

# TIMBERLAKE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

83 square miles of fire district plus over 150 square miles of contracted EMS areas in Kootenai & Bonner Counties.



Athol  
Chilco  
Bayview  
Little Blacktail  
and surrounding areas

Volume 1, Issue 1

August 2010

3 Full-time staff funded by the fire district.  
+3 Full-time Firefighter /EMTs funded by Kootenai Co. EMS  
24 Volunteer Responders  
3 Volunteer Support Staff  
5 Elected Commissioners

### 6 Fire Stations

- 1—Athol
- 2—Bunco/Hwy 95
- 3—Clagtone
- 4—Perimter
- 5—Bayview
- 6—Little Blacktail

### Vehicles in Service:

- 5—Engines
- 2—Water Tenders
- 2—Brush Trucks
- 2—Utility/Staff
- 2—Ambulances
- 1—Fire Boat

### Vehicles Out of Service :

- 1—Engine
- 1—Utility/Staff
- 1—Brush Truck

### Vehicles Set Aside as Surplus:

- 1—Engine
- 1—Brush Truck
- 1—Water Tender
- 1—Ambulance

## Introduction

Greetings from the Board of Commissioners of Timberlake Fire Protection District (TFPD). We would like to give you an update as to your fire district. We will discuss some recent changes and why they were made. We will also share with you some general information about the fire district to help you understand it better.

### Changes

Administrative management of the daily operations switched from Chief, Administrative Assistant, and contract employees to a management contract with Northern Lakes Fire Protection District (NLFPD). The paid fire fighter/emergency medical technicians are not impacted.

### Why?

The short answer is cost. The following table shows what the cost of a chief, administrative assistance, part time training officer and contract software

	Current Mgmt Structure	Contract	Savings for other uses
Fire Chief Salary	\$71,200	\$90,000	
Fire Chief Payroll Burden	\$9,910	*	
Fire Chief Benefits	\$11,503	*	
Admin Assist. Salary	\$37,700	*	
Admin Assist. Payroll Burden	\$4,016	*	
Admin Assist. Benefits	\$12,823	*	
PT Training Officer	\$14,000	*	
PT Technical Advisor	\$4,500	*	
Conferences, etc.	\$3,400	*	
<i>(included in Mgmt Contract)</i>			
	\$169,052	\$90,000	\$79,052

support officer cost the district on an annual basis in fiscal year 2010. The table also highlights the cost of a management contract. The result is that we can save the district taxpayers \$79,052 next fiscal year, which will be invested back into equipment and facilities. Should the contract be accepted in subsequent years by future Board of Commissioners, either new equipment could be acquired or more firefighter/emergency medical technicians hired, all without asking for a tax levy increase.

### What does this mean for the District?

Timberlake Fire Protection District is still an independent fire district with local control by five elected commissioners. Whether you are for or against this concept, there has not been a consolidation/merger of fire districts.

Already, we have made much progress on assessing our equipment issues and developing plans to make further upgrades as we get into the next fiscal

## Where are we headed?

Good question. The answer is complicated but boils down to what do future boards of both TFPD and NLFPD believe they should do for their constituents?

Beyond October 1, 2011, a management contract would have to be agreed on by both

boards. If that occurs, then the citizens of TFPD could anticipate more of the same benefits previously described. If it does not occur then the board would have to decide what alternative structure it thought would serve the citizens best. The choices are difficult, but

would include and not limited to: return to the structure we just left and ask the tax payers for a 100% increase in the Timberlake Fire Protection District tax rate, or shift the department to more of a volunteer organization with fewer paid staff, or something else that has not been thought of yet.

# What is a Management Contract?

A Management Contract is a document that under which NLFPD agrees to manage the day-to-day business of TFPD for a fee. This includes all of the normal duties of a fire chief, the duties of the administrative assistant, and training officer.

TFPD agrees to pay for these services. The goal of the agreed upon fee is to be revenue neutral to NLFPD, meaning TFPD pays all costs and the taxpayers of NLFPD are not subsidizing TFPD.

The benefit to TFPD is obvious, significant cost savings and a great depth of day-to-day management resources. NLFPD is doing this because they have the ability to help, because they are good neighbors, and because they know that strengthening TFPD is better for the citizens of the overall area. We owe them a big thanks.

Our fire chief now is provided under contract with Northern Lakes Fire Department and lives just beyond the south edge of our

fire district. In addition to the fire chief, one deputy chief, a division chief of training and a division chief of EMS also provide direct support. These chiefs have areas of expertise in personnel and equipment.

Now instead of a chief that was a 40 hour per week employee that routinely was putting in 60 hour weeks, we have professional supervision and leadership 24/7.

# Why Now?

First, a bit of history. Last fall, the Board of Commissioners and the Chief discussed funding and specifically, the option of putting a levy on the ballot in May 2010.

The Board decided that we would move forward in a very methodical manner as described below:

First, educate the public about Timberlake Fire Protection District, without bias towards a levy. It is your fire district; the commissioners just manage the budget based on approved funding.

Second, if there seemed to be broad support for a permanent levy increase, then we would conduct public hearings to provide more information as to what we would actually do with the money.

Third, we would put the levy on the May 25, 2010 ballot. As a permanent levy increase, it would have required a 66.7% super majority to pass.

We were working towards a newsletter in late January and early February, however at least three of the fire commissioners thought the draft was too biased towards supporting a levy and wanted changes made in the material. Again, the goal was only to provide information, not a sales piece.

In mid February, the chief acting on his own without Board approval, removed many pieces of equipment from service. The resulting public mistrust of the chief, mistrust of the Board, mistrust of Timberlake Fire Protection District would make passage of a levy impossible in the opinions of at least three of the five Board Members. Additionally, consider the last levy increase Timberlake Fire Protection

District proposed versus now:

	2002	2010
Strong Local Economy	Yes	No
Dissention in the fire district	No	Yes
Two year levy increase	Yes	No
Permanent levy increase	No	Yes
Amount	\$200,790	\$500,000
Required to pass	60%	66.7%

Only 61.5% of the voters approved of a two-year \$200,790 levy when everything else was positive. As you can see a permanent levy increase even in good times would not have passed.

At the public hearing on February 17, in Bayview, and 18, in Athol, the majority of those in attendance asked the Board to find a way to operate within its existing budget, as is its responsibility.

Two plans were developed by Commissioner Quillin by late May. At his request, President Rudebaugh coordinated a joint meeting with Northern Lakes Fire Protection District (NLFPD) to discuss the possibility of entering into a management contract with NLFPD. Both TFPD and NLFPD thought the plan made fiscal sense and agreed to move forward.

Regretfully, in order to accomplish this we had to make the difficult choice of terminating the contract of the Chief. Also, we agreed to eliminate the position of Administrative Assistant. On a positive note, our Administrative Assistant was hired by NLFPD on July 30, 2010. Per the Management Contract, she will be helping NLFPD Chief Marcus administer the day-to-day operations of TLPD.

Within a few days, both TFPD and NLFPD approved a Memorandum of Understanding to cover the period from mid June to September 30<sup>th</sup>. During that time a Management Contract would be negotiated. Now, as of August 16, 2010, the Management Contract has been approved by TFPD for the next fiscal year, October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011. Additionally, our next budget has been developed and has been approved at the budget hearing on August 16, 2010. The chart on the front page shows where we would have been with our prior management structure and with the new management structure.

As you can see, we were able to save the taxpayers approximately \$79,052 with the new structure which has been used to increase our equipment repair/maintenance funds.



**Our full-time Firefighter/  
EMTs work 24 hour  
shifts in Athol**

# Equipment

February 11, 2010, our chief removed all but four pieces of equipment from service in a reaction to a failing with one piece of equipment. This was done without Board of Commissioner involvement.

The action caused 17 of the 21 pieces of equipment the fire district uses to be out of service. Within a few days, equipment was being put back into service as inspections were completed. As of March 3, 2010, the district had 10 of the 21 vehicles back in service, five vehicles were removed from active status and set aside for surplus. The six remaining vehicles needed some repairs to make them service ready. The vehicles

were then scheduled for repairs according to need in the district.

Currently, we have one engine, one water tender and one utility vehicle out of service. Repair and maintenance of equipment is constantly taking place. With the new management contract we have added an additional \$79,052 to our repair and maintenance budget for next year. If we are able to spend less than that then we can carryover the unspent funds to use as the board sees necessary in future years.

NLFPD has now begun assessing our equipment and is developing an on-going repair and maintenance plan.



# ISO Ratings. What are they?

The Idaho Survey and Ratings Bureau grades every fire department on a scale of 1 (best) to 10 (worst, or no fire protection).

Our current rating is a Class 4/8/9. What does this mean?

You are in a **class 4 Zone** if you live within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant and within 5 road miles of an active/open fire station.

You are in a **Class 8 Zone** if you live beyond 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant and within 5 road miles of an active/open fire station.

You are in a **Class 9 Zone** if you live 5 to 10 road miles of an active/open fire station.

Additionally, the ratings are influenced by a number of other considerations that can move the ratings.

In many cases, the ISO Ratings are used by insurance companies to determine the level of service

a fire district can provide and can affect the cost of fire insurance premiums. Those savings may be small for many residential properties but can be substantial for large homes and commercial facilities.

The district was last evaluated in August of 2009. We were notified after that evaluation we would likely change to a rating of 5/8/9. However, we were given time to rectify some of our deficiencies.

Our new Management Contract allows us to use the expertise of Northern Lakes Fire Protection District to improve the likelihood of keeping our existing rating. Specifically, we will be using the money we have saved with the management contract to get the entire fleet of vehicles to the level necessary to receive maximum credit under the rating formula. Additionally, we will purchase certain necessary small equipment items that need to be placed on the vehicles that were missing at the last inspection.

### Historic Call Volume

2000 = 339	2001 = 389
2002 = 448	2003 = 554
2004 = 570	2005 = 655
2006 = 696	2007 = 750
2008 = 691	2009 = 619

**Better fire code enforcement of burn permits reduced those types of calls by 40 in 2009**

### 2009 Statistics

Number of Calls = 619

EMS = 472  
 Fires = 53  
 Other = 94

### Average Response Time

First Arriving Unit = 10 mins 24 Seconds.

*Plus 1-0 minutes for dispatch to process the call and alert the fire-fighters.*

Arrive in 10 mins or less = 58.8% of the time.

Fire Code Plan Review = 96

Commercial Fire Code Inspections = 20

Total Personnel Training Hours = 3,142

# Summary

The board accomplished what was promised in February. We found a way to live within the budget that allowed us to address equipment needs. Service to the citizens of TFPD is expected to continue at the same level as in the past, with regards to response time. Additionally, we now have 24/7 administrative leadership from a very professional neighboring fire department.

**TIMBERLAKE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

Primary Business Address  
P.O. Box 810  
Athol, ID 83801

Phone: 208-683-3333  
E-mail: [commissioners@timberlakefire.com](mailto:commissioners@timberlakefire.com)



**More information on our Website:**

**[www.timberlakefire.org](http://www.timberlakefire.org)**