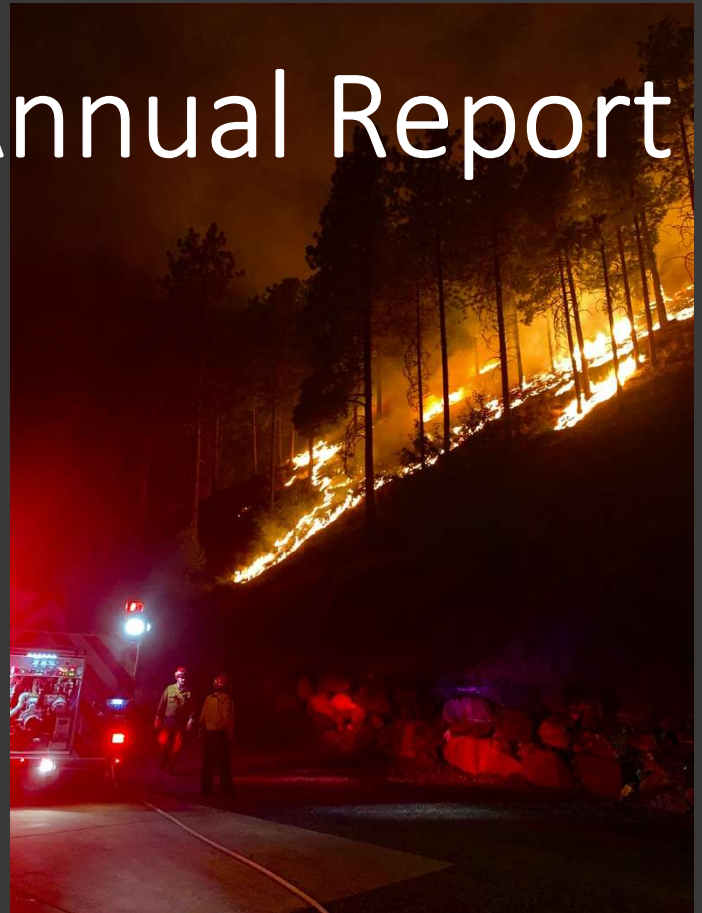




2021 Annual Report



2021 – Year in Summary

As Methow Valley residents reflect on 2021 they invariably think of what seemed like never ending smoke (at times the pollution from the smoke was recorded as the worst in the nation), major wildfires, and Covid-19. We all know the impact that Covid has had on the lives of Valley residents — cancelled plans, ZOOM meetings, availability of affordable housing, and the increase in the Valley population as people fled cities and suburbs.



The management and firefighters of Okanogan County Fire District 6 dealt with the smoke, wildfires, and Covid as well as other emergency incidents throughout the Valley. The number of incident responses reached 351 calls, the most in District 6 history. District firefighters managed to maintain initiatives promoting fire safety and fire prevention and provided volunteer labor to community events such as the home air filter giveaway program and Firewise education, fuel reduction, and home surveys.

After over a decade of planning District 6 broke ground on the new fire station in Winthrop. Significant progress has been made and move-in is projected for the 3rd quarter 2022. The station provides much needed apparatus space, indoor and outdoor training areas, equipment maintenance areas, administrative areas, as well as rest and rehabilitation areas for the firefighters.



The Firefighter Vocational Training Program (FVTP), funded by The Bruno and Evelyn Betti Foundation, has made significant progress towards its goal of training residents throughout North Central Washington to become career or volunteer firefighters. The Program Director was hired, the firefighting drone program was initiated, and the training facilities have been integrated into the new station plans. The Betti

foundation recognized the progress of the FVTP program and in January awarded an additional \$500K to the program's capital fund.

District 6 added 13 new volunteer firefighters to the ranks. All successfully completed Recruit training and are actively engaged in responding to incidents. Of significance is that three (3) of the new recruits respond from the Mazama station and five (5) from the Carlton station. Historically these stations are hard to staff with volunteers.

The District 6 staff and firefighters are grateful for the support of the Community and look forward to serving the Valley residents and visitors in 2022.



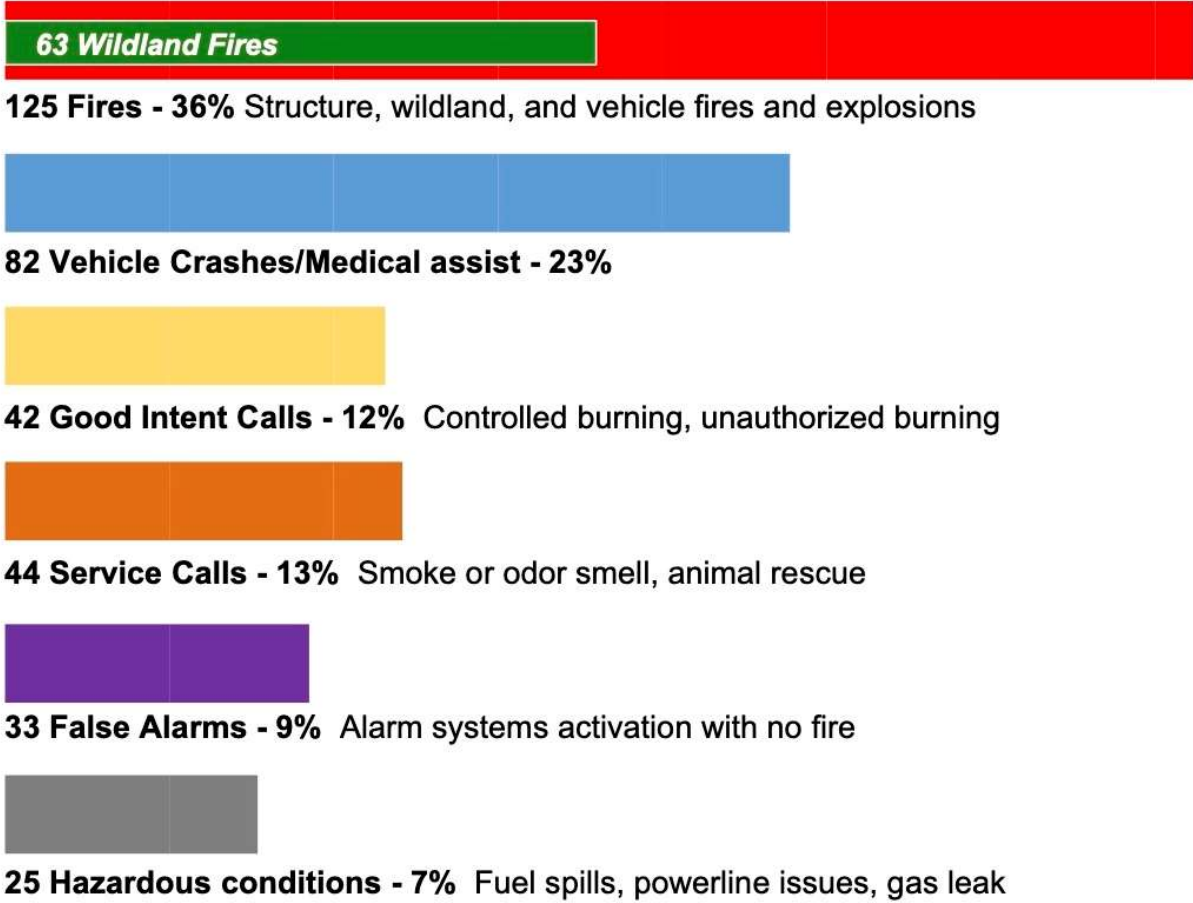
Emergency Incidents



This year District 6 had its highest call volume in its 64-year history. In total we had 351 call outs, 10% higher than last year. There were 41 different types of incidents as defined by the National Fire Classification System. These ranged in type from wildland, structure, and vehicle fires to animal rescue. Firefighters logged over 3771 hours of emergency response time, a 61% increase from 2020.

2021 = 351 Emergency Responses

The largest number of calls in a year to date



The first incident call of the year was on 1 January for an activated smoke alarm at a Twisp residence.

Fortunately, there was no fire. Then on 9 January District 6 responded to a call of a helicopter crash near the ice rink lower parking lot.

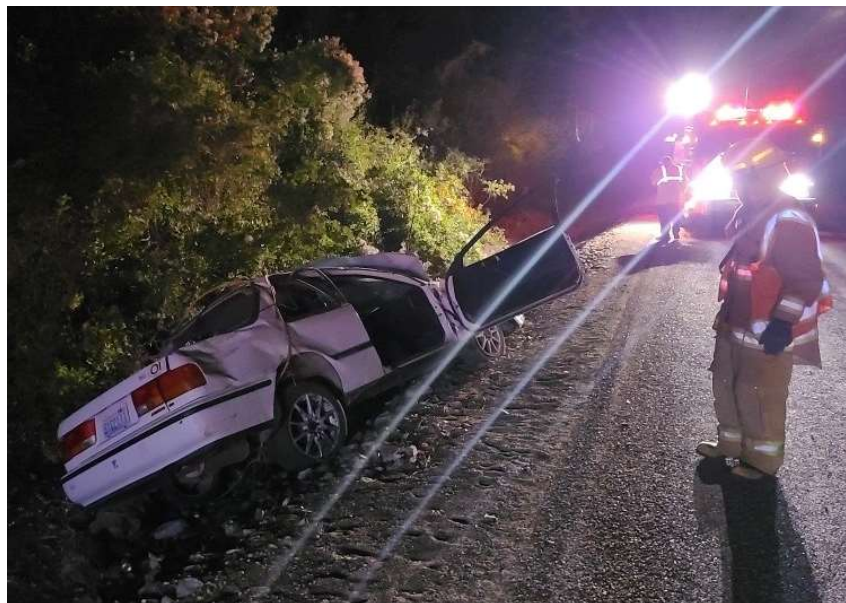


The two (2) passengers escaped without injury and there was no fire or collateral damage.



Early on Christmas Eve morning District 6 firefighters responded to a fully involved car fire that also ignited a small fire in a motor home parked nearby.

The car and motor home fires were quickly extinguished. Immediately following this incident firefighters were called to a chimney fire in Mazama. The last call of the year was on 27 December at 4AM, temperatures at minus four (4) degrees, for a chimney fire.



Overall, the District had a higher than normal call out for motor vehicle accidents, responding to over 77 calls, a 9% increase over 2020.

On 17 July a fire was ignited near the corner of West Chewuck and Cub Creek Roads resulting in a wildland fire that covered approximately 70,200 acres. There are numerous homes in the wildland urban interface environment of this burn area, fortunately only one (1) residence was lost.



While the Methow Valley experienced a lower than normal number of lightning storms in 2021, one storm moved through the area on 20 July resulting in the start of the Cedar Creek, Varden, and Delancy fires. The Cedar Creek fire burned over 55,200 acres, threatened structures from Mazama to the Twisp River drainage, and resulted in a State Emergency Mobilization of resources to fight the fire. At one point during the fire, it was declared the number one priority in the United States for the assignment of National resources to combat the fire.



Many houses were threatened, none were lost to this fire. The Cedar Creek and Cub Creek 2 wildfires resulted in the Valley being assigned two (2) Type 1 fire management teams. Type 1 teams are the top-rated teams in the nation, and both teams operated simultaneously in the Valley. Fire camps were set up at the Rhythm and Blues field and at the Methow Valley School District campus.



Fire District 6 administrative personnel stayed in close and continuous contact with all Type 1 teams to make sure that the best interest of the Fire District and the Valley communities were being met. Involvement included participation in the daily planning sessions, fire personnel and public briefings, and area on-site surveys.

While all of this was going on the District 6 firefighters responded to Conconully as part of a State Mobilization team to fight the Muckamuck wildland fire.

The wildland fire season resulted in District 6 responding to over 63 wildfire calls, 11% more than the previous year. The first lightning storm of the summer brought a lot of activity to our firefighters.

Many of the wildland fires had potential for rapid growth, such as two fires in the Twin Lakes Ranch development, but they were quickly contained by a rapid coordinated response of District 6, DNR, and the U.S. Forest Service.

In late June the Valley experienced an extreme heat wave with temperatures reaching over 110 degrees. This resulted in District 6 responding to calls throughout the Valley for propane tanks venting. The tanks were doing what they are supposed to do as pressure inside the tank built up causing the safety pressure release valve to vent.



We had 19 building related fires, a 64% increase over the previous year. This does not include chimney fires that would add another 12 calls. One structure fire resulted in the complete loss of the building. We also had an RV/home fire that also was a complete loss. All in all, it was a challenging year for residents in Fire District 6 and for the firefighters.



Training



This year our firefighters collectively logged over 4200 training hours. Due to Covid we continued to use the OCFD6 Covid protocol that was established in 2020. Each of the four (4) District stations train as individual units, or 'pods,' to contain any chance of cross contamination throughout the entire organization. Further, we ask all firefighters to wear masks and practice social distancing whether at training or at an incident. Currently, we do not require Covid vaccinations; we do encourage all firefighters to get vaccinated. So far our Covid related discipline has paid off for our firefighters.

In 2021 we conducted two (2) recruit training schools. The Spring training had eight (8) Recruits and the Fall session had five (5) Recruits. In June we conducted a Wildland Training School with seven (7) students. At completion of this school the students earn their National Certification as a wildland Fire Fighter Type 2 (FFT2).





Each year apparatus drivers are required to attend “Emergency Vehicle Incident Prevention” (EVIP) training and the infamous cone course. The cone course evaluates the driver’s ability to maneuver the District 6 vehicles in different situations. The road system and driveways in the Valley present many challenges to our drivers.



As part of the FVTP District 6 has initiated a firefighting drone program. The program has two (2) main objectives, 1) develop drone operations capability for District 6, and 2) train personnel in North Central Washington as drone pilots for other emergency incident response organizations.

District 6 firefighter Bob Cordes has completed his FAA Part 107 drone pilot certification and is currently helping to develop operational capability for District 6.



Maintaining and executing a quality training program is a top priority in the operations of District 6 and contributes significantly to firefighter safety and public safety. The new station combined with the 'Firefighter Vocational Training' program will significantly improve our training grounds and facilities.

Thank you, new recruits and veteran firefighters, for your dedication and commitment to training and to public service and safety.

Volunteer Recruiting and Retention

Volunteer firefighter recruiting and retention continues to be an issue in the Valley. Volunteering consumes a considerable amount of time and places new pressures on a person's physical and mental wellbeing, not to mention the need to coordinate family life and work life with volunteering activities. Nationally the number of volunteer firefighters continues to decline, according to information released by the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Finding and training new volunteers is a continual effort to maintain an adequate response crew on a 24/7 basis. At year's end the district firefighting staff consisted of five (5) career (paid) firefighters and 43 volunteer firefighters. There is a high degree of turnover of the volunteer firefighters.



Lack of affordable housing, lack of full time employment, and an aging volunteer workforce are among the reasons for the turnover. While we added 13 new Recruits to the roster, we also lost eight (8) of our seasoned firefighters.

In January 2021, a new career firefighter, Captain Zack Gurney, reported for duty. Captain Gurney is also the Program Manager for the Firefighter Vocational Training Program.

Based on Washington State Rating Bureau guidelines the district would be considered fully staffed with a complement of 75 firefighters. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us at 509-996-2227.



You can learn more about District 6 and becoming a volunteer firefighter by visiting our website at www.okanogancountyfd6.com.



Public Education and Fire Prevention

An integral part of Fire District 6 operations is an active program to promote public safety and incident prevention education. The primary objective of this program is to reduce fire and life safety risk incidents through public awareness, preparation, prevention, and mitigation. Studies have shown that through public awareness and education, communities can reduce fire loss and improve fire and life safety.



As part of the district's outreach program, it applied for and was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the 'Association of Washington Business Institute's Holiday Kid's Tree Project.' The District used the funds to provide toys and local merchant \$50 gift cards to families in need throughout District 6.

In April, the District participated in a Firewise Community meeting at the Twin Lakes Ranch Community. Washington State Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz was the featured speaker.



Other events our firefighters participated in included school visits, Winthrop 49ers and Twisp's 4th of July parades, the Yard Waste Recycle Program, the Methow Valley School District's wildland fire fuel reduction program, and the InstaBrand home air filter giveaway program.

As part of its public outreach program the district publishes a quarterly newsletter, maintains a district website, and has a Facebook page, all aimed at keeping the public informed about district activities and ways to help make your life and the community safer.



If you have questions about fire safety and prevention, would like to schedule a survey of ways to improve your home's safety from wildfires, or want to tour a fire station, please contact us at 509-996-2227

Fire Board of Commissioners

The Fire District Board of Commissioners and the Fire Chief had a busy year dealing with budget management, finalizing the design and construction plans for the new station, awarding the contract for the new station, and monitoring the station construction.



The Board decided to hold the monthly Commissioners meetings virtually due to Covid-19 guidelines. The public could participate in the meetings using a 'call-in' format. The meeting time, date, and instructions on how to call in were posted on the district website (www.okanogancountyfd6.com) and at the entrance to each station.

The Board approved the 2022 Budget Plan at their meeting in November 2021. Of significance in the budget for 2022 is the final payment for completion of the new station. Also, increased funding is available in the FVTP budget due to the additional \$500K awarded by the Betti Foundation.



District 6 has an active program applying for grant funding to relieve pressure on the annual budget. This year District 6 applied for a FEMA grant to replace the District's Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) that has reached its end of service life. The district received the grant award of \$268K in October. The new SCBAs will be put in service in January 2022. Also, the District was awarded over \$60K through the Covid Relief Fund Program to purchase Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) cleaning and drying machines and decontamination equipment for cleaning the interior of fire apparatus and fire stations.

The Board approved a one (1) year extension of the contract to provide 'Fire Protection Services' to the Town of Twisp. The district has provided these services to Twisp for the past 9 (nine) years.

Les Stokes completed his six (6) year term as a Fire Commissioner. In the November general election, Miles Milliken was elected to fill the vacated Fire Commissioner position. Miles also is a volunteer firefighter with District 6

The district's financial position is good and there is a strategic plan in place to deal with operations, facilities, equipment maintenance and replacement, and improvements.



Okanogan County Fire District 6 maintains a professional crew of career and volunteer firefighters. They are well trained and dedicated to serving you. The district had a busy, yet safe, emergency response year in 2021, made all the more challenging by the Covid-19 pandemic.