

Q4 | Fall Edition  
November 2020

*Beech  
Mountain  
Volunteer  
Fire  
Department*

# The Department Dispatch



Providing quality fire and medical services to the Town of Beech Mountain and aid to the surrounding high country since 1971.

## **#BeechMountainStrong**

We are #BeechMountainStrong! 2020 has delivered many challenges and our community has continued to strive for success. We have so much to be thankful for as we approach a new year. We have witnessed many of you support each other, encourage each other and remain focused on the things that are most important.

The Beech Mountain Fire Department (BMVFD) has continued to maintain its level of commitment to you as well. We have taken this time to focus on new training, technology, community improvements and continued education. These efforts did not come without their own level of challenges but again, we are #BeechMountainStrong.

We encourage you to continue reading for current information and incredible updates. There is so much to be grateful for and BMVFD wants you to see what we have done!



## **Chief's Corner**

It is that time of the year when the summer greenery gives way to the fantastic colors of fall along with the cooler, crisp weather and the anticipation of the winter activities and holidays. Before we bundle up, I want to take a few minutes to report all that your Fire Department has accomplished this summer.

First and foremost, the Fire Department responded to one hundred thirty-six (136) emergency calls between April and September, these are further broken down as sixty (60) Fire calls and seventy-six (76) Emergency Medical calls. On a particular note, we experienced a greater number of calls this summer than in the past ten (10) years.

## #BMVFDStrong

Our BMVFD's firefighters are overcomers and will do whatever it takes to get the job done right!

Even though we were subject to the restrictions under North Carolina's COVID-19 orders, we did not let that slow us down. We quickly implemented virtual meetings to continue information sharing to secure and serve our community. Our department leaders created online training tools and exercises which included research and independent, hands-on, in the field reviews of equipment. The training also included inventory checks for proper placement and inspections. These exercises kept our skills and knowledge sharp while we could not conduct group training in person.



Under the current North Carolina Phase 3 orders we have the ability to practice drills outdoors with proper social distancing and a commitment to protecting the health of the department and the community by staying home if we are feeling unwell.

To date our volunteers have stayed healthy and it feels great to be able to train together again.

The summer months are the time each year that the Fire Department undergoes the State Fire Marshal's inspection of our equipment, communications, response times, available manpower and training hours from the previous year. I am pleased to report that your Fire Department received a passing grade with no deficiencies!

During these difficult times with the COVID-19 Pandemic, our members continue to respond to serve you, our customers. We have taken all precautions for the safety of our emergency responders, however, the additional risk they choose to accept is a testament to their dedication of serving others. Please take the time to thank our members, your neighbors, for their sacrifice to our community.

In addition to the State inspection, we are required to test our fire pumps, fire hoses, ladders and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) each year with a third-party testing provider, again your Fire Department passed in all categories.

Speaking of testing, our volunteers inspect, test and flush each of the Town's 362 fire hydrants each year and the Town's Utilities Department maintains and repairs the hydrants as required. So, what does all of this mean to you, our customer? First, the testing and inspecting ensures that the emergency equipment we rely upon during emergencies is in top condition and ready to go. Next, we are able to effectively respond to your calls for assistance with state of the art equipment and volunteers trained to properly use and operate the tools needed to do the job. Finally, with all components of the Fire Department in place you are able to save substantially each year on your Fire Insurance premiums.

As we transition from summer to fall and then winter, we are assured that all of our tools are prepared for what may come. Our slogan of "Help Us Help You" is ever more important during the winter months. You can make a difference by preparing yourself and your home in the months ahead. Check those smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure that they are working, replace the batteries and test them regularly. Have your chimney inspected and cleaned before starting that first fire and have your heating system inspected for proper operation and carbon monoxide leaks. Check that you have at least one fire extinguisher, that it is properly charged, and you and your family and guests know how to use it. Know how to call 911 to report an emergency, when using a cell phone know that you may not be connected directly to Beech Mountain, so know your location when requesting emergency help.

Together we can make this winter safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Until next time, stay safe and enjoy Beech Mountain!

Bob Pudney  
Fire Chief

## Communicating to the Next Level

BMVFD will be stepping up our game by implementing a new texting solution. After spending months of research, we have found a safe and secure partner to improve our communication with you.

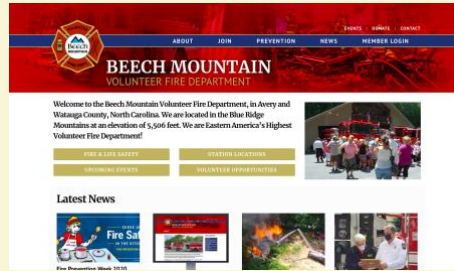


We have learned the following about the successes of a text messaging program:

- Text open rates are 98% higher than 20% of all emails
- 90% of texts are opened within 90 seconds

Our goal, in addition to our updated website and quarterly newsletters, is to provide you with more effective ways to get the information you need. The good news is you will only be receiving four texts from us a year. Messages will be sent in alignment with the publication of our quarterly newsletter.

Stay tuned, the next newsletter will have the details for you to opt in and participate.



## Check Us Out Online

The Beech Mountain Volunteer Fire Department recently launched a re-designed website. The new site has a very large section dedicated to Fire and Life Safety with videos and other materials. This “one-stop” resource offers a wide variety of

safety information on many topics for residents and visitors. Holiday, Heating, Smoke Alarm, Cooking and Fire Extinguisher Safety, along with Home Fire Escape Planning and Emergency Preparedness are just a few of the topics that are found on the site. Individuals with children will want to check out the Kid’s Corner which has fun videos and printable activity sheets. The site is designed to entertain, educate and share important safety information with family, friends, visitors and neighbors.

On the site you will enjoy reading the unique history of the Beech Mountain Volunteer Fire Department and find a list of the volunteers who are currently serving our community. The site also provides the locations of the 2 Fire Stations, photos of the trucks and other emergency vehicles and interesting news articles from the department. Visitors to the site will find a convenient way to make online donations and access to a calendar of events. Perhaps, most importantly, the site provides information on how you can join the BMVFD family. Be sure to watch the video of one of our newest recruits describing his experiences and why he decided to join the BMVFD.

“We hope the community enjoys the new website” said Chief Bob Pudney. “We are very proud and pleased to serve the residents and visitors on Beech Mountain and our surrounding neighbors.”

To visit the website, search for BMVFD.org or go directly to the website below <http://BeechMountainVFD.org>



## On A Medical Response Call, We Need Your Help

Very often when our department is called to assist a customer for a medical problem, we must obtain a history of the patient to determine what is wrong. This history consists of a series of fact gathering information that includes our obtaining vitals and doing medical interventions but also includes verbal interviews with the patient, family members, or by-standers who saw what happened. This information is passed on to the ambulance crew and then on to the hospital emergency room to aid in the best care possible.

## Lions and Tigers and Wildfires... Oh My!



Wildfires are not a problem just isolated to our western states. In the High Country we learned this first-hand in 2016. We can all learn from others and the past. In the midst of Fall, while we have backyard fires, falling leaves, dead limbs falling and overgrown summer shrubs, there are several things that can be done to protect our homes. Here are some helpful tips:

- Create a defensible space around your home. Remove weeds, brush, and other invasive debris.
- Trim back touching or overhanging tree branches at least 10 feet from your home.
- Be sure to move any firewood or other combustible material away from your home, garage and deck/patio/balcony. Combustibles should be stored farther from the structure.

These suggestions will promote protection for yourself, your property and the BMVFD in the event you have an emergency, when we respond to the call.

One of the many important bits of information in this fact gathering process is the need to know what medications the patient is taking and the past medical history of the patient. During the moment of an emergency many patients or family members cannot remember all of the medications, their doses, or when they are taken, but this is vital information that is needed. We highly recommend having a current and updated written list of medication for each family member available in the house or in the possession of someone who can provide it to the medical responders. There are some products on the market such as the Vial of Life that hold this information, but the easiest item is just a printed list of medication name, what it is used for, the dose of the medication, and how often it is taken. This list should also indicate any treating physicians and contact information for them so they can be contacted if needed. If possible, this list should also document the patients total past history of medical problems and treatments. Many times, when asked for past medical history the patient or family member will not think that certain past medical problems have anything to do with the current problem, but it can aid in diagnosing and treatment. Your doctor's office can help provide such a list for you but please make sure to keep it current.

Also, please make sure a copy of the list is easily available to give the medical personnel and that everyone in the family knows where the list is kept, as often the patient is not in a position to tell us where it is. Some people may keep it in the bathroom or kitchen on the refrigerator. A spouse may not know more than "he takes a yellow pill once a day and a green one twice a day" but if they know where a medicine/treatment list is located it will greatly aid in the care we provide.



## Class for New Medical Personnel

A number of years ago over half of our department membership, besides being firefighters, held a certification level of State Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or higher. With such a large number of medical responders we were assured of providing adequate coverage at all times to the customers in our town. Due to retirements, members moving away from our town, and the general time requirements for training and responses, we lost a number of these trained members causing fewer of us to be available to provide the excellent medical response the BMVFD prides itself in. Responding to so many calls in the middle of the night with our few remaining medical responders has been challenging.

Earlier this year the BMVFD, working with Mayland Community College, hosted a state certified EMT training class at Station 2 for more than 15 people, including members of our department and a few people from the general public. This class consisted of 192 hours of classroom work and an additional 48 clinical

## Winter Fire Facts & Christmas Tree Fires

Carefully decorating your home can help make your holidays safer. Between 2013-2017, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 160 home fires that started with Christmas trees per year. U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 780 home structure fires per year that began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees.

- Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in more than two of every five (44%) home Christmas tree fires.
- Two of every five (39%) home Christmas tree fires started in the living room. Five percent were chimney or flue fires. One-fifth (21%) of the decoration fires started in the kitchen. Sixteen percent started in the living room, family room or den.
- Almost three of every five (57%) December home decoration fires were started by candles, compared to one-third (32%) in January to November.

### Christmas Tree Disposal

Christmas trees are combustible items that become increasingly flammable as they continue to dry out in your home. More than one-quarter (29%) of home fires that begin with Christmas trees occur in January. Although Christmas tree fires are not common, when they do occur, they're much more likely to be serious.

ride-along hours with Avery County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to get the hands-on training that is required. The class started on January 14<sup>th</sup>, meeting two nights a week and on some Saturdays, to cover the material. Then the unprecedented events of 2020 started, COVID-19 made the news, and in-person classes were suspended per guidelines from the College. Between the help of Mayland Community College, great work by the instructors, and help from within the BMVFD, the classroom work and testing was finally completed in September. The ride-along portion with EMS was completed in October which provided a great learning experience on actual medical calls and vital hands-on experience with a variety of situations which proved to be the favorite part of class to many of the students.

Five of our members have passed the class and are waiting to take and pass their NC State EMT certification exam. We would like to salute Larry Burn, Michael Holland, Gabe Joseph, Eric Thomas, and Janet Villanova for completing the class and we hope to see them regularly on our late night and early morning medical calls as we continue to provide top-notch medical care to our town.



## Sparky Says

Beech Mountain has more and more families joining the neighborhood. It's important to talk about fire safety and have a plan. Having a plan is essential but can also be fun. Did you know there are many helpful tools available to "spark" family conversation? Here, is one that you can start doing together so your family is prepared. Check out Sparky's website

<http://www.sparky.org>. Discover games, videos, music

and activities for you and your young ones. Parents, you can also find helpful information for you as well!

Getting a jump start on this can prevent an unimaginable situation later. Please take the time and talk with your family. Sparky and the BMVFD want you to remain safe. If you have questions you are encouraged to ask us at any time. We are here for you!

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