

Item

To: Cynthia White, Chief Administrative Officer
From: David Tomkinson, Fire Chief
Date: August 05, 2025
Subject: Fire Department Activity – July 2025

This is provided as information, and no resolution is required. Council may make a motion to direct staff to take particular action if they wish.

Background

Calls for Service:

Total Calls for Service in June: 124

July saw a sharp increase in call volume, exceeding the year-to-date total by month's end. Notable incidents included a motor vehicle fire that spread to the Double D Motel on Nicola Avenue, several dumpster fires, a highly visible landscape fire on the Bench that required a coordinated response with the BC Wildfire Service, and an inter-agency deployment to assist with a vehicle-related wildfire 18 km south of Merritt. The month also brought an uptick in nuisance fires associated with unhoused individuals, along with a marked increase in medical incidents.

Reportable Fires Summary – July 2025:

#	Type of Fire	Location	Damage Description	Cause	Dollar Loss
1	Dumpster Fire	Coldwater Avenue	Contained to dumpster	Incendiary – suspect not identified.	\$1,500.00
2	Dumpster Fire	Quilchena Avenue	Contained to dumpster	Incendiary – suspect not identified.	\$1,500.00
3	Dumpster Fire	Quilchena Avenue	Contained to dumpster	Incendiary – suspect not identified.	\$1,500.00
4	Dumpster Fire	Quilchena Avenue	Contained to dumpster	Incendiary – suspect not identified.	\$1,500.00
5	Vehicle Fire	Hwy 5 South	Inter-Agency Request from BC Wildfire Service for	Undetermined. Outside Scope of Agreement.	\$400,000.00

			vehicle/wildfire 18 km South of Merritt.		
6	Vehicle Fire	Nicola Avenue	Vehicle Fire which extended into structure.	Undetermined	Not yet determined
7	Vehicle Fire	400 Block Hwy 8, Lower Nicola	Fire confined to commercial vac truck unit.	Undetermined. Outside scope of Fire Protection Agreement.	\$395,000.00
8	Vehicle Fire	Highway 97c	Fire confined to passenger vehicle	Undetermined. Outside scope of Fire Protection Agreement.	\$10,000.00
9	Wildfire	Lookout Access Road	A landscape fire grew to approximately 0.5 hectares and required a multi- agency response to bring it under control.	Incendiary – suspect not identified.	\$0.00
10	Interface Fire	Hwy 5 South	A fire that started along the highway below was contained by MFRD and BCWS crews before it could advance toward residences on Foxfarm Road.	Undetermined. Outside scope of Fire Protection Agreement.	\$2,000.00



Preventing fire from spreading to the forest – 18 km South of Merritt

Firefighter Training:

- **Total Training Sessions and Hours:**

In July, MFRD conducted 36 training sessions, totaling over 763 staff hours. These sessions were strategically scheduled across weekdays, evenings, and weekends to maximize participation and accommodate diverse schedules of the department's paid on call firefighters.

- **Training Topic Highlights:**

July was a notable month for the department. Three paid on call (POC) members successfully completed the final requirements for their NFPA 1001 Professional Firefighter certification, and one of our newest recruits concluded his Exterior Operations program and was issued his pager, marking his readiness for operational response.

Our paid-on-call members participated in a range of training exercises, including Highway Rescue training focused on stabilization and lift bag operations, as well as Wildland firefighting and firefighting foam application. These skill sets were promptly applied in the field, as the department responded to multiple incidents in both areas throughout July.



Firefighters Perrin, Wudrich, and Irvine proudly earned their NFPA Professional Firefighter Certifications.

Inspection and Enforcement Activities:

- **Commercial Occupancy Inspections**

Fire Prevention Inspectors conducted a total of **31 commercial occupancy inspections** to ensure compliance with fire and life safety codes in publicly accessible buildings.

- **5 Assembly (Group A) Occupancies** – Including places of gathering such as churches, halls, and community centers.
- **2 Care (Group B) Occupancies** – No inspections conducted in facilities providing care (e.g., hospitals, nursing homes).
- **0 Residential (Group C) Occupancies** – Focused on multi-family dwellings and apartment complexes.
- **11 Business and Personal Services (Group D) Occupancies** – Including office buildings and service providers.
- **10 Mercantile (Group E) Occupancies** – Retail and commercial businesses such as stores and shopping centers.
- **3 Industrial (Group F) Occupancies** – Covering factories, warehouses, and similar industrial facilities.

- **Pre-Incident Planning**

- **24 Pre-incident surveys** were completed to support operational readiness, improve firefighter safety, and enhance response efficiency during emergencies at high-risk or complex structures.

- **Campfire Permits**

- **2 campfire permits** were issued, following verification of safe usage practices and compliance with local fire regulations.



Vehicle fire extending into structure – Double D Motel (Photo Credit: Facebook)

Community Engagement / Public Education Activities:

- As the school year ended, the department hosted Fire Station Educational Tours for elementary students, giving them the chance to meet our firefighters, learn about fire safety, and explore the equipment and operations of the fire service. The department also took part in Canada Day celebrations at Rotary Park, where firefighters connected with more than 270 community members.
- With funding from the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program, the department completed the second of three FireSmart™ chipping days, helping residents reduce wildfire risk through a free chipping service for highly flammable trees and shrubs. This initiative supports homeowners in removing hazardous vegetation from their properties, increasing community resilience to wildfires.
- Additionally, six FireSmart™ Home Assessments were requested by property owners as part of the Wildfire Mitigation Program (WMP) designed to engage residents in voluntary wildfire mitigation activities by offering a professional home assessment with property-specific recommendations.
- In July, the MFRD delivered fire extinguisher training to two non-profit organizations as part of our ongoing community outreach efforts.

- The MFRD brought extra excitement to the City's Summer Day Camp program by hosting the Lil' Heroes Firefighter Camp, giving children a hands-on experience through our Junior CPAT - a fun, age-friendly version of the firefighter physical abilities test.

Work Experience Program:

The department's Work Experience Program (WEP) continues to thrive, offering participants immersive training, mentorship, and direct exposure to the realities of fire service operations. In July, two WEP firefighters secured career positions with departments across Canada - most notably with Richmond Fire-Rescue and Regina Fire & Protective Services - highlighting the program's strong reputation and national reach. By bolstering operational readiness, fostering community engagement, and preparing the next generation of fire service professionals, the WEP remains an invaluable asset to both the department and the community.

The program was developed in response to growing service demands and the department's decreasing daytime response capacity. In particular, ensuring adequate coverage during weekday working hours has become a significant challenge.

WEP attracts candidates from fire academies and pre-service programs across Canada and the United States. Successful applicants arrive with NFPA 1001 Professional Firefighter certification, with many bringing additional volunteer firefighting experience.

Living on site at the fire station, WEP firefighters supplement the City's paid-on-call force. Not only do they respond to emergencies, but during working hours, they also assist career staff by delivering public fire safety education, performing company-level fire inspections, and conducting station and equipment maintenance. This integration bridges the gap between career and volunteer fire services, ultimately providing Merritt residents with an enhanced level of fire protection and emergency response.



Current Work Experience Program Firefighters pose with new Prince Rupert Fire Engine during its visit to the Merritt fire station.

Respectfully submitted,

David Tomkinson
Fire Chief