



# ELECTORAL AREA DIRECTORS REPORT

**TO:** Chair and Directors

**File No:** 7010 02

**SUBJECT:** Road Rescue Feasibility Report

**DESCRIPTION:** Report from Derek Sutherland, Team Leader Protective Services dated September 17, 2018.

**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT: the Electoral Area Directors forward the Road Rescue Feasibility Report to the Board for information;

AND THAT: the Electoral Area Directors recommend to the Board that staff be directed to work with existing road rescue service providers to determine strengths and weaknesses in the existing programs and work collectively towards finding solutions to servicing issues.

## SHORT SUMMARY:

Within the CSRD, there are two road rescue societies and two fire departments (Revelstoke and Golden) that provide road rescue services. Additionally, two fire departments from outside the CSRD (Vernon and Chase) provide road rescue services to areas within the CSRD. There are areas serviced by the Revelstoke and Golden fire departments which are outside of their fire suppression area, but are largely remote. However, the areas serviced by the Vernon and Chase fire departments are more densely populated and are quite far from their respective fire halls. As an example, the Chase Fire Department services the entire Electoral Area F, and a road rescue call out to Seymour Arm can take close to two hours for response.

The following recommendation is provided by Firewise Consulting in the road rescue feasibility study report:

***The CSRD should enable those fire departments within the regional district who are willing to provide road rescue services to indeed provide the service in support of emergency services and to improve the safety of the public and firefighters.***

***As stated above the opinion of Firewise suggesting the development of road rescue teams in the Falkland area, using the resources of the Falkland Volunteer Fire Department and in the Celista area using the resources of the Celista, Scotch Creek/Lee Creek and Anglemont Volunteer Fire Departments would be a logical first step to ensure a reasonable level of road rescue is provided.***

CSRD staff does not agree with the recommendation provided in the report and would alternatively suggest that the Board advocate for the Province to take a more proactive role in the development and maintenance of road rescue services and provide support to the sustainability of the societies that are currently offering the service. In addition, staff suggests the CSRD continue to work with road rescue service providers to determine the strengths and weaknesses in the service delivery and to work collectively and collaboratively to address any shortfalls that may exist.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2013, the Falkland Road Rescue Society ceased operations, which created a gap in service for the southern portion of Electoral Area D, and the northern portion of the Regional District of North Okanagan. At that time, the City of Vernon Fire Department agreed to provide service to the area as an interim measure to ensure the safety of the motoring public. The CSRD agreed to commission a study to examine options for providing the service within its boundaries. In 2014, the CSRD Board approved an expenditure to undertake a road rescue feasibility study and the contract was awarded to Fire Chief Ken McClure from the Golden Fire Department. Tragically, Chief McClure passed away in the fall of 2014 before he had the opportunity to complete the study. The contract was then awarded to Fire Chief Darrell Blades, from 100 Mile House, BC. Chief Blades was unable to fulfill his commitments to the project after taking a position in another jurisdiction. In the summer of 2017 the project was retendered and awarded to Firewise Consulting, who finalized the road rescue report (Firewise Report).

The Firewise Report identifies that there is no legislative requirement for any governing body to provide road rescue service in BC. However, the legislative void has not eliminated the social need for road rescue as a public safety function. The lack of clear legislative mandate has resulted in an inconsistent application of the provision of road rescue services throughout the province. Eighty percent of road rescue needs in BC are serviced by local fire departments, with the remaining twenty percent being serviced by road rescue societies and search and rescue organizations that are staffed with volunteers. At one time, as many as 23 road rescue societies were operating provincially, compared with 2018, there are only eight societies still operating. There are several reasons for the decline, including unsustainable funding models, volunteer recruitment and retention, and absorption of the service by local fire departments. When fire departments absorb the function, it is often because funding and volunteer issues are affecting a society's ability to sustain operations.

**POLICY:**

The CSRD does not currently engage in road rescue service provision. If the CSRD was interested in providing a road rescue service, the extent of the service area would need to be determined along with more detailed costs, the model and method of service provision, the extent of the service provided. At that point the establishment of the service would require broad and sufficient support from the electorate.

**FINANCIAL:**

Local governments throughout BC have long been critical of the provincial government for not taking full responsibility of road rescue in the province. As a result, communities have taken on the delivery of road rescue without financial support from the provincial government, which has put more financial burden on local taxpayers, despite the fact that road rescue is being delivered on provincial and federal roadways. The province does provide some support to road rescue organizations and fire departments that deliver road rescue service outside of its fire protection boundaries. This program is administered by Emergency Management BC (EMBC) which pays \$330 per hour for a road rescue apparatus to respond to a road rescue call. This support is however insufficient to capture the full costs of the program as the payment only covers road rescue apparatus and does not cover fire suppression apparatus, support vehicles such as traffic control/protection units or command units. In addition to ongoing training requirements, these additional costs are borne fully at the local tax payer's expense.

The Firewise report estimates the cost to establish a road rescue service at each of the CSRD's fire departments would be \$35,000 per department. That cost would be to outfit one of the existing fire apparatus with the equipment necessary to conduct road rescue operations and to provide initial training to the department's members. Ongoing costs are estimated to be \$10,000 per year, very little of which would be recouped through EMBC funding. These costs are a starting point.

**SUMMARY:**

The question of whether to provide road rescue service internally is complex. There are significant social, moral, economic and political implications to be considered when evaluating the provision of road rescue. Through the Firewise Report and supplemental benchmarking along with discussions with existing service providers, CSRD staff advises that a region wide program to support road rescue would not be the best solution in this situation. If road rescue services are considered, the needs of the individual communities should be investigated independently from each other, as factors in every community are different. The Firewise Report recommends allowing those fire departments that are willing to provide the service, the ability to perform the service. CSRD staff does not consider this recommendation a sufficient threshold for making a decision of this nature. Further collaborative work should be undertaken by CSRD staff with service providers and the Province to better understand how the CSRD could play a supporting role and how the Province could offer increased support of the services. There could be negative consequences to advancing a road rescue service through the existing fire service function including recruitment and retention issues, along with critical stress issues as well as operational issues such as fire fighter and apparatus back-up provisions when fire members are called out on a road rescue call.

**DESIRED OUTCOMES:**

Through increased dialogue and collaboration with service providers, the existing road rescue service provision in the CSRD will strengthen. Increased lobbying to the provincial government to encourage a more active role in the participation and support of road rescue service providers in the province will strengthen the relationships and provide needed funding shifting the burden from the local taxpayer.

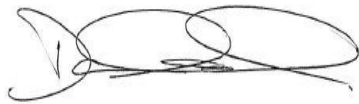
**COMMITTEE'S OPTIONS:**

1. *Endorse the Recommendation.*
2. *Deny the Recommendation.*
3. *Defer.*
4. *Any other action deemed appropriate by the Committee.*

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	EAD Report Road Rescue.docx
Attachments:	- CSRD Road Rescue Feasibility-Final.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 19, 2018

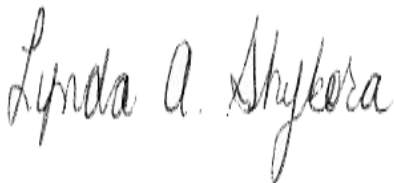
This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



**Darcy Mooney - Sep 17, 2018 - 2:48 PM**



**Jodi Pierce - Sep 18, 2018 - 11:49 AM**



**Lynda Shykora - Sep 18, 2018 - 3:35 PM**



**Charles Hamilton - Sep 19, 2018 - 9:04 AM**