

## News Release

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### **New agreement enables regional support for fire rescue and emergency response**

**DUNCAN, BC** – Fire departments across the region have entered into a mutual aid agreement that ensure all Cowichan communities have back-up emergency response assistance.

The Cowichan Valley Fire Department Regional Mutual Aid Agreement creates a no-charge reciprocal system of emergency response and assistance available to all 17 local fire departments throughout the region, and represents the first time a single, regional agreement has been established.

“This is an important agreement for residents of the CVRD, who can rest assured that emergency response resources are not limited to those in their own backyard,” said Aaron Stone, Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District. “Thanks to everyone from the many local governments and improvement districts in the region who worked together on this agreement, and all the volunteer firefighters whose continued service makes it possible.”

Mutual Aid Agreements are prevalent throughout the fire service in British Columbia and across Canada. The CVRD has been a party in a number of fire department mutual aid agreements previously, and the new single regional agreement allows all parties to terminate any outdated or other existing agreements.

“Implementing a single, regional mutual aid agreement provides the ability of fire departments to legally and promptly access resources should they be needed and available,” said Jason deJong, Fire Rescue Services Coordinator for the Cowichan Valley Regional District. “In a region that continues to experience prolonged summer droughts and associated increases to wildfire risk, it’s important that we have a coordinated network of first responders to ensure the safety of all residents.”

This agreement is between the CVRD (6 fire departments), North Cowichan (4 fire departments), City of Duncan, Town of Ladysmith, Town of Lake Cowichan, Mill Bay Improvement District, Cowichan Bay Improvement District, Shawnigan Improvement District, and Thetis Island Improvement District.

Mutual aid means that when a local fire department is attending one fire or emergency, another fire department can respond to any other fire or emergency situation in that fire protection area if required. If a local fire department determines that its resources are insufficient to bring a fire or other emergency under control, it may also request the support of another fire department. If a fire department is unavailable, mutual aid will come from the next closest neighboring fire department.

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