootenay employs distinct tax rates for each electoral area, particularly concerning fire protection services. These rates are determined based on the specific services provided within each area and the associated costs. Fire protection services in the RDCK are funded through local service areas, each with its own taxation requisition. These variations reflect the differing costs and service levels in each area.

In 2024, the RDCK sought electoral approval to increase the taxation limit for the West Creston Fire Protection Service, indicating ongoing adjustments to meet service demands. The West Creston Fire Protection Service referendum held on September 14, 2024, resulted in the rejection of both proposed bylaws.

These differences underscore the RDCK's approach to tailoring tax rates based on the unique needs and services of each electoral area. Given this structure, it is crucial for the CVFS planning to consider the specific financial frameworks of each area. Understanding the distinct taxation models can aid in developing equitable and sustainable funding strategies for fire protection services across the RDCK.

During stakeholder discussions, a few participants expressed concern regarding the perceived differences in fire protection taxation rates across the electoral areas served by the CVFS. While each local service area has historically determined its level of participation and funding through community-based decisions, the resulting variation in tax rates can create the impression of inequity, particularly when similar levels of fire response are provided across jurisdictions.

It is important to recognize that the RDCK's service-based taxation model is designed to reflect the unique needs, infrastructure, and service agreements of each area. However, as the region continues to collaborate on fire protection delivery, there may be value in exploring

opportunities to understand how costs are shared. Over time, this could support broader discussions around fairness, sustainability, and regional consistency in funding models, while continuing to respect local autonomy and historical agreements.

Recommendations – Section 9

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
46	The RDCK should work with the Town of Creston and CVFS partners to implement a lump sum operating contribution model, allowing each participating fire service area to contribute annually based on projected needs, while enabling consolidated financial administration under the CVFS umbrella.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff time	A lump sum contribution model simplifies financial administration, reduces staff workload, and enables more efficient and responsive budgeting while still allowing for transparent tracking of service area contributions and expenditures.
47	CVFS should adopt a unified budget structure with internal sub-coding or tagging for service areas (e.g., WYN for Wynndel-Lakeview, CLC for Canyon-Lister) to streamline expense tracking, reduce administrative workload, and maintain financial transparency without the complexity of managing multiple separate budgets.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Internal sub-coding allows CVFS to maintain clear, service-area-specific financial reporting while significantly reducing administrative complexity and improving day-to-day efficiency in budget management.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
48	To improve responsiveness and reduce delays, the RDCK should delegate limited capital spending authority to the CVFS Fire Chief (e.g., up to $10,000) for urgent repairs and equipment replacements, ensuring timely decision-making aligned with operational priorities.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Granting the Fire Chief limited capital spending authority enables timely responses to urgent operational needs, reduces delays caused by approval bottlenecks, and ensures frontline priorities are addressed efficiently within defined financial controls.
49	The Town of Creston and the RDCK should establish a collaborative governance framework to jointly plan and fund capital expenditures, including apparatus replacement based on updated market values, ensuring long-term sustainability and a shared understanding of financial responsibilities across the region.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A collaborative governance framework fosters shared accountability, improves long-term financial planning, and ensures that capital investments such as apparatus replacement are based on current market realities and equitably supported across all participating jurisdictions.

Section 10

Concept Proposal for Establishing a Fire Advisory Board for the CVFS

SECTION 10: CONCEPT PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A FIRE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEEFOR THE CVFS

10.1 Background on RDCK and CVFS

Incorporated in 1965, the RDCK is a local government that serves an estimated population of 60,000 residents across 11 electoral areas (A through K) and nine member municipalities: Castlegar, Creston, Kaslo, Nakusp, Nelson, New Denver, Salmo, Silverton, and Slocan. Governance decisions related to services, bylaws, and financial planning are made by the RDCK Board of Directors, with advisory committees typically established under Section 85 of the *Local Government Act* through Board resolution.

Within this structure, the CVFS provides fire protection services to Electoral Areas A, B, and C, as well as surrounding communities. As part of the scope defined in the Request for Proposals this FMP includes recommendations aimed at identifying opportunities for improved efficiency and long-term sustainability in fire service delivery.

This section introduces a proposed Fire Services Advisory Committee specific to the CVFS. The governance model is presented as a constructive and localized mechanism to enhance strategic coordination, operational oversight, and community engagement. The Advisory Committee would serve as a forum for providing informed input to the Town of Creston Council and the Regional District Board on matters such as service delivery, capital investment, and risk reduction, ensuring that decisions reflect both regional priorities and the unique operational realities of the Creston Valley.

Current Reality

Currently, the RDCK Board of Directors has ultimate authority over fire protection services, including budget approval, service agreements, and major capital projects within the regional district. In contrast, the Creston Fire can provide a report to the Creston Valley Services Committee to update the committee on operations.

The prolonged and unresolved situation involving the West Creston Fire Hall has highlighted systemic gaps in the governance and planning model for CVFS. Operational decisions have been made without formal, consistent input from fire service professionals and local stakeholders.

This has contributed to a stalled infrastructure project, safety concerns, and growing frustration among volunteers and the community.

A recent region-wide initiative to install diesel exhaust extraction systems in RDCK fire halls has highlighted the importance of clear communication, coordinated planning, and input from fire department leadership. While diesel extractors were purchased with the intent of enhancing firefighter safety across all departments, structural assessments were not completed in advance to confirm installation feasibility. As a result, some halls, such as Wynndel-Lakeview, have seen successful installations, while others, like Canyon-Lister, are awaiting engineering evaluations. This experience highlights the importance of a more integrated approach to project planning and execution, where a Fire Services Advisory Committee can provide meaningful support through early collaboration, local expertise, and shared oversight.

10.2 Fire Services Advisory Committee Objectives

Currently, the Creston Valley Services Committee (CVSC) acts as an advisory and decision-making body for budget planning, capital priorities, and service delivery within its mandate areas. The proposed Fire Services Advisory Committee would create an additional layer reporting to the CVSC, with the purpose of being solely focused on fire services operations.

The Fire Services Advisory Committee would play a valuable role in providing both operational insight and strategic guidance specific to the CVSC, RDCK staff and the Town of Creston. By participating in the evaluation of capital investment priorities, the committee could help ensure that funding decisions are aligned with service delivery goals and long-term infrastructure needs. It would also contribute to the development and review of operational budgets, offering recommendations that support financial sustainability while maintaining core service levels. Additionally, the committee could assist in reviewing service agreements, feasibility studies, and risk assessments, providing local context and expertise to support informed decision-making. Furthermore, its presence would also help strengthen communication and collaboration among RDCK staff, the Town of Creston, elected officials, and the broader public. Ultimately, the Fire Services Advisory Committee and the Town of Creston and the RDCK would enhance long-term fire service planning by ensuring it reflects the specific needs and evolving priorities of the Creston Valley region.

The Fire Services Advisory Committee would draw upon the expertise of both the RDCK Fire Chief and the Town of Creston Fire Chief, who would serve in a non-voting, advisory capacity. Their role would be to provide professional input and prepare reports on operational and financial matters, ensuring the committee has access to accurate and informed guidance. To

maintain objectivity and avoid any potential conflict of interest, neither Fire Chief would serve as a formal member of the committee. The Fire Services Advisory Committee would report to the Town of Creston, while the Creston Valley Services Committee (CVSC) would report to the RDCK.

10.3 Proposed Fire Services Advisory Committee Composition

- 1 Representative from each of Electoral Areas A, B, and C.
- 1 Representative from the RDCK administration
- 1 Representative from the Town of Creston.
- 1 Member with expertise in fire service operations from the Town of Creston.
- 2 Elected Officials from Town of Creston
- 1 Chair-Agreed to by both the RDCK and the Town of Creston

Representation on the board will be balanced among Electoral Areas A, B, and C and the Town of Creston to ensure equitable participation and shared accountability.

10.4 Authority and Scope

The Fire Services Advisory Committee will function solely in an advisory capacity, offering structured input to support informed decision-making. While it will not hold any direct budgetary or operational authority, the Committee will provide formal recommendations to the Creston Valley Services Committee, RDCK Board of Directors and Town Council through written reports and committee presentations. Operating under the authority of the Town of Creston municipal council, the Fire Services Advisory Committee will maintain a clear reporting relationship to the Regional District Board, ensuring that its contributions remain transparent, constructive, and within the scope of its mandate.

10.5 Advisory Committee Voting Procedures

The Fire Services Advisory Committee will discuss various items, and then those items will be voted on to determine which ones are recommended or carried forward to the Regional District Board of Directors for further action or approval. This process ensures that the Fire Advisory Committee's and Town Council’s recommendations are formally acknowledged and evaluated

by the Board of Directors and Council. The advisory board's role is typically to provide guidance and make recommendations, but the final decisions and approvals rest with the Regional District Board of Directors and the Town of Creston Council.

- Voting Rights

  Each Committee member is entitled to one vote on all matters brought before the Committee during a meeting. Voting shall be conducted in a manner that ensures clarity and fairness.

- Quorum Requirement

  A quorum shall consist of five Committee members required to be present for a vote to be valid. If a quorum is not present, no official vote shall be taken.

- Voting Process

  Votes shall generally be conducted by a show of hands or a verbal agreement unless any Committee member requests a secret ballot.

  The Chairperson will ask for all members in favour, opposed, or abstaining for each motion. If a motion requires a vote by secret ballot, the Committee will make arrangements for the ballots to be distributed, completed, and collected.

  If a vote is tied, the Chairperson shall have the casting vote to break the tie.

- Types of Voting

  Regular Voting: For routine matters, a simple majority (more than half of the votes cast) shall decide the outcome.

  Electronic Voting: In cases where a committee meeting cannot be held in person, electronic voting can be utilized. A motion may be approved by a majority of members responding electronically. All members must be given sufficient time to respond, and the Committee must establish a clear deadline for voting.

- Abstentions and Conflicts of Interest

  Committee members with a declared conflict of interest related to a vote shall recuse themselves from voting on the issue. Abstentions are allowed but shall not count towards the final tally of votes.

10.6 Advisory Committee Reporting Procedures

- Committee Meeting Minutes

  Minutes of each Fire Services Advisory Committee meeting will be recorded by the designated Secretary or Recorder and will document all motions, decisions, and voting outcomes. Draft minutes will be circulated to all Committee members within 14 days following each meeting, allowing members a seven-day window to submit any corrections or amendments. Once the Committee formally approves the minutes, they will be made available through the designated access point or distributed via established communication channels to ensure transparency and continuity of information.

- Annual Report

  At the end of each year an annual report shall be prepared and presented by the Fire Services Advisory Committee to the Regional District Board of Directors and the Town of Creston. This report will summarize the activities of the Committee, the status of ongoing CVFS projects, key decisions made and future goals. The annual report will be made available to the public.

- Regular Progress Updates

  Committee members assigned to specific projects shall report back to the Fire Services Advisory Committee during each meeting on the progress made and any issues requiring attention. These reports should be concise and focused on outcomes or challenges that need decision-making or input from the Committee.

- Special Reports and Emergency Sessions

  In the event of urgent matters that require immediate attention, the Committee Chairperson may call a special meeting. During such meetings, reports may be provided

by the relevant staff or committee members who are directly involved in the matter. A summary of the situation and any recommendations should be provided to all Committee members ahead of the meeting.

- Communication with Stakeholders

  The Committee shall designate a primary spokesperson for all external communication. This individual will ensure that all Committee decisions and activities are communicated consistently and professionally to external stakeholders (e.g., the public, government officials, or community partners).

10.7 Proposed Advisory Committee Meeting Frequency

Meetings will be held quarterly or additional meetings as needed, based on emerging issues or planning timelines.

10.8 Benefits

Establishing a Fire Services Advisory Committee offers several key benefits for the CVFS. Chief among them is improved communication both within the fire service and between stakeholders, elected officials, and the RDCK. The Advisory Committee would strengthen governance and enhance decision-making by creating a formal, structured mechanism for operational insight to be considered alongside political direction. This improved alignment between frontline realities and leadership priorities would help ensure that decisions are both informed and responsive. By incorporating consistent stakeholder input, the Committee would also increase transparency, foster public trust, and create a reliable forum for dialogue on complex issues such as fire service delivery, infrastructure planning, and budget management. Ultimately, the Advisory Committee would promote a more collaborative and forward-thinking approach to fire service governance in the Creston Valley.

10.8.1 Regional Governance Model Aligned with Financial Stewardship

A revised governance model that enables regular, structured dialogue between the Town of Creston, the RDCK, and CVFS leadership would create the conditions necessary for informed, timely, and coordinated financial planning. This model would be grounded in transparency,

shared accountability, and a mutual understanding of operational realities, fiscal constraints, and long-range capital priorities.

In a regional fire service model like the CVFS, equitable service delivery must be balanced with fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability. While individual electoral areas may differ in population, fire risk, or call volume, fire protection remains a shared public good. It's true value lies not in how often it is used, but in the capacity to respond when it matters most.

Concerns around tax equity are common in regional models, particularly when some areas perceive they contribute more than others. However, these concerns must be weighed against the broader benefits of collective resilience. Just as residents in urban settings collectively support policing services regardless of individual crime rates, fire protection depends on shared investment to ensure consistent readiness across all communities.

A Fire Services Advisory Committee can also play a vital role in helping educate the public on these realities. By fostering ongoing dialogue and promoting a clear understanding of how regional fire services operate, the Committee can support informed conversations around cost-sharing, service levels, and the principles of mutual benefit. Public engagement at this level helps reinforce that regional models are not only about efficiency, but also about equity, collaboration, and the strength of collective preparedness.

To this end, the CVFS must retain the operational flexibility to move apparatus and resources as needed across the service area. Whether due to seasonal risk, shifting call volumes, or regional growth, this flexibility ensures assets are aligned with demand, supports effective risk management, and reinforces CVFS's ability to deliver a high-performing and cost-effective service.

Fire services operate on the principle of preparedness. While residents may never need to call for emergency assistance, they expect a trained and equipped crew to respond without hesitation, regardless of municipal or electoral boundaries. A regionally minded approach ensures that all communities benefit from reliable coverage, coordinated automatic and mutual aid, and a consistent level of service.

Looking ahead, a regional perspective must guide decision-making, one that recognizes interdependence, values efficiency, and ensures that no area is left vulnerable due to fragmented or isolated planning. Establishing a shared governance model or a dedicated planning forum will enable proactive dialogue, facilitate timely decisions, and foster stronger collaboration across jurisdictions. Investing in shared fire services is not just about fairness; it is a strategic commitment to public safety, operational resilience, and long-term value and

sustainability for all residents. Ultimately, effective governance is about building the relationships and communication structures that empower a unified fire service, such as the CVFS, to thrive.

10.9 Advisory Committee Critical Next Steps

The current governance model for the CVFS, while established within the RDCK's legal framework, lacks a structured mechanism for integrating local operational input, collaborative planning, and timely stakeholder engagement. Recent challenges, such as the unresolved West Creston Fire Hall issue and the inconsistent implementation of diesel exhaust systems, have underscored the limitations of making decisions without consistent input from fire service professionals and local representatives. These governance gaps have contributed to project delays, operational inefficiencies, and growing community frustration.

Adding to this urgency is the operational need for an updated pumper truck at the West Creston Fire Hall. It remains unclear whether the RDCK will invest in a new apparatus or seek a used replacement. This type of decision, which has long-term financial and service implications, further highlights the importance of informed and coordinated capital planning.

A Fire Services Advisory Committee offers a proactive solution. By bringing together the RDCK, Town of Creston, Fire Chiefs, elected officials, and local area representatives, the board would provide balanced, community-informed input into critical decisions. It would ensure that operational needs, such as apparatus replacement are aligned with capital planning and service delivery priorities. More broadly, it would create a formal structure where political oversight and frontline expertise work in tandem, improving communication, fostering transparency, and strengthening public trust in the governance of fire protection services throughout the Creston Valley.

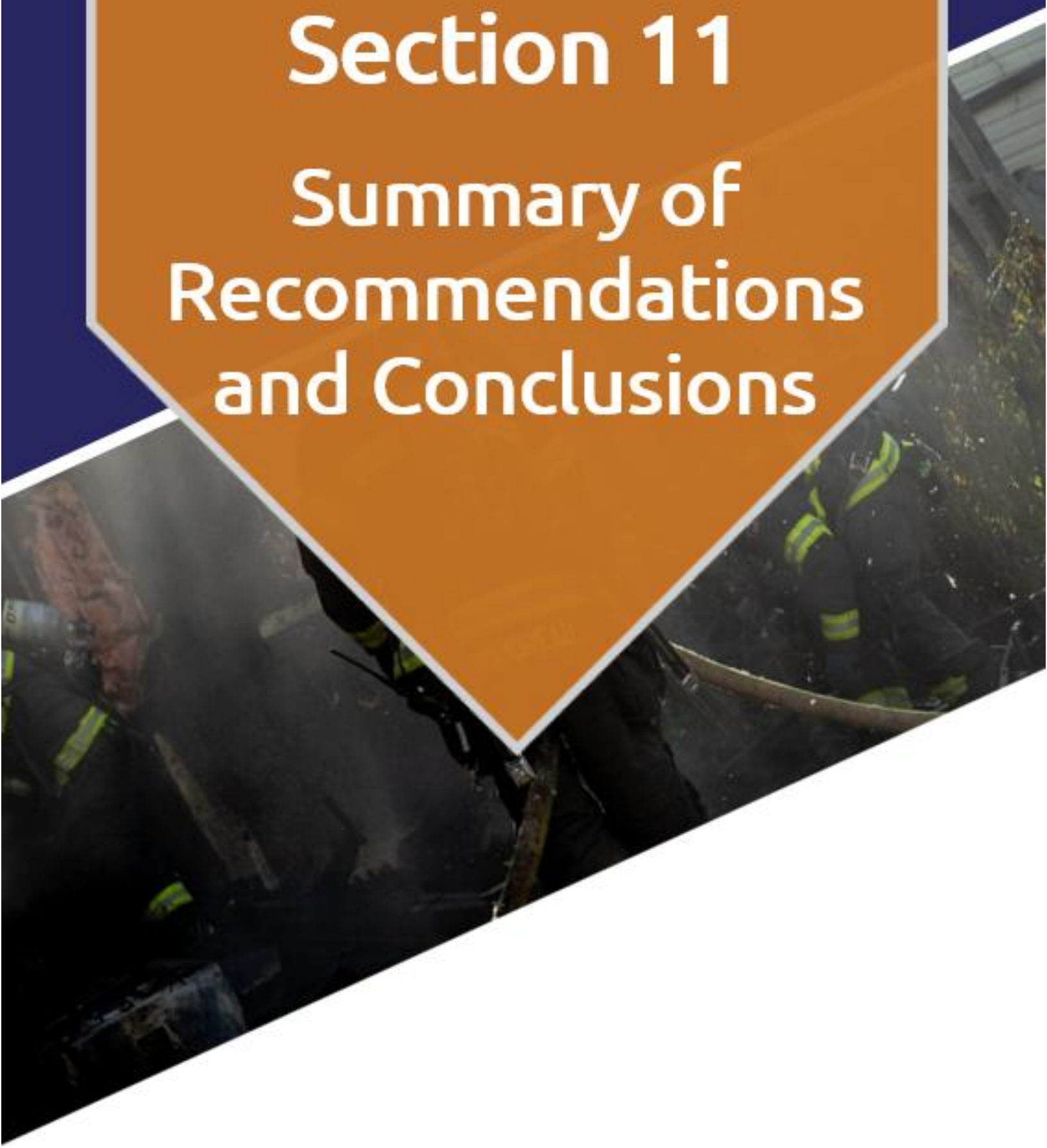
Recommendations – Section 10

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
50	The RDCK and the Town of Creston should jointly establish a Fire Services Advisory Committee for the Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) through formal resolution, creating a structured forum for collaborative planning, operational input, and regionally informed decision-making that reflects the interests of all partners.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A jointly established Fire Services Advisory Committee ensures that both the RDCK and the Town of Creston have a consistent, structured venue for collaboration, aligning operational needs with political oversight and fostering transparent, regionally balanced decision-making for the Creston Valley Fire Service.
51	The composition of the Fire Services Advisory Committee should include equal representation from Electoral Areas A, B, and C, the Town of Creston, RDCK Fire Services, and fire service leadership to promote transparency, shared accountability, and equitable decision-making across the Creston Valley.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Balanced representation on the Fire Services Advisory Committee ensures that all jurisdictions and perspectives are fairly considered, promoting equitable decision-making, strengthening accountability, and fostering trust among stakeholders across the Creston Valley.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
52	The RDCK and Town of Creston should define the Fire Advisory Committee's mandate to include advisory input on capital planning, service agreements, budget alignment, and operational needs, with a clear reporting structure to the RDCK Board to ensure decisions remain transparent, informed, and within scope.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A clearly defined mandate and reporting structure ensures the Fire Services Advisory Committee operates within its advisory role, providing focused, transparent, and informed input on key issues while maintaining alignment with RDCK governance processes.
53	The Fire Services Advisory Committee should be integrated into annual budget and capital planning cycles, ensuring that operational realities, such as apparatus replacement, facility upgrades, and risk reduction initiatives, are addressed proactively and within the full regional context.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Integrating the Fire Services Advisory Committee into annual budget and capital planning cycles ensures that frontline operational needs are considered early in the process, leading to more informed, timely, and regionally coordinated investment decisions.

Section 11

Summary of Recommendations and Conclusions



SECTION 11: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Conclusion

The review undertaken by the consulting team confirmed that the CVFS is supported by a dedicated team of full-time and POC firefighters who demonstrate a strong commitment to public safety. Both the RDCK and the Town of Creston have shown a genuine investment in the well-being of their communities and in the sustained success of the fire service.

CVFS continues to deliver effective fire protection and emergency response services within the current limitations of staffing levels, apparatus, facilities, and geographical coverage. Through the development of this FMP, the RDCK and the Town of Creston have demonstrated a shared commitment to continuous improvement, proactive planning, and long-term service sustainability.

This FMP is intended to be a living document, one that guides strategic decisions while remaining flexible to changing needs. An annual progress update is recommended, with a comprehensive review occurring every five years to ensure the plan remains relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the Creston Valley region. The costs and implementation timelines provided in this report are high-level estimates and should be used to guide future decision-making and annual budget discussions between the Fire Chief, local administration, and elected officials.

11.2 Recommendations and Estimated Costs

The following chart summarizes all recommendations outlined throughout the plan, including estimated costs (where applicable) and suggested timelines for implementation.

This FMP includes a total of 53 actionable recommendations that collectively aim to strengthen governance, enhance operations, support personnel, and ensure the long-term resilience of the Creston Valley Fire Service.

Recommendations Chart

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
1	The CVFS should develop a long-term call volume projection model every five years to guide operational planning and resource allocation.	Mid-Term (4 to 6 years)	Staff Time	Proactive call forecasting will help the department anticipate service demands and ensure future readiness as community risk profiles evolve.
2	Conduct a formal Community Risk Assessment (CRA) Plan for the CVFS aligned with NFPA 1300: Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A structured CRA will identify key risks within the communities and enable the CVFS to proactively reduce fire and emergency risks by identifying local hazards, targeting prevention efforts, and aligning resources with the greatest areas of community need.
3	The job descriptions for the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief must be updated.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Updated job descriptions will ensure role clarity, reflect current operational expectations, and support effective leadership, succession planning, and accountability within the CVFS.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
4	The job description for the Fire Service Support Supervisor (FSSS) must be updated and with the rank of Captain being identified in the document.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Updating and retitling the Fire Service Support Supervisor (FSSS) will better reflect the role's operational responsibilities, align with industry standards, and support a clearer leadership structure within the department.
5	Establish a second Assistant Fire Chief position within the Creston Valley Fire Service to provide dedicated oversight of fire inspections/prevention, risk management and operational leadership.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Salary	Introducing a second Assistant Fire Chief will strengthen the department's leadership capacity, relieve workload pressures on current senior staff, and ensure consistent attention to critical areas such as risk management, risk reduction and fire inspections.
6	Adopt a tiered leadership model within the Creston Valley Fire Service to distribute responsibilities across strategic, tactical, and operational levels, supported by the creation of an Assistant Fire Chief position.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	A tiered leadership structure will reduce workload pressures on senior leadership, improve operational oversight, and enhance span of control, while also creating clear pathways for leadership development, succession planning, and sustainable program delivery across all fire service functions.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
7	Develop and implement a formal, proactive recruitment and retention strategy that includes structured intake processes, wellness initiatives, and ongoing support for firefighter development and mental health.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A well-designed recruitment and retention strategy will reduce turnover, strengthen team capacity, and improve long-term operational sustainability by attracting committed members, supporting their well-being, and creating a more resilient fire service culture.
8	Implement a structured, community-engaged recruitment strategy that incorporates modern communication tools, flexible participation models, and partnerships with local organizations to attract a diverse and committed applicant pool.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	By aligning recruitment efforts with community engagement, flexible scheduling, and professional development opportunities, CVFS can build a more resilient volunteer base and foster long-term commitment in an increasingly competitive and evolving fire service environment.
9	Determine the risk-based compliance monitoring system for the Creston Valley Fire Services including the General and Specific Risk of each public building. The compliance monitoring system may include combination of Fire Inspections and Fire Safety Assessments in order to determine the Frequency of Inspections.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated requirement of the Fire Safety Act that must be adopted by Town of Creston Council.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
10	Declare the person(s) or class of persons designated as fire inspector and fire investigator and ensure that the appropriate training certification is completed.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated requirement of the Fire Safety Act that must be adopted by Town of Creston Council.
11	Conduct and complete the annual Fire Inspection Program for the Town of Creston. Include consistent plan reviews and new business inspections. Include enforcement support.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated by the Fire Safety Act. Supports the life safety of the community and the CVFS personnel. Industry recognized best practice.
12	Develop and deliver a Pre-Incident Fire Planning Program. Consider including this service delivery in future Fire Service Agreements.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Supports the life safety of the community and the CVFS personnel. Industry recognized best practice.
13	Provide staffing level that is sufficient to meet the needs of the delivery of the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Increase in Annual Operating Budget for 1.0 FTE Assistant Fire Chief	Division is currently understaffed and unable to complete mandated inspections and move the Fire Prevention and Community Safety Program forward.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
14	Determine and deliver an annual Fire and Life Safety Educational Program to the Town of Creston, Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Arrow Creek/Erickson and the Lower Kootenay Band. Provide training and education to support the delivery of the program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Contracted service as per the Fire Services Agreements. Supports the life safety of the communities. Industry best practice is NFPA 1035 "Standard on Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist and Youth Firesetter Program Manager Professional Qualifications".
15	Update bylaws to align with new Fire Safety Act.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Fire Services Bylaw No. 1928, Fire Prevention and Hazard Control Bylaw No. 1931 reference old Fire Service Act. Legislative mandates of the Fire Safety Act should align with CVFS bylaws.
16	A worker's representative for the Joint Health and Safety Committee needs to be appointed and they need to complete the mandated training within six-months.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Mandated by WorkSafeBC. Supports the Health and Wellness of the CVFS.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
17	Develop a Health and Wellness Program complete with measurable goals, strategic objectives, and realistic timebound tasks. Ensure record keeping and annual program reviews. Along with a detailed operating budget for the program.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Industry best practice and align with national standard. Supports strategic thinking and continuous improvement. Supports program review and a model of continuous improvement.
18	CVFS should establish and maintain consistent, visible recognition practices that celebrate firefighter contributions, achievements, and service milestones throughout the year	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time (minimal cost for service milestones)	Regular recognition reinforces a culture of appreciation, boosts morale, and supports retention by making firefighters feel valued for their ongoing contributions and commitment.
19	Offer flexible scheduling and create diverse volunteer roles to improve accessibility, attract a wider range of candidates, and support long-term firefighter retention.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Flexible scheduling and diverse volunteer roles accommodate varying lifestyles and interests, making it easier for members to contribute meaningfully and remain engaged over the long term.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
20	Conduct a comparative review of Paid-on-Call (POC) compensation across similar departments to ensure CVFS offers a competitive and equitable pay structure.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Operating budget adjustment	A compensation structure aligned with industry norms supports recruitment, improves retention, and reinforces the value of Paid-on-Call members within the organization.
21	CVFS should be formally included in the development review process for new subdivisions, rezoning, and large commercial or industrial projects.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Early involvement in development planning ensures fire protection services are appropriately integrated into growing areas and infrastructure demands.
22	The CVFS should develop a formal succession planning framework to support leadership continuity and internal career progression.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A structured approach to succession planning will help identify future leaders, reduce operational risk during transitions, and strengthen long-term organizational stability.
23	The Fire Chief must assess the CVFS needs, department capacities, and costs in terms of resources and planning to pursue the Superior Tanker Shuttle Service for the CVFS.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	This certification requires a thorough evaluation of apparatus capabilities, water sources, personnel, and deployment times. A detailed assessment by the Fire Chief ensures the CVFS fully understands the operational requirements, resource commitments, and financial implications before proceeding.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
24	Conduct a Dangerous Goods Risk Assessment to identify DG on rail/road at the regional and local level and develop a community risk reduction plan.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A focused risk assessment enables the development of targeted community risk reduction strategies that enhance preparedness, safety, and regional coordination.
25	Develop a training schedule for the delivery of First Responder certification so this service is available to Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston and Canyon lister.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Providing First Responder certification to all fire service areas ensures a consistent level of emergency medical response across the region.
26	The RDCK and the Town of Creston should review the Road Rescue funding model to determine the true cost of delivering the service.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	This will help address growing operational and capital pressures on the Town and ensure funding remains fair and sustainable.
27	The CVFS should upgrade to mobile data terminals in frontline apparatus.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Grant has been provided and costs to purchase will likely continue to increase. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
28	The CVFS should obtain regular reports on dispatch communications performance.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Industry best practice NFPA 1225 requires monthly evaluations. Reporting and program analysis supports cycle of continuous improvement.
29	The CVFS should conduct a needs assessment/gap analysis of the radio communications system and coverage of the Creston Valley.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Upgrade to NG 911is mandated. Radio communications gaps exist in the service area in particular the road rescue area.
30	The RDCK should prioritize a comprehensive facility needs assessment for the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall and Wynndel-Lakeview Fire Hall as part of its ongoing engineering study process, with a focus on identifying structural deficiencies, safety compliance gaps, and long-term operational requirements.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time (upgrades to be determined)	A comprehensive facility needs assessment will ensure that both halls meet current safety standards, support long-term operational sustainability, and provide a clear foundation for informed capital planning and future investment decisions.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
31	Develop a work plan with the RDCK to ensure that a diesel extraction system is installed in Canyon Lister fire hall before December 2025.	Immediate (0 to1 year)		Installing a diesel exhaust extraction system is essential to meet WorkSafeBC requirements, protect firefighter health, and ensure the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall remains a safe and compliant operating environment.
32	The RDCK should evaluate the future of the West Creston Fire Hall by exploring all viable options—including relocation, reinvestment, or closure—through a structured analysis of service levels, capital requirements, operational viability, and community impact.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Undetermined	A structured evaluation of the West Creston Fire Hall is essential to ensure that future decisions are based on service needs, financial sustainability, and the long-term effectiveness of fire protection in the area, while balancing community expectations and resource allocation.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
33	The training grounds are a vital asset for the Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) and should be supported with a dedicated operating and capital budget. To enhance year-round usability, safety, and accessibility for training activities and personnel, the RDCK and the Town of Creston should work collaboratively to pave the training grounds or implement an alternative durable surface.	Mid-Term (1 to 3 years)	Undetermined	A paved or durable surface enhances firefighter safety by reducing slip and trip hazards, minimizes wear on equipment, and ensures reliable access to the training grounds in all weather conditions—supporting consistent, effective, and safe training operations.
34	The Town of Creston and RDCK should explore the feasibility of designating the CVFS training facility as a regional live-fire training hub to support broader RDCK fire department training needs.	Mid-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A regional training hub would reduce duplication of infrastructure, promote consistency in firefighter competencies, and provide cost-effective, high-quality training opportunities for departments across the RDCK.
35	CVFS should complete a fire station location and coverage review within the next 7–10 years to assess whether current infrastructure aligns with projected population growth and evolving service demands.	Long-Term (7 to 10 years)	Undetermined	A strategic review will help ensure continued compliance with NFPA 1720, support equitable response times, and guide future infrastructure investment based on data-driven analysis.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
36	Standardize the individual contracts for fire service delivery to the RDCK into one common agreement.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Reduce costs of future renegotiation processes.
37	The provision of fire service by CVFS should be standardized into a "one fire service" model.	Short-term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Improve decision-making, program review and continuous improvement programs. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.
38	The RDCK and Town of Creston review, update, and formalize mutual and automatic aid agreements to ensure response alignment, shared resources, and current contact protocols.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)		Regularly updated agreements promote coordinated response efforts, clarify responsibilities, and improve operational interoperability across departments.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
39	Update Town of Creston Emergency Management Bylaw No. 1960, 2022 and the Disaster Response Plan 2023 to reference and align with the new Province of BC Emergency Disaster Management Act.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	There is new provincial legislation. EM Bylaws and EM Plans should be part of an annual review. Agency information in Part 6 is incomplete. EM Plans should be updated and a record kept after each exercise and/or activation.
40	Update risk assessment to align with the Disaster Climate Risk Resiliency Assessment methodology.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Requirement of the Emergency Disaster Management Act. Supports reconciliation with the Lower Kootenay Band. Grant funding has been accepted.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
41	Develop a regional risk assessment for the Creston Valley, and a collaborative framework for emergency management programming.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Supported by the Emergency Disaster Management Act. Provides streamlined and standardized service across an affected area. Supports reconciliation with the Lower Kootenay Band.
42	Review and update operating budget for Emergency Management Creston.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Provide funding for response and recovery operations via a contingency fund. Consideration for backup plan for funding FireSmart Coordinator position if Grant funding becomes unavailable.
43	Provide Emergency Social Services for the Town of Creston.	Mid-term (4 to 6 years)	Staff Time	Component part of an Emergency Management Program. Potential gap with service capacity for regional events.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
44	The Town of Creston and RDCK should develop a unified Emergency Management Plan that formally integrates CVFS into regional disaster response strategies.	Short Term (1-3 years)	Staff Time	An integrated plan ensures CVFS is effectively deployed during disasters and aligns emergency response roles with local and provincial expectations.
45	CVFS should expand FireSmart engagement through public workshops, property assessments, and annual community fuel mitigation targets.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Enhanced FireSmart activities reduce wildfire risk, improve community resilience, and support grant eligibility through the CRI program.
46	The RDCK should work with the Town of Creston and CVFS partners to implement a lump sum operating contribution model, allowing each participating fire service area to contribute annually based on projected needs, while enabling consolidated financial administration under the CVFS umbrella.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff time	A lump sum contribution model simplifies financial administration, reduces staff workload, and enables more efficient and responsive budgeting while still allowing for transparent tracking of service area contributions and expenditures.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
47	CVFS should adopt a unified budget structure with internal sub-coding or tagging for service areas (e.g., WYN for Wynndel-Lakeview, CLC for Canyon-Lister) to streamline expense tracking, reduce administrative workload, and maintain financial transparency without the complexity of managing multiple separate budgets.	Immediate (0 to 1 year)	Staff Time	Internal sub-coding allows CVFS to maintain clear, service-area-specific financial reporting while significantly reducing administrative complexity and improving day-to-day efficiency in budget management.
48	To improve responsiveness and reduce delays, the RDCK should delegate limited capital spending authority to the CVFS Fire Chief (e.g., up to $10,000) for urgent repairs and equipment replacements, ensuring timely decision-making aligned with operational priorities.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Granting the Fire Chief limited capital spending authority enables timely responses to urgent operational needs, reduces delays caused by approval bottlenecks, and ensures frontline priorities are addressed efficiently within defined financial controls.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
49	The Town of Creston and the RDCK should establish a collaborative governance framework to jointly plan and fund capital expenditures, including apparatus replacement based on updated market values, ensuring long-term sustainability and a shared understanding of financial responsibilities across the region.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A collaborative governance framework fosters shared accountability, improves long-term financial planning, and ensures that capital investments such as apparatus replacement are based on current market realities and equitably supported across all participating jurisdictions.
50	The RDCK and the Town of Creston should jointly establish a Fire Services Advisory Committee for the Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) through formal resolution, creating a structured forum for collaborative planning, operational input, and regionally informed decision-making that reflects the interests of all partners.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A jointly established Fire Services Advisory Committee ensures that both the RDCK and the Town of Creston have a consistent, structured venue for collaboration, aligning operational needs with political oversight and fostering transparent, regionally balanced decision-making for the Creston Valley Fire Service.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
51	The composition of the Fire Services Advisory Committee should include equal representation from Electoral Areas A, B, and C, the Town of Creston, RDCK Fire Services, and fire service leadership to promote transparency, shared accountability, and equitable decision-making across the Creston Valley.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Balanced representation on the Fire Services Advisory Committee ensures that all jurisdictions and perspectives are fairly considered, promoting equitable decision-making, strengthening accountability, and fostering trust among stakeholders across the Creston Valley.
52	The RDCK and Town of Creston should define the Fire Advisory Committee's mandate to include advisory input on capital planning, service agreements, budget alignment, and operational needs, with a clear reporting structure to the RDCK Board to ensure decisions remain transparent, informed, and within scope.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	A clearly defined mandate and reporting structure ensures the Fire Services Advisory Committee operates within its advisory role, providing focused, transparent, and informed input on key issues while maintaining alignment with RDCK governance processes.

Rec #	Recommendation	Suggested Implementation Timeline	Estimated Costs	Rationale
53	The Fire Services Advisory Committee should be integrated into annual budget and capital planning cycles, ensuring that operational realities, such as apparatus replacement, facility upgrades, and risk reduction initiatives, are addressed proactively and within the full regional context.	Short-Term (1 to 3 years)	Staff Time	Integrating the Fire Services Advisory Committee into annual budget and capital planning cycles ensures that frontline operational needs are considered early in the process, leading to more informed, timely, and regionally coordinated investment decisions.

Emergency Management Group

Appendices

Appendix A: Internal Survey Results

Appendix B: Stakeholder Survey Results

Appendix C: Internal SWOT Analysis

Appendix D: Community Survey Results

Appendix E: Findings from Internal, External and Community Surveys

Appendix F Comparable Departments – Additional Information

APPENDIX A: INTERNAL SURVEY RESULTS

A.1 Internal Survey Responses

During March 2025 a survey was conducted of internal Creston Valley Fire Services personnel. The survey utilized the SurveyMonkey web-based platform which supports a process that maintains anonymity of respondents. The platform was selected to ensure anonymity of responses, fostering an open and honest feedback environment. A total of 27 individuals participated, representing a diverse cross-section of the department's membership, including both qualitative and quantitative insights.

The survey is a vital component of the CVFS master planning process. It allows EMG to gain a deeper understanding of the internal culture, operational challenges, and member perspectives, insights that are not always visible through policy reviews or statistical data alone. For CVFS, the survey provides an opportunity to elevate the voices of its firefighters and staff, creating space for them to express pride, concerns, and ideas for the department's future. The results help validate strengths, identify service gaps, and inform recommendations that are grounded in the lived experiences of those who serve. Ultimately, the survey supports a transparent, inclusive planning process that aligns strategic development with the needs and aspirations of the team.

To support this process, the ten most common themes have been identified and presented, along with a brief summary of the key findings from each survey question. This ensures that both recurring messages and individual insights are captured and considered in shaping the direction of the CVFS moving forward. The high level of participation and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from firefighters reflect a deep sense of pride, commitment, and engagement within the department.

Questions and Results

Q1 – What are the things that make you most proud of the CVFS?

Summary

CVFS personnel are proud of their department and their people. It is highly important to them to provide service and outreach to the community in a safe and professional manner.

- Level of professionalism
- Community involvement and activity
- Committed and dedicated department membership
- Helping people in their most vulnerable time
- Person forward attitude
- Making a positive impact in community is amazing
- Working together with all the departments as one service and family
- Safety first mindset
- Ongoing support of members to become better firefighters
- What makes CVFS special is the pride and honour in their work and the way they carry themselves

Q2 – How do you think most people living in the community perceive the Fire Department, and why?

Summary

Overall CVFS personnel believe that the community appreciates the service they receive from the Fire Department and its personnel. It is noted that some residents have negative views about the service they receive for their taxes, but this may be addressable through better communication.

- Very positive, citizens say thank you often
- Appreciation for Fire Department
- Helpful and trustworthy
- Fire department is great asset to the Valley
- Respect because of professionalism
- Most perceive Fire Department well
- Generally appreciative
- Some think it's a waste of tax money and don't really understand the importance of the service
- Few personalities still polarized as a result of the new fire hall referendums
- Worthwhile/necessary service that provides value

Q3 – Based on your experience with the Fire Department, what would you say are the top three issues facing the department today?

Summary

It is believed that the call volume is increasing, and that the population is aging. There is an overwhelming opinion amongst the CVFS personnel that the department is understaffed influencing its abilities to maintain current and future service levels. It is noted that the membership is aging, and the recruitment and retention needs to be a focus in order to retain the younger members. Ensuring adequate funding for firefighting equipment is of concern, as is the condition of the West Creston Fire Hall and the lack of ventilation at the Canyon-Lister Fire Hall. Training for new skills, including leadership training, team building, and mental health are noted.

- Recruitment on new members
- Membership numbers are critical, and call volume has increased and will continue to increase
- Not being a full-time hall

- Poor retention of members
- Aging work force
- Workload required to be completed with minimum staff to complete the required work (training, administration, and operations)
- West Creston Fire Hall
- Apparatus nearing end of life
- Mental health of firefighters – PTSD effect on some members
- Communications in the Valley are poor (radio)

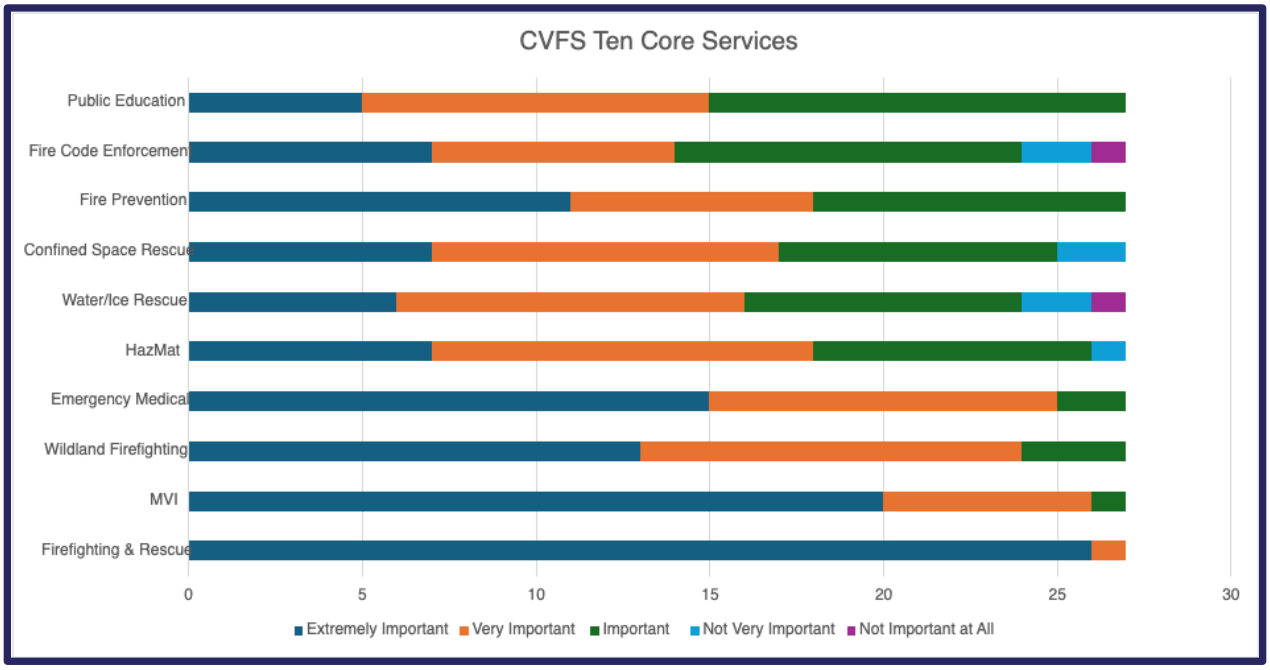
Q4 - Which services are believed to be most valued by the community?

Summary: All services that were polled were believed to be more important than less. Rated the least was the provision of home fire safety visits, and how often the CVFS would consult or request feedback from the community on its service provision. Highly rates were the speed of response and timely service delivery, personnel being well-trained, apparatus and equipment being well maintained and current. Also, the importance of attending community events.

Service Provided	Extremely Important/Very Important/Important	Not Very Important	Not Important at All
Speed of service delivery	100%	-	-
Home fire safety visit	63%	33%	4%
Cost of fire service	89%	7%	4%
Inter-agency service provision	96%	4%	-
Community consultation	66%	30%	4%
Community training opportunities	89%	11%	-
Attendance at community events	100%	-	-
Assistance services after an emergency	100%	-	-
Timeliness for requests for service	100%	-	-

Service Provided	Extremely Important/Very Important/Important	Not Very Important	Not Important at All
Status of current apparatus and equipment	100%	-	-
Training of personnel	100%	-	-

Q5 – What do you believe are the top 10 services that the Fire Department provides by order of importance?



The top 10 is based upon the total number of positive responses, including ratings of *Extremely Important*, *Very Important*, and *Important*. This approach provides a more balanced picture of overall support for each service by recognizing that while some services may not be rated at the very top tier by all respondents, they are still viewed as valuable and necessary components of the department's mandate.

The following list reflects the services in descending order of overall importance, as perceived by survey participants:

- Firefighting & Rescue
- Emergency Medical

- Motor Vehicle Incidents (MVI)
- Wildland Firefighting
- Fire Prevention
- Public Education
- Hazardous Materials (HazMat)
- Water/Ice Rescue
- Confined Space Rescue
- Fire Code Enforcement

While Firefighting & Rescue, Emergency Medical, and MVI response received the highest concentration of top-tier ratings (*Extremely Important*), other services such as Public Education and Fire Prevention were also widely supported, though often rated as simply *Important* rather than *Extremely* or *Very Important*. This highlights their steady, long-term value to the organization, even if they are not perceived as the most urgent or high-risk functions day to day. Overall, the data reflects a well-rounded understanding among personnel of the department's diverse service delivery responsibilities.

Q6 – Are there any other services that you believe the Fire Department should provide, or increase the level of a present service? Why and what would be the outcome/benefit?

Summary

Providing a water rescue response, including ice rescue, should be considered for the future. The personnel also feel that a focus on public education and community events, as well as FireSmart opportunities is important.

- Water rescue on Kootenay Lake
- Public education
- Community education opportunities benefitting a safer community and a change in culture on safety issues
- Swiftwater rescue

- Water and ice rescue training
- House and property inspections (voluntary) at no charge including Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Lister and isolated properties
- Presence in community events, parades (dedicated parade vehicle/antique fire truck, joining with other community groups for events to "fly the flag")
- More wildland fire prevention and training
- Boosting of fire-safe planning for town and out-of-town residences
- More auto extrication training

Q7 – When improvements, if any, could the Fire Department implement to make it better? What do you believe would be the outcome of implementing these changes?

Summary

A large number of respondents believe that increasing training and certifications should be a focus for a better future and that there is a need for a training officer. Increasing public education opportunities for the community, as well enhancing safety and a greater focus on mental health of the membership are top priorities.

- Having full-time staff
- Dedicated training officer
- More hands-on training and live fire drills
- Better communication from officer level to firefighters
- More certification opportunities, auto extrication and rope rescue
- More in depth debriefings of events with suggestions for options, what went well, what could be improved upon
- Mental health is important
- Retention provided increased wage for duty shifts
- Increase community familiarity with fire service and personnel to increase recruiting

- Public education

Q8 – If it were up to you, what would the Fire Department be like in five to ten years from today, and why? How do you Propose we get there?

Summary

While it was noted that there is pride in the CVFS as it is now, there would be a need for more career personnel moving towards a full-time fire service. Building on current training opportunities with leadership and communication, water and ice rescue, swift water, and confined space were highlighted.

- More full-time trained firefighters
- Expand number of career positions to keep up with increasing call volume, operational and administrative responsibilities
- Plan, train and implement swift/flat/ice rescue, confined space
- Updated apparatus at all fire halls including Wynndel-Lakeview, Canyon-Lister, West Creston and Creston
- Leadership training
- Community education about needs and wants of fire department, i.e. faster response, better training
- Ongoing training and development
- Full-service hall working more in the community
- Stronger team bond – more team events
- West Creston needs a completely new fire hall

Q9 – Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to add that would help improve the service the Fire Department delivers to the community?

Comments: Additional comments supported those key points noted in the previous questions.

- Need more full-time firefighters

- Continue signing of yearly employment letters
- Continue encouraging station uniforms at practices
- Old apparatus in outlying areas
- Keep on the path
- Push higher levels of training
- Keep moving forward
- Hold community meeting to determine concerns of the citizens
- Good lounge space for practice nights/pre-training socialization upstairs
- Professional training of officers is appreciated
- Amazing

Internal Survey Observations

The internal survey responses reflect a deeply committed and community-oriented culture within the CVFS. Personnel take great pride in their professionalism, teamwork, and ability to serve the public during moments of greatest need. They believe the community appreciates their work, though they acknowledge communication gaps and occasional public misconceptions. While firefighters are proud of the department's accomplishments, they are also acutely aware of its challenges, particularly staffing shortages, aging infrastructure, and the need for ongoing recruitment and retention. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of continued training, mental health support, and increased public education. Looking to the future, members envision a more sustainable and full-time fire service model, with expanded rescue capabilities, better equipment, and stronger leadership development. Their feedback underscores a desire to grow thoughtfully while maintaining the high standards and service culture that define CVFS.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

In April 2025, Emergency Management Group (EMG) distributed a focused survey to elected officials from the Town of Creston, Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), and senior administrative leadership, including the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The purpose of the survey was to collect insights and perspectives from decision-makers responsible for fire service governance, budgeting, and long-term community planning.

For EMG, this survey provided essential context to supplement operational data and stakeholder interviews, highlighting governance priorities, funding expectations, and strategic goals. For CVFS leadership, the responses help bridge the understanding between frontline service delivery and broader policy oversight, ensuring alignment between what the department is doing and what council and regional leaders expect. The results offer a high-level view of current perceptions, desired service outcomes, and emerging areas for improvement or investment. Each question below is followed by a summary of key themes identified in the responses.

Q1. Do you think the residents are getting fair value for their tax dollar in relation to the fire services provided? If so why, if not why?

- There is quick response and cross coverage from the fire stations in the valley.
- I believe residents are getting fair value for their tax dollars in relation to the fire service provided. The WEP is a valuable tool in our community because it increases the number of FTEs which helps keep insurance lower.
- I would say, yes, they are however I am not an expert and can't say that I have the expertise in order to evaluate this.
- Uncertain – I do not have sufficient information around the budget to determine that.
- Yes.

The responses reflect a generally positive view of the value provided, with recognition of the system's responsiveness and benefits like the Work Experience Program (WEP). A few respondents noted limitations in their knowledge of financial specifics, which shaped more cautious or uncertain answers.

Q2. Do you feel the community is properly protected by the present number of fire stations and fire apparatuses? If so why, if not why?

- "I believe that the services in place right now adequately provide the protection that is needed in Creston and the surrounding communities in the valley."
- "Yes, I feel our community is properly protected. The response time stats are consistently in a good range."
- "Area B does have access to fire protection services in most of the communities, and they are well equipped in my opinion... That being said, I wonder if a smaller, well equipped 4x4 fire engine would help respond to hard to get into properties in remote locations."
- "Within the Wynndel-Lakeview fire protection area, yes."
- "Yes."

Overall, the responses reflect confidence in the department's current protection capacity. Some noted high satisfaction with response times, while others suggested minor improvements, such as more agile equipment for rural or remote areas to further enhance coverage.

Q3. Based on the future growth of the community, do you feel that the fire department can keep up to the demands in its present state? If not, what is missing?

- "Yes… it's my understanding that the expansion of the CESB was to meet current and future needs of our growing communities."
- "The fire department is keeping a decent pace with growth especially with the service being a whole valley service."
- "Yes, with the addition of a new fire response asset in Canyon/Lister, and a smaller rapid response 4x4 unit."
- "Yes."
- "The fire department is keeping up, however, if growth continues and more volunteers can't be recruited, we may have challenges."

The comments generally show confidence that the department is keeping pace with current growth, largely due to regional integration and recent investments. However, there's

recognition that continued community expansion will require sustained planning, especially in recruitment and resource development.

Q4. What do you believe are the greatest strengths of the Fire Department?

- "Fire protection, fire prevention and education. I see them often assisting with medical calls which is also good as the ambulance service seems extremely busy."
- "Each fire department in the valley working together is a stretch. The WEP is a strength and also having the College program is a good thing for our community."
- "The quality of the leadership. The firefighter training program."
- "Work experience program."
- "Professionalism, integrity, planning/preparation, teamwork, well-equipped, experienced, motivated."

Respondents highlighted a wide range of strengths, including the department's professionalism, leadership, training programs, and inter-agency collaboration. The Work Experience Program was repeatedly cited as a unique asset contributing to both service capacity and community benefit.

Q5. What do you believe to be the top risks/issues facing the Fire Department (i.e., barriers to response/delivery of service, recruitment, and retention)?

- "I think recruitment and retention may be the biggest challenge. There is a need for a large crew… if you aren't utilizing the skills, you've learned regularly, you may not feel confident to continue as a volunteer."
- "Recruiting and retaining paid on call volunteers is the top risk."
- "Maintaining the firefighter training program."
- "Aging of local population from which to recruit."
- "The demographics of the community suggest that those with the most time to offer… may not have the time needed to commit."

The dominant concern across responses is clearly recruitment and retention, especially of paid-on-call volunteers. Respondents pointed to demographic challenges, volunteer time

constraints, and training continuity as central issues influencing the sustainability of service delivery.

Q6. How would you like to see the Fire Department in the next 5 to 10 years in relation to serving the community, keeping in mind growth of the community?

- "Able to easily meet the needs of the community in a fire event… assisting businesses and homes to protect themselves from fire through education and inspections."
- "I would like to see the department continue in the direction they are heading. Top notch training and strong leadership."
- "Retention of the high quality of leadership and dedicated staff, keep up with training opportunities and asset replacement as required."
- "Better accountability over costs and levels of service."
- "I don't expect significant growth, and infrastructure is well-managed, so feel we're well positioned to serve over that period."

Respondents expressed a desire for continued strong leadership, top-tier training, and the ability to adapt to community needs through education, inspections, and well-maintained infrastructure. Several highlighted the importance of balancing future service delivery with cost accountability and asset renewal.

Q7. Do you see an opportunity for the Fire Department to develop strategic partnerships with other organizations in relation to cost and service efficiencies? If so, then with whom and why?

- "I'm not really sure how this could or would look. I don't feel there is a like agency or organization near here that they could partner with to provide fire protection services."
- "Continue to work with Creston Emergency Management and RDCK."
- "Provincial Wildfire Services."
- "I believe the critical partnerships are in place already, especially between the Town of Creston and RDCK."
- "Not aware of any critical gaps (maybe West Creston). Have to see how the Emergency Management plan evolves."

Most respondents felt that key partnerships are already in place, especially between the Town of Creston and the RDCK. A few saw opportunities for continued collaboration with emergency management or Provincial Wildfire Services, while others were uncertain about the potential for new partnerships.

Q8. Can you share any input received from your constituents and/or staff in relation to the Fire Department, whether they are cost related, service related, or fire safety and education related?

- "There is still a bit of a belief that the new hall is too big and extravagant for the size of Creston and the valley… I think this will help to debunk some of the misinformation that still percolates a bit through town."
- "Just disappointed that the community of Kitchener has not supported the need for a fire response service. This could save additional structures… and the spread of fire onto adjacent forested areas."
- "Folks I talk to are very satisfied and impressed with the existing level of service… no issues."
- "I have none to share at this time."

Constituent feedback reveals a mix of perspectives. While many expressed satisfaction and appreciation for current service levels, some respondents noted perceptions that the new CESB facility may exceed the community's scale or expectations. Others highlighted gaps in coverage (such as in Kitchener) and the importance of continued public education to address lingering concerns.

Q9. Are there any other aspects or factors that you believe should be considered that we have not touched on already? For example, fire station closures or additions, reduction in services by the fire department, or even an increase in services through the hiring of more fire personnel.

- "To my knowledge, I believe that all things have been considered and are in place… More specific data and metrics shared with Council will make it easier to decide if more is needed."
- "Information that would be interesting to know includes number of fire-specific events… number of volunteers vs. paid firefighters… other opportunities where volunteers are participating in fire safety and education."

- "Continued volunteer recruitment efforts need to be supported and encouraged."
- "No."

Most responses indicated confidence that key factors have been addressed, but there is interest in more data transparency, especially comparisons with similar jurisdictions**.** Volunteer recruitment was again raised as a priority, reinforcing earlier themes from the survey.

Stakeholder Survey Observations

The external survey responses from elected officials and senior administrators offer a valuable lens into the broader governance perspective of the CVFS. There is strong overall support for the department's current operations, particularly in its responsiveness, training quality, and regional service model. Many respondents highlighted the strength of programs like the WEP, the department's leadership, and its role in fire prevention and community education. While confidence in the current system is evident, concerns persist around the sustainability of volunteer recruitment, aging demographics, and the need for succession planning. The desire for more detailed operational data and ongoing transparency was also noted, especially to support decision-making and budgeting. The feedback reinforces a shared commitment to maintaining high service standards while addressing long-term growth, infrastructure renewal, and evolving community needs.

Overall Stakeholder Observations

The internal and external survey results reveal a strong degree of alignment on several key priorities for the CVFS. Both staff and governance representatives consistently identified the importance of professionalism, quality training, and responsive service as core strengths of the department. The WEP was repeatedly praised for enhancing operational capacity and offering developmental opportunities for emerging firefighters. Similarly, both groups acknowledged the challenges posed by increasing call volumes and emphasized the need to plan for a more sustainable staffing model, especially with regard to recruitment, retention, and the growing demand for full-time or career roles. There was also mutual recognition of the value of community education, regional coverage, and the need to maintain modern equipment and infrastructure.

At the same time, some gaps in perspective emerged that merit honest reflection. Council members and senior administrators (Town of Creston and RDCK) are responsible for fiscal oversight and long-term planning and will naturally prioritize financial accountability, service equity, and data-driven comparisons with other jurisdictions. Firefighters, on the other hand,

operate with a lived, insider perspective and are acutely aware of what is and isn't working on the ground. This includes concerns around workload, mental health, aging infrastructure, and the need for dedicated training leadership, issues that, while less visible at the governance level, are central to sustaining daily operations and long-term resilience. These differing priorities are not in conflict; rather, they reflect the diverse responsibilities and experiences within the system.

Bridging these viewpoints will require more intentional communication through operational updates, shared planning sessions, council and RDCK briefings, and regular opportunities for feedback. As the CVFS continues to evolve, there is also a clear opportunity to explore how a revised governance structure could enhance this communication. A more formalized model that includes structured representation from both the Town of Creston and the RDCK could support more collaborative planning, clearer accountability, and better alignment between fire service leadership and those responsible for its oversight. Strengthening these connections will be essential to ensuring that the department is equipped both operationally and strategically to meet the future needs of the valley.

APPENDIX C: INTERNAL SWOT ANALYSIS

This summary provides an overview of themes that emerged from responses to the internal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) survey. Participants ranged from new members to long-serving personnel, offering a broad perspective across the department.

To bring authenticity and clarity to the feedback, EMG has included selected direct quotes from the survey responses. These quotes reflect the voices of the CVFS members and help illustrate key themes in a more personal and meaningful way. They ground the analysis in real experiences, offering a transparent snapshot of how CVFS members view the department's strengths and challenges.

Strengths – What Are We Doing Well?

Across the responses, several strengths consistently stood out:

- Training: Members strongly value the department's training program. It's described as professional, well-organized, and ongoing. Some noted individualized assessments that tailor content to each firefighter's development.
- Community Service: The department's role in public engagement is recognized—from school programs and community events to smoke alarm campaigns and wildfire sprinkler kits.
- Operational Response: CVFS is seen as responsive, skilled, and diverse in its capabilities—covering structure fires, wildland incidents, rescues, and medical calls.

"We are a full-service department with dedicated firefighters that can handle fires, both structure and wildland along with rescue and medical services."

Weaknesses – Where Can We Improve?

Some consistent internal challenges were identified:

- Communication and Leadership: A few respondents noted communication issues and called for more trust and less micromanagement from leadership. Concerns about internal dynamics were raised, especially regarding clarity and trust in officer roles.

- Recruitment and Retention: The time demands on paid-on-call firefighters are impacting engagement. With growing service expectations, retention is becoming more difficult.
- Training Execution: While training is a strength, applying it effectively in live scenes was flagged. Suggestions included more pre-assigned roles, posted announcements (like fire bans), and more repetition of key skills.

"From what I have experienced it is the practical application of said training. The Executive does try to assign tasks related to your training, but in the flurry of assignments at a live scene it is understandably hard to get the assignments perfect."

Opportunities – What Should We Be Exploring?

Ideas for growth and development centered around external partnerships and new methods:

- Modern Training Delivery: Suggestions included introducing virtual/online platforms to support shift-based or remote learning.
- Specialized Training: Swift water rescue and hazmat awareness were noted as areas worth developing.
- External Collaboration: Working with local colleges, first responder agencies, and other departments was seen as an untapped opportunity.

"New ways of achieving training and response need to be explored through shifts and online (virtual) training programs."

Threats – What External Challenges Do We Face?

Several common concerns were raised:

- Budget Constraints: Limited funding, especially for capital purchases and training facility upgrades, is a known risk.
- Changing Legislation: Compliance requirements (e.g., Fire Safety Act inspections) and insurance industry shifts may pressure resources and operations.
- Attrition & Coverage Gaps: A few noted challenges with staffing in outlying areas like Canyon, and the risk of becoming too large to train effectively.

"The Fire Safety Act requires a more robust fire inspection program… The insurance industry is more risk adverse which may require local governments to improve services like hydrants and water systems."

Overall SWOT Observations

The SWOT analysis reflects a department that takes pride in its professionalism, strong training culture, and commitment to community service. Respondents offered thoughtful insights that balance recognition of the department's strengths with a desire for continued growth. While training emerged as both a key asset and an area for improvement, underlying themes of communication, leadership trust, and operational consistency were also present. Members expressed openness to innovation, external collaboration, and skill development opportunities. Overall, the responses highlight a motivated and engaged team that wants to build on its strengths while addressing internal challenges with clarity and care.

APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Understanding community expectations is essential to delivering effective, trusted fire protection services. By gathering direct feedback from residents, the CVFS gains valuable insight into public perceptions, service priorities, and areas for improvement. This engagement helps align fire department planning with community values, ensures transparency, and supports evidence informed decision-making that reflects the needs and concerns of those served. The survey results offer a meaningful snapshot of what matters most to the public, guiding future investment, communication, and service delivery strategies. Below is a summary of the findings from the survey.

Q1: What is your general impression of the CVFS in relation to professionalism, community safety, education, and fire prevention awareness programs?

Most respondents expressed a positive impression of the CVFS, highlighting professionalism, commitment to safety, and community presence. However, a few raised concerns about declining engagement, visibility, and the effectiveness of the Work Experience Program (WEP).

Q2: Have you been approached by CVFS firefighters in relation to smoke alarm program or any other fire department initiative and, if so, how did you find this interaction?

Most respondents reported they had *not* been approached or engaged by the department for fire prevention initiatives. This suggests a gap in public outreach and visibility, particularly regarding smoke alarm programs and public education efforts.

Q3: How important are the following statements to you?

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of fire service delivery on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *"Not Important at All"* to *"Extremely Important."* A total of 33 responses were recorded. Below is a breakdown of the key themes and their relative importance based on aggregated responses:

- How quickly the CVFS gets to me if I have an emergency (33 responses)
    - This was one of the highest-priority items, with a large majority rating it as *Extremely Important*. Fast emergency response is clearly the public's top concern.

- Whether the CVFS will visit my home to give me safety advice and/or fire smoke alarms (32 responses)
    - Most respondents rated this as *Important*, but it did not rank among the highest priorities. While appreciated, in-home visits are seen as helpful rather than essential.
- How much the fire services cost me as a taxpayer (33 responses)
    - Responses were mixed, with moderate levels of importance placed on this item. While some concern exists about cost, it is not the community's overriding focus.
- How well the CVFS works with other agencies (33 responses)
    - This was a strong priority for most respondents, with many rating it *Very* or *Extremely Important*. Inter-agency cooperation is viewed as critical for effective emergency management.
- How often the CVFS consults me about their services (33 responses)
    - Most respondents rated this as *Important*, but it was not among the highest priorities. The public appears content with limited direct consultation as long as services are delivered effectively.
- How often the CVFS provides community training opportunities (33 responses)
    - Responses were mixed, with moderate levels of importance placed on this item. Training programs (like extinguisher use or school education) are valued, but not universally prioritized.
- How visible the CVFS is at local community events (33 responses)
    - This item was seen as less important by many respondents, with a notable portion rating it *Not Very* or *Not at All Important*. While visibility is appreciated by some, it's not seen as essential.
- Contacting assistance services after an emergency (33 responses)
    - This was a strong priority for most respondents. Many appreciated the idea of support beyond the initial emergency, such as referrals or follow-up services.

- Timeliness to any request for services or assistance from the CVFS (33 responses)
    - This was a strong priority for most respondents, with a large share rating it *Very* or *Extremely Important*. People want prompt, reliable service beyond emergency calls.
- Purchasing and maintaining new and applicable equipment (33 responses)
    - This was a strong priority for most respondents, reflecting the public's support for investment in reliable, up-to-date equipment that enables effective response.
- Continued and relevant training (first instance, 33 responses)
    - This was one of the highest-priority items. The community strongly supports ongoing firefighter training as a key contributor to safety and professionalism.
- Contacting assistance services after an emergency (duplicate, 33 responses)
    - This repeated question received strong ratings again, reinforcing the importance of post-incident care and recovery support in the eyes of the public.
- Continued and relevant training (duplicate, 20 responses)
    - Though fewer people answered this second version, responses were still highly supportive. However, only the first instance is considered valid due to higher response rate.
- Timeliness to any request for services or assistance (duplicate, 33 responses)
    - This duplication also reaffirmed its importance. The consistent results confirm that responsiveness is a key performance expectation.
- Purchasing and maintaining new and applicable equipment (duplicate, 6 responses)
    - With only 6 responses, this version of the question lacks statistical reliability. It appears to be a survey duplication and should not be used in analysis.

- How much the fire services cost me as a taxpayer (duplicate, 6 responses)
    - Similarly, this second instance received very limited input and likely confused respondents. The first version with 33 responses is the accurate measure.
- How well the CVFS works with other agencies (duplicate, 6 responses)
    - Low participation in this version suggests it should be excluded from decision-making. The original version already shows this is a public priority.
- How often the CVFS consults me about their services (duplicate, 6 responses)
    - This low response duplicate also lacks reliability. The first version is the best representation of community sentiment on consultation.

***Note:** During analysis of Question 3, it was identified that the statement* "Continued and relevant training" *appeared twice in the survey. The first instance received 33 responses and is considered statistically valid. The second instance received only 20 responses, indicating a likely duplication or formatting error. To ensure consistency and avoid inflating results, only the first occurrence was used in the final analysis. Both responses, however, reinforce that ongoing firefighter training is a clear public priority.*

Q4: What do you think are the top three issues facing the fire service today? (31 responses)

Respondents frequently identified recruitment and retention, funding limitations, and equipment costs as primary challenges. Several also noted concerns with operational planning, regional dispatch issues, and burnout. Additional comments highlighted the need for improved visibility, better public education, and modern leadership. These responses underscore the need for a sustainable staffing model, proactive capital planning, and more structured engagement with the public.

Q5: Which core CVFS services are most important to you? (33 responses)

The services ranked most important were:

- Firefighting and rescue (29 Extremely Important)
- Vehicle collision and extrication (23 Extremely Important)
- Grass, bush, and forestry firefighting (23 Extremely Important)

Secondary priorities included emergency medical intervention, hazardous materials response, and fire prevention. Lower emphasis was placed on fire code enforcement and public fire safety education. The results suggest the public places highest value on core emergency response capabilities, while still recognizing the importance of risk reduction services.

Q6: Are there any additional services you believe should be provided? (17 responses)

Suggestions included:

- Wildfire mitigation and FireSmart.
- Use of the fire hall as a permanent cooling/warming centre
- Expanded senior support and public education
- More community-based risk reduction

Some also proposed inspections of fire extinguishers in public spaces and enhanced coordination with vulnerable populations. These ideas reflect a growing expectation that the CVFS evolve into a broader community safety agency.

Q7: Over the next 10 years, what would improve how CVFS services are delivered? (19 responses)

Top themes included:

- Upgraded equipment and apparatus
- Improved leadership and management oversight
- Expanded public engagement and education
- More wildfire readiness and training

Multiple respondents asked for cost control, more community outreach (especially in rural areas), and fewer non-essential apparatus callouts. One respondent suggested the department invest in a smaller response vehicle for non-fire medical assists to preserve fire trucks and reduce maintenance costs.

Q8: Have you directly received service from the CVFS? (33 responses)

- Yes – 3
- No – 30

This indicates that most community members have not had direct contact with CVFS emergency services, which may reflect a relatively low personal exposure to incidents rather than a lack of service.

Q9: Could you share some details of your experience and any recommendations for improvements? (9 responses)

Those who had contact with the CVFS described their experience as professional, respectful, and compassionate. One response criticized the Fire Chief's attire at a motor vehicle scene, noting it didn't reflect uniform standards. Another highlighted the crew's respectful handling of a residential fire. A few called for increased transparency and greater emphasis on public image, particularly through broader community interaction.

EMG Community Survey Observations

The survey responses offer a valuable snapshot of how the community views the CVFS. Overall, the public perceives the department as professional, capable, and committed to emergency response. However, there is a clear call for increased public engagement, especially in fire prevention programs, visibility at events, and communication about services. The community strongly supports investment in firefighter training, timely service, and reliable equipment, while also recognizing challenges related to recruitment, retention, and funding. These results reinforce the importance of balancing core emergency response with evolving expectations around education, outreach, and broader community safety roles. Going forward, this feedback can help guide planning, resource allocation, and strategic communication in a way that reflects public priorities and builds trust.

APPENDIX E: FINDINGS FROM INTERNAL, EXTERNAL, AND COMMUNITY SURVEYS

As part of the FMP process, several targeted surveys were conducted to gather feedback from key stakeholders, including internal staff, external governance partners, and the broader community. These surveys were designed to capture diverse perspectives on department strengths, challenges, priorities, and future directions.

EMG extends our sincere appreciation to everyone who took the time to complete these surveys. Your insights are invaluable in shaping the future of fire services in the Creston Valley, and your participation ensures that planning decisions reflect the real experiences, expectations, and priorities of those most affected.

Each survey offered unique insights. Internal members shared firsthand operational experiences, highlighting training, workload, leadership, and morale. Governance stakeholders, including elected officials and senior administrators provided a strategic lens focused on oversight, service models, and sustainability. Community members shared expectations and perceptions related to service delivery, visibility, emergency response, and public education.

Common Themes Across All Surveys

Despite the different audiences, several common themes emerged:

- Strong Foundation in Training and Professionalism: All groups praised the department's professionalism and the depth of its training culture. The Work Experience Program (WEP) was consistently recognized as a valuable asset.
- Need for Sustainable Staffing: Recruitment and retention challenges were a central concern across surveys, with clear recognition that increasing call volumes and service expectations will require new approaches to staffing, potentially including more full-time roles.
- Investment in Equipment and Infrastructure: Respondents from all groups supported continued investment in apparatus, training facilities, and other infrastructure critical to effective service delivery.
- Communication and Engagement: Both internal and external feedback pointed to the need for improved communication, whether internally across leadership levels, with

elected officials through operational updates, or with the public through education and outreach.

- Planning for Growth and Resilience: There was a shared acknowledgment that CVFS is at a transition point. Continued regional collaboration, structured governance, and evidence-informed planning will be essential for aligning operational realities with long-term community expectations.

Together, these surveys provide a strong foundation for strategic planning. They affirm what is working well and identify where targeted improvements can support a more effective, resilient, and trusted fire service.

APPENDIX F: COMPARABLE DEPARTMENTS-ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Creston Valley Fire Service (CVFS) provides fire services to the community of Creston, as well as to Canyon-Lister, Wynndel-Lakeview, West Creston, Arrow Creek/Erickson and the Lower Kootenay Band through five individual Fire Service Agreements (FSA). As different models for service provision are explored in order to capitalize on efficiencies and effectiveness, it is important to poll other organizations and to consider industry trends and/or norms.

Eight fire service organizations were asked to complete questionnaires in order to support data analysis related to the creation of the CVFS Fire Master Plan. Five responses were received. The responses included both qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The respondents shared what worked well, challenges, as well as specific notes about the services.

TABLE #36: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – WHAT WORKS WELL

Fire Department Name	Type of Service	# Fire Service Agreements	What Works Well
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	Municipal	4	10-year agreement provides stability of service provision.
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services	Regional	4	Each department has its own budget and bylaw. Community funding and taxes stay within the community. Some sharing of expenses but cost sharing must be transparent.
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services	Regional	2	Good cost for level of service provided to the communities.
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	Regional	1	Provide the same service to both communities. Administration and decision-making is made solely by the Regional Fire Chief.

Fire Department Name	Type of Service	# Fire Service Agreements	What Works Well
Township of Langley Fire Department	Municipal	0	Four mutual aid agreements. Shared resources increased service to residents. Focus on providing standardization in service delivery.

It is noted by Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services that the cost to provide service rises as distance from the fire station increases. Similar to the model in place with CVFS, they do not have a standardized formula for analyzing costs and fees. Fire inspections and fire investigations are not provided outside of the municipality, resulting in a disconnect between the service provided to each of the four additional communities, and the level of life safety both for firefighters attending an incident, and for residents of the community.

The Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services noted that their service area spans two electoral areas. Like the Creston Valley Fire Service, they operate under multiple fire service agreements with surrounding communities, requiring them to manage several distinct budgets and budget requests. They also highlighted that smaller departments often face greater challenges in securing adequate funding, particularly when balancing service expectations across multiple jurisdictions.

The Comox Valley Regional District provides fire protection services within a fire protection area. Outside of this there are some residential areas that do not have enough residents to make establishing a service or contract realistic.

The Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue includes Rossland, Warfield, Genelle, Trail, Montrosse, Fruitvale, and Electoral Areas A and B. The provision of the same level of service provides a high degree of standardization and greater ease of administration and operation. Standardization is a model that many fire services including the Township of Langley Fire Department are targeting to provide more efficient and effective services to their communities.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Data that can be measured is numerical format is considered to be quantitative. Measurable data is imperative when comparing like for like, but also for identifying core differences. This supports the quantitative data and the story that it tells.

TABLE #37: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	23,000	$5,584,853	$140,000	6.4%
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	1,800	$669,000	$180,000	0.25 per $1,000 assessed
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	900	$447,000	$120,000	0.39 per $1,000 assessed
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	165	$473,000	$150,000	0.86 per $1,000 assessed
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	800	$331,000	$107,000	1.22 per $1,000 assessed
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	8,000	$1,210,250	$160,000	0.4911
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	3,000	$580,000	0	0.4056
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	700	$310,440	$2,500,000	0.6355
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	850	$5,623,021	$2,253,821	67.20 per $100,000 assessed
Township of Langley Fire Department	400	$27,981,807	-	-

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their financial information is included for further consideration.

TABLE #38: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fire Department Name	Population	Operating Budget	Capital Budget	Tax Rate
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Denman Island	1,300	$531,305	$9,000	0.6328
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Hornby Island	1,300	$705,900	$30,000	0.6795
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Fanny Bay	700	$260,000	$454,500	0.7767
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Union Bay	850	$849,825	$6,300,000	0.9572
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Bates Huband	400	$67,000	0	0.4217
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Rural Cumberland Contract w/Village of Cumberland	700	$260,305	0	0.6955

Consideration should be given to the number of incidents that occur annually. The below data is for 2024. This information along with the number of fire stations that serve the area and the staffing provide additional information to consider.

TABLE #39: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – INCIDENTS, STATIONS, STAFFING

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	23,000	2,400	1	32
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	1,800	145	1	26*
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	900	84	1	24*

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	165	30	1	24*
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	800	38	1	18*
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	8,000	356	1	43
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	3,000	170	1	25
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	700	11	0	10
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	850	2,070	6	81
Township of Langley Fire Department	400	12,684	7	206

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their data is included for further consideration.

TABLE #40: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS, STATIONS, AND STAFFING

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Denman Island	1,300	137	1	35.8
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Hornby Island	1,300	184	1	31
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Fanny Bay	700	46	1	15
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Union Bay	850	107	1	21
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Bates Huband	400	0	0	0

Fire Department Name	Population	2024 # Incidents	# Stations	# Staff
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Rural Cumberland Contract w/Village of Cumberland	700	48	0	0

TABLE #41: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – STAFFING AND APPARATUS DETAILS

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	32	1 FC 1 DC 6 Cpt 6 POC 18 FF	9	2 Pumper 1 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 2 Bush 1 Side x Side
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	26*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 18 POC 1 BC	10.5	1 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 3 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	5.5	2 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	4	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Rescue 1 Other

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	18*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 3 Cpt 12 POC	3	1 Pumper 1 Tanker 1 Rescue
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	43	1 FC 1 DC 1 AC 40 POC	5	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue Pumper 1 SPU
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	25	25 POC	2	1 Pumper 1 Tanker
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	10	10 POC	1	1 Aerial
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	81	1 FC 1 DC 5 Cpt 10 FF 63 POC 1 Admin	21	8 Pumper 1 Aerial 5 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 1 Light Air Support 3 Command 1 River Rescue

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Township of Langley Fire Department	206	1 FC 2 DC 4 AC 24 Cpt 95 FF 80 POC	26	9 Pumper 3 Squads 8 Tankers 3 Rescues 1 SPU 2 Quints

Note: The Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services model has a shared Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief amongst the four fire stations.

The Comox Valley Regional District has five additional fire services within the region. Their data is included for further consideration.

TABLE #42: COMPARABLE FIRE SERVICE DATA – ADDITIONAL STAFFING AND APPARATUS DETAILS

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Cranbrook Fire & Emergency Services	32	1 FC 1 DC 6 Cpt 6 POC 18 FF	9	2 Pumper 1 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 2 Bush 1 Side x Side
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Windermere	26*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 18 POC 1 BC	10.5	1 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 2 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 3 Other

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Fairmont Hot Springs	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	5.5	2 Pumper 0.5 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Panorama	24*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 4 Cpt 16 POC 1 BC	4	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Rescue 1 Other
Columbia Valley Rural Fire & Rescue Services - Edgewater	18*	1 FC* 1 DC* 1 AC* 3 Cpt 12 POC	3	1 Pumper 1 Tanker 1 Rescue
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Oyster River	43	1 FC 1 DC 1 AC 40 POC	5	1 Pumper 1 Aerial 1 Tanker 1 Rescue Pumper 1 SPU
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services - Merville	25	25 POC	2	1 Pumper 1 Tanker

Fire Department Name	# Staff	Staff Details	Apparatus	Apparatus Details
Comox Valley Regional District Fire Services – Mt. Washington	10	10 POC	1	1 Aerial
Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue	81	1 FC 1 DC 5 Cpt 10 FF 63 POC 1 Admin	21	8 Pumper 1 Aerial 5 Tanker 1 Rescue 1 SPU 1 Light Air Support 3 Command 1 River Rescue
Township of Langley Fire Department	206	1 FC 2 DC 4 AC 24 Cpt 95 FF 80 POC	26	9 Pumper 3 Squads 8 Tankers 3 Rescues 1 SPU 2 Quints

APPENDIX G: APPARATUS

Creston

Engine 21 - Creston - 2010 Ferrara 1500 gpm pumper with 1,000 gallon tank

Ladder 21 - Creston- 2001 Quint with 1500 gpm pump and 500 gallon tank

Tender 21- Creston - 2003 Sterling Water Tender with 3,000 gallon tank.

HazMat Trailer - Creston

Canyon Lister

Engine 51 - Canyon Lister - 2000 International Pumper with 1050 gpm and 800 gallon tank.

Tender 51 - Canyon Lister - 2011 Freightliner (Rosenbauer) with 650 gpm pump and 1,600 gallon tank.

Brush 51- Canyon Lister - 2008 Ford F550.

Supply 51 - Canyon Lister - 2002 GMC

Structure Protection Unit - Type 2 - Canyone Lister

Wynndel-Lakeview

Engine 41 - Wynndel-Lakeview - 2000 International Pumper- 1050 gpm with 500 gallon tank.

Tender 41 - Wynndel Lakeview - 2020 Freightline with 650 gpm pump and 1,600 gallon tank.

Command 41 - Wynndel Lakeview - 2005 Ford F350

West Creston

Engine 61 - West Creston - 2001 Superior Pumper- 1,050 pump with 800 gallon tank.

Brush 61 - West Creston - 1988 Ford 350

Support 41 - West Creston - 1997 Ford

The CVFS has command vehicles for each fire hall, including: C51 (2017 Ford F150), C52 (2017 Ford F350), and C53 (2019 Ford F350). While command vehicles typically have a service life of 12 to 15 years, replacement should be scheduled based on a comprehensive evaluation of vehicle condition, reliability, maintenance history, and escalating repair costs. Proactive lifecycle planning ensures cost-effective fleet management and minimizes the risk of operational disruptions due to unexpected mechanical failures.

APPENDIX H: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) FRAMEWORK

To ensure that the recommendations and strategies outlined in this FMP translate into measurable outcomes, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework has been developed. This framework provides a set of quantifiable metrics aligned with the core functional areas of the CVFS leadership to track progress, evaluate effectiveness, and maintain accountability over time.

Each KPI reflects an important aspect of fire service delivery, including emergency response, training and certification, fire prevention, apparatus/equipment maintenance, workforce sustainability, public engagement, and financial stewardship. Where applicable, benchmarks have been aligned with relevant provincial standards, NFPA guidelines, and best practices observed in comparable jurisdictions.

The measurement frequencies are designed to balance oversight with operational practicality. Annual reporting on most KPIs will support ongoing improvement efforts and help inform future resource allocation, training priorities, and strategic decision-making.

This KPI framework should be viewed as a living tool that is intended to evolve with the department as service demands shift, community expectations change, and new risks emerge.

Key Performance Indicator Framework

Strategic Area	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Target Benchmark	Measurement Frequency
Emergency Response	80th percentile response time for first arriving unit (NFPA 1720 compliance)	10 minutes or less, 80% of the time	Annually
Training & Certification	% of firefighters meeting BC Playbook service level training requirements	100% compliance by operational level	Quarterly
Fire Prevention & Public Education	Number of public education events delivered annually	Minimum of 12 events per year	Annually
Apparatus & Equipment	% of apparatus within recommended service life (per FUS and NFPA standards)	90% apparatus within serviceable age and condition	Annually
Human Resources & Leadership	Annual turnover rate of paid-on-call firefighters	Below 15% annual turnover	Annually
Community Engagement	Community satisfaction score from public survey (biennial)	Minimum 75% positive satisfaction rate	Every 2 years
Financial Sustainability	% of capital projects delivered on time and within budget	90% or more of projects on track	Annually