

**COFFEE CREEK VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT – TRINITY CENTER
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

STATISTICS AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2008

Activity classification	2008	2007
Fires	11	15
Medicals	41	81
Traffic collisions	15	10
SAR	1	1
Air crash	1	0
Misc (incl FIREWATCH patrols)	17	29
Trainings	31	41
Total emergency responses	70	107
Total responses	117	177

Narrative

As can be seen from the above, activity was way down in 2008 compared to 2007. This is attributable to fewer people in our response area during the summer season. Summer of 2007 generated 70+% of our emergency responses for that year. This indicates the influence on emergency responses due to tourism and recreational activity. Tourism was down in 2008 due to four factors:

- 1. A receding economy.**
- 2. High fuel prices.**
- 3. Low lake level due to drought conditions.**
- 4. Smoke from the lightning-caused fires starting 6/20/21.**

For all of Trinity County the major public safety event was the series of lightning caused wild land fires started on 6/20-21/08. These fires eventually burned in excess of 200k acres to the west and southwest of the north lake area. Unknown to the majority of residents in the CCFVD-TCVFD response area, these lightning strikes also hit the north lake area and created the same hazard potential.

On 6/20/2008 just prior to daybreak CCVFD and TCVFD were almost simultaneously dispatched on two fires. One was described as being in the vicinity of Hatchet Cr and the other in the vicinity of Strope Cr. Responding units were neither able to reach nor even find the fire near Hatchet Cr. USFS Bonanza King lookout was able to advise that this was a solo tree burning in an inaccessible area with no structures proximate and presenting no danger of spread.

Responding TCVFD units located and extinguished a fire on a hill top above a cliff just northwest of S/R 3 and Strope Cr Rd. This fire had a moderate rate of spread and was endangering homes off Strope Cr Rd. TCVFD extinguished this fire.

During the afternoon hours of 6/21 CCVFD-TCVFD were dispatched to a reported wild land fire near Davis Cr, west of S/R 3, between Trinity Center and Long Cyn-Lake Forest Estates-Covington Mill. Upon arrival of initial responding TCVFD apparatus a solo USFS firefighter was encountered (USFS Patrol 41), who had been directed to the fire by the USFS Bonanza King lookout. Immediately upon his arrival he determined that this fire was far beyond his solo capabilities and immediately requested mutual aid. USFS and TCVFD worked as a team and extinguished this fire. While working this fire (the Davis Fire) TCVFD was advised of an additional mutual aid request from USFS which was working a fire on top of the divide between Swift Cr and Rancheria Creek just northwest of and proximate to Trinity Center. Once released from the Davis Fire, CCVFD-TCVFD resources were committed to the Rancheria Fire and assisted USFS until all responders were relieved by a contract clean-up crew.

Large fires almost always start as small fires. If firefighters can get to a fire quickly enough and initiate suppression efforts quickly and skillfully enough they may be able to contain, control and extinguish the fire before it grows to the point where direct attack becomes too risky and indirect attack must be initiated. Clearly there is an element of luck here, and in these instances luck sided with the USFS-CCVFD-TCVFD firefighting team.

The remainder of the activity for 2008 was routine, but within the context that fire/rescue/EMS agencies exist to respond to emergencies and that is the normal working environment.

Two issues to consider for the future

CCVFD lost five experienced members to retirement at the conclusion of 2008. All five have been extremely valuable assets to our fire/rescue/EMS team. All five are facing age and health issues and have soldiered on despite the obstacles and difficulties in doing so. They have my highest respect and gratitude for their years of service and dedication. Unfortunately no one has emerged to replace them, despite a community meeting in October for the purpose of recruitment. Given the small population of Coffee Creek and the aging demographic, this is not surprising. Fire/rescue/EMS is dangerous work, dangerous for patients, dangerous for responders, so it is not a place for unqualified, undisciplined or unskilled individuals. We can, and do, train our personnel in the requisite skills, which is an extremely lengthy process. But if an individual has personal issues, character defects, or lacks the dedication to make the necessary commitment then they will not be able to become part of the team.

Offsetting this is the fact that staffing at TCVFD has remained relatively stable. In addition, all personnel have quite a bit of experience so the skills and knowledge are well entrenched. Even the most recent TCVFD recruit has prior fire-fighting experience so he can hit the ground running. In addition, if a new member has emergency response experience, even if not in fire/rescue/EMS, that person will already be conditioned to functioning in critical situations.

CCVFD and TCVFD effectively function as a single team. Both departments do all training together and are simultaneously dispatched on all calls for service. Given this arrangement, the lack of personnel will not increase the workload of TCVFD since TCVFD would be responding either way. What stands to be impacted are two areas:

- 1. Increased response times to Coffee Creek. Typical TCVFD response time once in service to Coffee Creek is ten minutes for EMS, and slightly greater for fire apparatus.**
- 2. Insufficient resources for larger incidents. This factor impacts the entire response area since the rationale behind simultaneous dispatches is to ensure sufficient resources.**

Lack of volunteer personnel is not unique to Coffee Creek. This is a topic of frequent discussion in the Trinity County Fire Chiefs Association and is (at least) a county-wide problem. Depending on which statistics one reads, somewhere in the area of 75+% of the country is protected by all or partially volunteer fire departments. The almost universal response throughout the country is that volunteerism is down. Unfortunately, we are not an exception.

By now it is not news that the country is in a recession. Realistically then, both departments must be prepared for reduced donations and less income from fund-raising efforts. TCVFD has a modest income derived from tax revenue, so there is something of a safety net there. CCVFD has no such stable and assured source of income and thus is always subject to economic vicissitudes. Fortunately for both departments, insurance has been switched to a new carrier (Golden State Risk Management Authority), which result in a cost saving to each department of approximately \$4k per year. As time passes we will gain a clearer picture of the economic effects on both departments. TCVFD/CSD has been able to pay off the lot purchased for a new station. Progress on construction of the building will depend on donations and fund-raisers. CCVFD must depend on donations and fund-raisers to sustain day to day operations so must be especially vigilant to make sure we can remain solvent. Critical foresight for the short to mid-term future will be critical to retaining our ability to render emergency services.

Conclusion

Aside from normal maintenance and repairs, the rolling stock of both departments is sound and reliable. Numerous critical incidents have proven the dependability and suitability of our apparatus to the types of incidents we handle and the environment in which we function. At this point no major repairs are anticipated and no vehicle replacements are planned or necessary. Both departments are in equally fine shape in terms of personal protective equipment, communications equipment and ancillary equipment. Our personnel are equipped to work as safely as is humanly possible.

Once again it has been my privilege to serve the north lake community, the Trinity Center and Coffee Creek Boards, and to lead the dedicated men and women of both departments.

Roger Chatterton
Chief
Coffee Creek Volunteer Fire Department
Trinity Center Volunteer Fire Department