



## “OPERATOR...I’D LIKE TO REPORT A FIRE.”

**A frightening thought, isn’t it? Smoke in the house. “Should I call 911, or should I look for the fire and try and put it out myself? I didn’t think that this could ever happen to me.”**

Unfortunately, it can and annual losses in our region prove the point. Most fires are preventable, but some are not. Your best defenses against injury and catastrophic damage from a fire are preparedness and haste.

The qathet Regional District has two well-established volunteer fire departments on the mainland. **Malaspina Volunteer Fire Department** services properties from the City of Powell River’s east boundary, south to 1.3 km past Roberts Road. **Northside Volunteer Fire Department** serves properties from just north of Lund (north boundary of DLs 4194, 1615, 4204) south to Tla’amin Nation and includes properties on the Malaspina Peninsula side of Okeover Inlet from Penrose Bay south. It does not include Sharpe’s Bay, Bliss Landing, Savary or Hernando Islands. The qathet Regional District also has a strong relationship with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations in dealing with Wildland Interface Fires (forest fires that threaten residential areas) and fires within unprotected areas.

We hope that this guide will be of assistance to you in protecting you, your family, and your property.

## CALLING FOR HELP - 911

**911** is an easy-to-remember, 3-digit telephone number that gives you immediate access to emergency services. The qRD’s **911** Emergency Telephone System is available to all mainland residents that require police, ambulance or fire services. The system is very fast and is manned 24 hours a day. When you dial **911**, the operator will ask you which service you require - Police, Fire or Ambulance.



If you request fire department assistance, the **911** operator will hand you off to the Campbell River Fire Dispatcher, who will take details from you, then call out, and maintain continuous communication with the appropriate fire department. The time it takes from your initial call to **911** to until fire department call-out is measured in seconds – the fire department will be dispatched faster than you could dial a conventional 10-digit telephone number.

If you see or smell smoke in your building and cannot find the source, phone **911 immediately**. Seconds wasted are seconds that the fire could become well-established and very difficult to extinguish.

After you have called **911** and requested assistance, occupants of the building should leave the structure and gather in a safe location until help arrives. If there is thick smoke in the building, then crawl out of the building for better visibility – avoid inhaling smoke if you can.

Once you are out and everybody is safe, you may also wish to walk to the end of your driveway to signal the fire department as it arrives.

***Please do not call off-duty firefighters for assistance during an emergency.***

# A RESIDENTS' GUIDE TO RURAL FIRE SUPPRESSION

## CAN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FIND YOU?

Every home within the qathet Regional District (excluding Lasqueti Island) should have a house number assigned to it. If you do not know your house number, or need one for new construction, simply call the regional district office at 604-485-2260.

Your fire department carries detailed mapping of house numbers, but having your house number clearly posted at the beginning of your driveway can make a huge difference in response time – especially on a dark, rainy night when visibility is poor.

Your house number should be at least 18 inches (450mm) wide by 12 inches (300mm) high, with clear, bright numbers on a dark background. Local sign-painting firms produce high quality, reflective signs if you do not want to prepare your own.

Place the sign at the beginning of your driveway, in a location clearly visible to on-coming traffic and high enough that weeds and brush will not obscure the sign.

Your fire department will do its very best to reach you during an emergency, but **the responsibility for a clearly marked and accessible driveway is yours.**

Please remember that most fire departments respond with large, heavy trucks that carry a lot of water and equipment – in many cases, they are bigger than dump trucks. The closer that fire-fighting equipment can be to the fire scene, the faster and more effective it will be with the job of fire suppression.

***Your driveway should be clearly marked with your house number, at least 15 feet (5 metres) wide, have a solid base of gravel or asphalt and should not be too steep or have very sharp curves. Please do your best to ensure that the driveway is not cluttered with vehicles, equipment, or anything else that would hinder access by a large emergency vehicle.***

*Firefighters will tell you that they would prefer to be dispatched to a false alarm than to a burning structure that is too involved to save.*



This truck weighs about 35,000 lbs (17 tons) fully loaded, is 11 feet (3.4 m) wide and is 28 feet (8.6m) long.

**COULD IT REACH YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS?**

**Time lost trying to find your home or business is time lost fighting the fire!**

# A RESIDENTS' GUIDE TO RURAL FIRE SUPPRESSION

## WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

**Smoke Alarms** are your business or home occupant's first line of defense – and they are not expensive. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and placement and remember to:

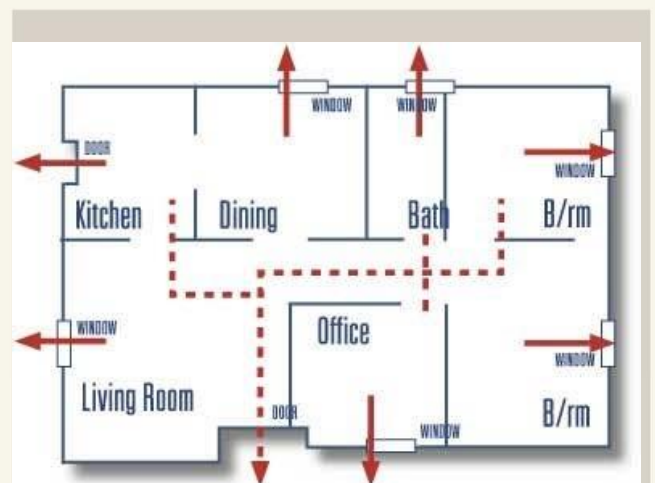
- Test them regularly;
- Change batteries routinely, twice a year;
- Inform your children and other building occupants about what they are, where they are, and what to do if they sound an alarm.

**Fire Extinguishers** are safe and easy to use. A typical house would carry two extinguishers. Each 5-pound (1.5 kg) extinguisher should be certified for use on AB and C fuels (that covers electrical, structural and flammable liquids fires). Again, follow the manufacturer's advice for placement, installation, maintenance, and operation. If you've never discharged a fire extinguisher (and most of us haven't), watch for opportunities at your local fire hall – rural departments often host open houses where they offer fire extinguisher training and practice.

**An Evacuation Plan** is very important. If the smoke alarm is activated, children and other occupants should be clear on how to leave the building and where to meet (or muster) – for their safety.

- If the building is filled with smoke, crawling on the floor may improve visibility, because smoke will be concentrated at the ceiling.
- Try to minimize inhaling the smoke – depending on what is burning, smoke fumes may be toxic.
- Close doors behind you – this will slow the spread of fire.
- Establish an alternate door from which to leave the building, in case the main door is inaccessible.
- Meet at an established location outside the building – a spot that everyone will be able to relate to (even at night) and that is well clear of responding fire trucks.
- Do not try to re-enter the building until the fire department has given you the "all-clear" to do so.

*If you represent a group (such as a day-care, school class, or just a group of people interested in understanding fire extinguishers), contact your local fire department's non-emergency phone number to arrange a demonstration.*



# A RESIDENTS' GUIDE TO RURAL FIRE SUPPRESSION

## WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

### Chimney Cleaning

Especially if you use wood as a primary source of heat, chimney cleaning should be a regular and frequent project. If the accumulated creosote in your chimney ignites, it becomes a difficult fire to access and to extinguish. If a chimney fire is allowed to burn unnoticed, it can lead to severe structural damage and possible building loss.

Losses from chimney fires are reported every year within the qathet Regional District.

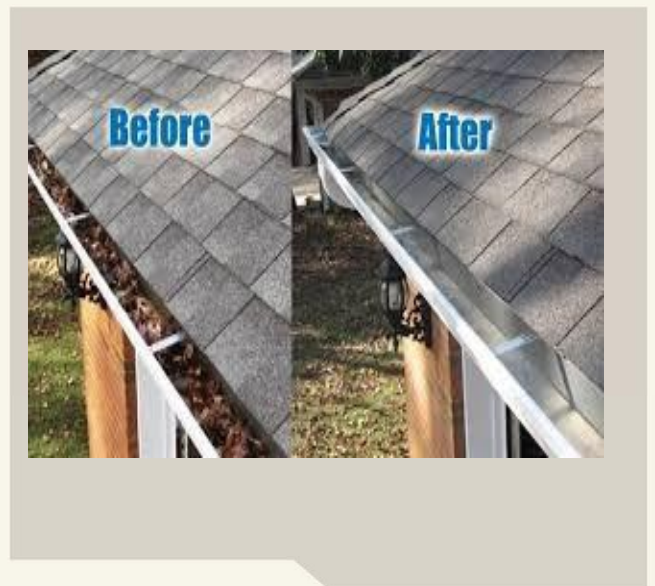
Make sure that you burn only dry, seasoned wood and refrain from burning household garbage or flammable fuels in your fireplace or heater.

Also, remember not to stack your firewood against, or too near the house.

### Roof Gutter Cleaning

Along with rainwater, roof gutters collect leaves, branches, and conifer cones. During an extended period of dry weather, this organic debris dries out in the gutter and becomes a fire hazard that a spark or ember from a nearby fire can easily ignite. Once established, a fire in the gutter can easily spread into the roof structure of your building.

Regular cleaning reduces that risk. The closer your building is to established trees, the more often you should clean your gutters.



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## WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

**Water Supply** during a fire is always a challenge for rural fire departments when they respond to areas that are not serviced by fire hydrants. Fire departments train regularly to take advantage of any available, nearby water source – swimming pools, lakes and ditches, if necessary. All departments are equipped with water tanker trucks, but the less distance that these have to travel to collect water, the better.

### Can you help?

- Do you have a pond on your property? Have you considered a pondscape as a part of your landscaping that could double as a water reservoir in the event of an emergency at your home or business?
- Do you have any water storage tanks on your property, or would you consider placing one in a location that would be accessible by the fire department?

If so, please contact your fire department, using the non-emergency phone number. A member of the department would be happy to assist and to catalog the water source for possible future use.

**Open Fires** can also be the source of catastrophic fires, if not properly managed. These include brush-clearing fires and even small campfires. Most rural areas (outside of the City's boundary) within the qathet Regional District (mainland) do not have any open burning regulations. Check with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to determine if there are any active fire bans in your area in advance of igniting a brush pile. In the simplest of terms:

- Watch the weather and avoid fires in windy conditions – any time of the year.
- Make sure that the amount of fuel you're burning will be manageable.
- Have appropriate tools and a water source available nearby – even for a campfire.
- Don't ever burn household garbage (it's illegal and very inconsiderate to neighbors).
- Extinguish the fire completely before leaving the scene.

For more information on open burning, current burning bans, and procedures, please check the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operation's website at [www.bcwildfire.ca](http://www.bcwildfire.ca). Powell River is part of the "Coastal Fire Centre."



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MALASPINA VOLUNTEERS

## If you would like more information:

qRD fire halls are unmanned so please leave a message and one of volunteer members will return your call as soon as possible.

Malaspina VFD  
Non-emergency phone 604 487-9911  
[mvfdchief@gathet.ca](mailto:mvfdchief@gathet.ca)

Northside VDF  
Non-emergency phone 604 483-7700  
[nvfdchief@gathet.ca](mailto:nvfdchief@gathet.ca)

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED BECOMING A MEMBER OF YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT?

One of the greatest challenges for rural fire departments is recruiting and maintaining a required number of active members to meet safety standards and the insurance industry's requirements. Without that minimum number, there is a risk of losing insurance recognition, or worse, the department itself.

Remember, fire departments offer a volunteer service that through a referendum, property owners agreed to support with taxes and manpower.

You do not need to be in prime physical condition, have a specific skill or have experience with other services – just an interest in learning, participating and being a part of a great team. Training is provided for you and the departments offer a range of opportunities and incentives.

If you are working or retired, young or not-so-young, interested in operating vehicles (or equipment, or radios), or can help with traffic control at an emergency scene, then would love to talk to you. Your support is critical to the department's success and to the effectiveness of the rural fire service.