RDOS Area "D" Service & Boundary Study
Fact Sheets
November 2021

EMERGENCY SERVICES

➢ What services are provided?

Fire Protection

Part of Area "D" receives fire protection services from the Okanagan Falls Volunteer Fire Department (Figure 1). The department is comprised of a paid-on-call fire chief, a deputy chief and approximately 22 paid on-call firefighters. The fire department is authorized to provide:

- fire protection services
- fire prevention program (public education)
- auto extrication/road rescue services
- medical first responder services ,
- rescue services (still water rescue, low angle rescue, marine rescue, ice rescue), and
- property fire inspections[1]

Portions of Electoral Area "D" that lie outside of the fire service boundary receive no fire protection service. Responsibility for wildfires, as well as Crown lands, rests with the provincial the Wildfire Management Branch, although are often initially responded and attended to by the Okanagan Falls department. Within the Province of B.C. there are 6 fire centres and within each centre are zones. Area "D" is within the Penticton zone.

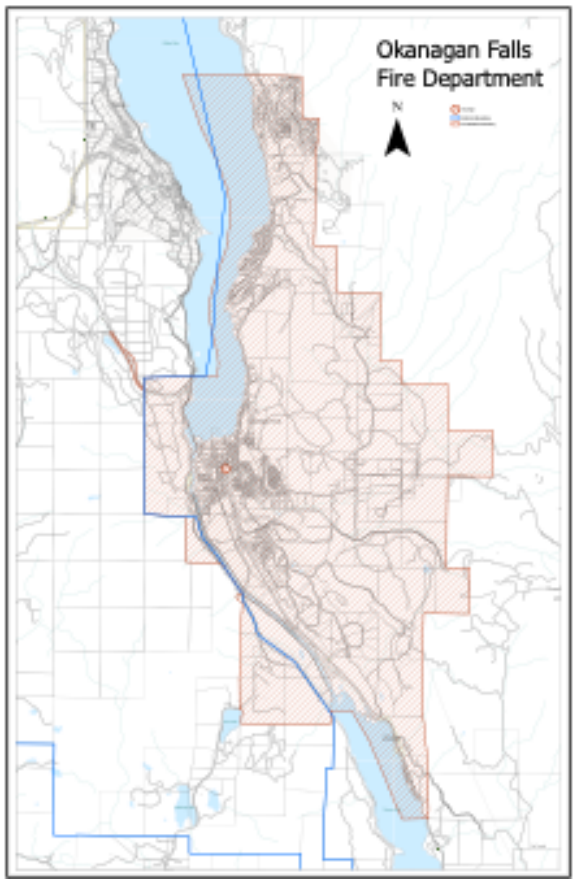
Emergency Planning

The RDOS is the lead local government authority for emergency management throughout the Okanagan-Similkameen region, including all of Area "D". This includes an emergency plan for the entire regional district, a Manager of Emergency Services, an Emergency Program Coordinator, an element of local planning, training and coordination specific to Area "D", and an annual contribution agreement for regional Search & Rescue.

911 Emergency Call System

As with emergency planning, the RDOS also provides 911 emergency telephone service for the entire regional district, including the Penticton Indian Band.

Figure 1: Okanagan Falls Fire Service Area



[1] This service was previously provided on contract. While the department has training, the department is not currently undertaking fire inspections.

Victim Services
Victim services are provided locally by the RCMP, but are supported by the regional district through subsidies from the electoral areas. RCMP Victim Services offers assistance and resources to those in need.

➢ Who delivers the service?

Fire Protection
The Okanagan Falls VFD services the area shown in Figure 1, which includes the communities of Okanagan Falls, Vaseux Lake, Skaha Estates and Heritage Hills. The VFD department is also a signatory to a mutual aid agreement that includes fire departments in Kaleden, Willowbrook, Oliver, Osoyoos, Penticton, Princeton, Summerland, the Hedley Improvement District, the Oliver Fire Protection District, and the Osoyoos Rural Fire Protection District whereby any one of them may, in situations where the resources of their own fire department are insufficient, request assistance from the others to bring the situation under control.

Emergency Services
Emergency planning, coordination and preparedness initiatives are delivered on a region-wide basis to all electoral areas and municipalities within the regional district by the RDOS, overseen by a Manager of Emergency Services who reports to the Manager of Community Services.

Within the boundaries of the Regional District there are four volunteer SAR teams: Keremeos, Oliver/Osoyoos, Penticton and Princeton. These four separate teams combine their efforts to provide mutual aid service throughout the region. Calls for service from Area "D" are generally responded to by Penticton Search and Rescue. The RCMP with jurisdictional authority is responsible for all SAR activity within their catchment areas. Municipal and provincial governments also contribute towards SAR operations within the Okanagan-Similkameen region.

E911 Emergency Call System
Operation of the E911 service is contracted to the Regional District of Central Okanagan in partnership with E-Comm – an emergency communication centre located in the Lower Mainland. The current agreement with E-Comm is valid until December 31, 2021. 911 fire calls for the South Okanagan-Similkameen region are relayed to a secondary dispatch centre at the Kelowna fire hall. 911 medical first response calls are relayed from E-Comm to the Provincial BC Health Services Emergency Dispatch Operations Centre in Kamloops.

Victim Services
Victim Services is one of the programs provided by the RCMP's Community Policing Unit from the detachment in the City of Penticton.

➢ Who makes decisions?

The Okanagan Falls fire chief has operational authority over the fire department, and responsibility for complying with the BC firefighter training "Playbook". Decisions regarding the regional district volunteer fire services, including decisions pertaining to budget and capital expenditures are made by the RDOS Board of Directors. The RDOS has a relatively new Fire Department Operational Bylaw that states that the Chief Administrative Officer oversees the operation of fire services for the regional district, but the bylaw ensures that the RDOS consults with the fire departments on major decisions, such as training programs, operational guidelines and the hiring of new chiefs.

In 2018 the Fire Chiefs created the South Okanagan Similkameen Fire Chiefs' Association, including the chiefs and deputy chiefs of Naramata, Kaleden, Okanagan Falls, Willowbrook, Keremeos and Anarchist Mountain volunteer fire departments. Tulameen Fire Department opted not to participate in the society. The purpose of the society is to benefit volunteer members through sharing training methods, equipment and information. The society also carries out the recruitment process for vacant fire chief positions.

The Chiefs report directly to a Fire Services Committee established by the Board of Directors. The Committee is composed of the directors from the areas that have the regional volunteer fire departments.

Emergency Planning and 911
Decisions for emergency planning and E911, as region-wide services, are made by the full Board of Directors.

Victim Services
Victim Services is provided to a smaller subset of electoral areas; decisions are made by the RCMP that provide the service; the service is structured solely to make a financial contribution to the RCMP's service.

➢ What is spent by RDOS on the service?

The 2021 budget for each of the emergency services are as outlined in Figure 2. It is worth noting that the Okanagan Falls fire service budget was significantly higher than usual in 2021, due to some capital expenditures (fire hall planning and construction). General operating expenses generally range from $380,000 to $400,000. Similarly the Emergency Planning budget undertook a $600,000 wildfire preparedness program initiative in 2021, paid for through a grant; in future years the budget is generally in the range of $515,000 to $530,000, supported by both tax requisition and grants.

Figure 2
Cost of Services
2021

Service	Cost[1]
OK Falls VFD[2 3]	$727,068
Emergency Planning[3]	$1,119,462
911 Emergency Call System	$1,070,522
Victim Services	$13,743
Total	**$2,930,795**

1 Cost estimates are from adopted 2021 budget figures
2 Service area is shown on Figure 1 map
3 Service cost figures represent an unusual year (see text)

In addition to the service costs, there are also operating reserve accounts created for most services, and others have capital reserves as well. It is useful to consider the amounts that the region has set aside for future expenditures.

Figure 3
Reserve Totals
2020

Service	Reserve Total[1]
OK Falls VFD - Equipment	$803,531
OK Falls VFD - Building	$225,023
Emergency Planning Operating	$13,078
911 Capital	$460,747
911 Operating	$297,328
Victim Services Operating	$3,726

1 Reserve totals are as at the end of 2020.

➢ How are the costs recovered?

Fire Protection
The cost of the Okanagan Falls volunteer fire department is raised primarily through property taxes. The tax requisition amount is raised from the properties within the service area based on the assessed value of the property (building and land). The cost of auto extrication services outside of a fire department boundary is funded provincially using a task number assigned by Emergency Management BC.

Emergency Planning
The cost of emergency planning is shared by all jurisdictions (electoral areas and municipalities) in the region, and the costs are raised primarily through property taxes based on assessed value (land and improvements).

E911 Emergency Call Service
Tax requisitions for E911 emergency telephone services are based on the assessed value of improvements only. The costs are shared by all the region's jurisdictions (electoral areas and municipalities).

Victim Services
The requisition for the victim services contribution is raised through property taxes within a defined service area. Area "D" is within a service area that includes Areas "D", "E", "F" and "I".

➢ What is the cost to a typical residence?

The tax impact on areas within Area "D" receiving fire protection from an RDOS volunteer fire department and/or emergency services is shown in Figure 4. The amount owing is based on a home valued at $450,000, of which 50% of the value is assumed to be land value, and 50% improvement or building value.

For example, a residence valued at $450,000 within Okanagan Falls would pay approximately $163 in taxes for fire protection for 2021, along with $21 for other emergency planning, victim services and 911 service.

Figure 4
Cost on Typical Residence
2021

Service	Tax Req.[1]	Res. Rate	Owing[2]
OK Falls VFD	$424,786	0.3626	$163.18
Emergency Planning	$253,245	0.0099	$4.46
911 Emergency Call[3]	$939,069	0.0675	$15.19
Victim Services	$8,743	0.0024	$1.06
Total			**$183.89**

1 Tax requisition amount excludes 5.25% Surveyor of Taxes fee

2 Impact is calculated on a home assessed at $450,000

3 Assessed on improvements only (assumed at $225,000)

➢ What impact would incorporation have on these services?

It is expected that a newly incorporated municipality would continue to participate in and contribute to the RDOS regional services of emergency planning, 911 emergency call services. The costs, services and service levels for these services would therefore not change in an incorporation scenario.

Victim services would continue to be provided by the RCMP; the municipality would be expected to make its own contribution to the service.

Whether the new municipality would assume responsibility for the Okanagan Falls VFD may depend on how the fire service boundary relates to any proposed incorporation boundary. If the boundary encompasses the VFD service area, new municipalities are more likely to want control over the fire department. If any of the existing service areas are not included in a future municipal boundary, those areas could either receive service from a municipal fire department through a fee-for-service contract, or, if agreed to by the municipality and the electoral area, the fire service could remain with the regional district, similar to the Keremeos volunteer fire department.

It is typical that a municipality will provide fire service to all properties within the municipal boundary although this is not required. Depending on the boundary of a proposed incorporation area, this could potentially impact both the service boundaries and how the cost of that service is shared amongst the municipal taxpayers. There could be pressure for a municipal fire department to expand service to cover the entire municipal boundary (if it did not already).

If the fire department becomes a municipal fire service, the new municipality would be required to meet obligations under the *Fire Safety Act* to undertake fire inspections and investigations — obligations that are not imposed on regional districts. While the Okanagan Falls VFD is currently certified to undertake both inspections and investigations, it does not currently complete that work. Extra responsibilities are likely to increase the workload demands of the department and may require the new municipality to increase the stipend for the Fire Chief position or consider a full-time chief in place of the existing POC Fire Chief position.

A change in governance would also occur with an incorporation. The municipal Council would have the authority and responsibility to make decisions regarding the services, service levels, and any agreements to provide services beyond the municipal boundaries.