Service Capacity Policy for the Thetis Island Improvement District

Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department Service Capacity Policy, 2008 Edition

Introductory Overview

This one-page introductory overview is for convenience purposes, and does not replace or encompass the attached full text of the Service Capacity Policy. It remains a responsibility of residents of the Thetis Island community to read and understand the Service Capacity Policy. The term “resident” is used in this document to include all persons and corporate entities owning or occupying land within the bounds of the Thetis Island Improvement District.

Purpose

To explain the service capacity of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department (“the Department”) so residents and property owners understand department capabilities and limitations, and the responsibilities residents have in obtaining optimal service by the department.

Service Description

The Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department is funded by the Thetis Island Improvement District, which raises the necessary monies through property taxation within the territory defined as the Thetis Island Improvement District by the Province of British Columbia. The department provides fire and first responder medical response to the Thetis Island community exclusive of off-shore islands. It relies on a volunteer staff, who are on call to respond to fire and medical emergencies, and therefore the numbers responding will vary in relation to the individual availability of these volunteers.

The Department is alerted via the provincial 911 emergency dispatch system, and responds with **available personnel**, deploying the department apparatus and equipment under direction of the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief or other officers of the department. Emergency scenes are managed in accordance with the following priorities:

1. safety of department personnel;
2. safety of other persons at an emergency scene;
3. containment of emergency situations;
4. risk reduction to structures; and
5. risk reduction to pets or livestock at an emergency scene.

Residents have a number of responsibilities for reducing risks and improving emergency response (summarized on page 7), including ensuring properties comply with **access specifications** as per pages 5-6 of this document. The department can only respond to properties/ emergencies within the Thetis Island Improvement District, where such locations are accessible via existing and suitable roads and private driveways.

Service Capacity Policy TIID/TIVFD May 2008

Purpose:

This policy statement provides Thetis Island residents and property owners ("the community") with a clear statement of the fire and medical services provided by the Thetis Island Improvement District through its service delivery agency, the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department ("the department"). It rests with the Thetis Island Improvement District ("the district") to use reasonable means to advise residents (including all owners and/or occupiers of lands in the district) of the services provided on their behalf. Circulation of this policy is achieved by (1) local mail delivery to all Thetis Island households, (2) Canada Post to all off-island addresses as provided by the B.C. Assessment Authority and (3) posting on the community website (http://thetisisland.net/) and bulletin board.

It is the responsibility of residents to understand the limitations of these emergency services. This policy may be revised as deemed necessary by the district board to remain consistent with changes to the service capacity.

General Service Descriptions:

Thetis Island Improvement District ("the district")

The Thetis Island Improvement District is established under the authority of the *B.C. Local Government Act*, and exists for the purpose of financing and operating fire and first responder services within the Thetis Island Improvement District. It delivers these services through the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department, which is staffed by volunteers who are unpaid employees of the Improvement District. The district raises necessary funds for operation of the Fire Department through property taxation within the boundaries established for the Improvement District in its Letters Patent, authorized by the Province of British Columbia. The Improvement District is overseen and operated by a board comprising five trustees elected at the annual general meeting of the Improvement District. The normal term of a trustee is three years. The Improvement District is the authorizing and responsible agency for fire regulation bylaws, fire administration bylaws and any related resolutions and policies pertaining to the delivery of same bylaws resolutions and operations by the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department.

Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department ("the Department" or "the Fire Department")

Under the provincially-granted authority of the Thetis Island Improvement District, the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department provides fire and first responder medical services to the community of Thetis Island within the geographic boundaries defined in the approved Letters Patent of the Thetis Island Improvement District.

The Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department provides services within the boundaries of the territory described in the Letters Patent of the Improvement District. Situation-specific service outside the boundaries of the district may be undertaken provided mutual aid agreements or

other inter-agency agreements have been established, adopted and authorized by the Improvement District.

General Service Description
The Fire Department provides fire protection and prevention services as well as first responder medial aid services to Thetis Island, as geographically defined within approved Letters Patent of the Thetis Island Improvement District. The two general services are:

1. Fire response includes risk management, education and best efforts to control and extinguish structure fires, urban interface fires, motor vehicle incidents and marine/ vessel fires

2. First responder actions include victim extrication, physical stabilization, basic treatment and emergency transport under the direction of the British Columbia Ambulance Service ("BCAS")

Specified Services of the Department
The comprehensive list below describes the limits of specified services; **services not on this list are either beyond the capacity or authority of the department to provide**.

- 9-1-1 response to fire and medical emergencies;
- Fire response capacity subject to the availability of volunteers. Assets will be directed primarily against structure fires with reduced capacity to combat interface or wildfires.
- Fire suppression training and competency for personnel.
- Limited fire investigation, subject to personnel certification by the Office of the Fire Commissioner.
- Road rescue and automobile casualty extrications.
- First Responder training/competency for personnel.
- Medical aid first response as requested by and under the aegis of the British Columbia Ambulance Service.
- Transportation of medical emergency patients as requested and under the aegis of the British Columbia Ambulance Service.
- Public education, in the form of general education to provide residents with information and appropriate means to self-assess their properties for fire safety.

Personnel
The services of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department depend on the availability of unpaid volunteer employees who are members of the community and have completed appropriate training. The Department provides equipment meeting the necessary standards for up to 20 volunteer firefighters, including the Chief, Deputy Chief, Officers and regular members. Certain members are, in addition to firefighting, are trained and qualified as first responders.

- The volunteer members are on call to provide response capability 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, although as unpaid volunteers, individual Department members are not

obligated to respond to all page-outs, and therefore numbers of personnel available for delivery of services at emergency events may vary.

- Each volunteer member individually decides their own level of commitment to the Department.
- The personnel capacity of the department is a function of the level of recruitment and retention of volunteers from within the community, and ultimately emergency response capacity is dependant on community participation.

The Department includes a number of auxiliary members who provide support services such as traffic control, food services, etc. to regular department members during emergency callouts. Auxiliary personnel do not participate in direct event response or front line operations.

Service Standards

Standards for service, work conditions and equipment are provided by WorkSafe BC, The Office of the Fire Commissioner and the National Fire Prevention Association. Standards of medical service are provided by the Emergency Medical Licensing Board of British Columbia. Based on these, and on practices in other fire departments, the Fire Department maintains its own manual of standard operating guidelines (SOGs).

Authorized Territory for Service Delivery

The Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department is legally limited in responding to fire and medical emergencies to the territory defined for the Thetis Island Improvement District. Insurance and liability preclude responses outside this territory unless there is a valid mutual aid agreement in place. This legal territory which normally extends to 150 meters offshore, excludes all offshore islands, and the boundary bisects the middle of Clam Bay, the “cut” between Clam Bay and Telegraph Harbour, and Telegraph Harbour itself. The Letters Patent of the Thetis Island Improvement District provide the authorized description of this legal operating territory.

Major Equipment and Apparatus

As of January 2008, the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department owns/operates the following:

Two pumper trucks: “Engine 1” with a capacity of 625 gallons on board, is based at the central fire hall on Mission Road. Engine 2, with 125 gallons on board is based at the Pilkey Point Road fire hall. “Engine 2” has 4-wheel drive, enabling access to more sites. Both pumpers are equipped with fire suppression apparatus, including Class A foam generation capability and portable pumps to meet a variety of circumstances.

One 1000 gallon tender truck based at the central hall to serve as a re-supply for Engines 1 and 2. The tender is equipped with portable pumps to enable filling from other water sources that may be available on the island.

One emergency response vehicle (Rescue 1) for response to medical emergencies. This vehicle is equipped with first aid supplies, casualty cot and stretchers, oxygen and

related medical aids, as well as some rescue response fire equipment. This vehicle is 4-wheel drive.

Emergency Priorities

The priority of focus at the scene of any emergency response will be directed by the Incident Commander (IC). As highest priority goals are accomplished or deemed to be stabilized, the focus will shift to subsequent priorities. The Incident Commander determines achievement of priorities and directs personnel and equipment be directed to remaining priorities within the capacity of the Department. The following sequence of priorities will be used to determine the sequence for any emergency response by the Department:

1. The Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department will operate with the safety of its personnel as an overriding priority. The lives and well-being of department personnel are safeguarded through employment of approved techniques, training, equipment and operational methods.
2. The Department will endeavor to preserve and protect lives of other persons at emergency scenes;
3. The Department will endeavor to contain fire or other risks and hazards from spreading beyond the immediate scene of an emergency;
4. The Department will endeavor to protect structures or other physical assets from further damage or destruction by fire;
5. The Department will endeavor to protect livestock and pets that may be at risk at the scene of an emergency.

With respect to all emergency responses by the Department, the departmental priorities shall be as outlined above, in descending order. In the event of an emergency such as a brush fire or wildfire that exceeds the capacity of the department, support will be requested from the BC Ministry of Forests and other agencies for fire suppression. Department resources will be directed toward preservation of lives and, to a lesser degree, structures which are deemed defendable properties as outlined in the Fire Safe Communities Guidelines published by the Office of the Fire Commissioner of BC and the BC Forest Service.

First Responder Medical Aid Service

First responder medical aid service is provided by the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department. The Department responds to 9-1-1 emergency requests and provides First Responder (level 3) medical assistance and transportation of patients/casualties to a designated rendezvous with BC Ambulance Service personnel. The first responder service provided by the Department is funded through the Improvement District. The Department is not an ambulance or medical services provider, but rather is a component of emergency services, intended to extricate, physically stabilize and transport emergency casualties. The Department is neither trained nor equipped to provide technical rescue services such as high angle rescues or marine rescues. Other agencies are relied upon for these services.

Fire Regulation, Incinerators, Burning Controls, Wood Burning Appliances
The Fire Department, through bylaws established by the Improvement District, is responsible for administration of fire regulations, including outdoor burn piles and use of incinerators and other matters. Penalties for violation of bylaws are explained in the bylaws. Bylaws are posted electronically on the Thetis Island community website and are available on request.

The Fire Department does not conduct inspections of wood burning appliances, nor does it provide specific advice to owners of such appliances. Inspections and maintenance of these devices should be conducted by qualified contractors.

Access Constraints and Specifications
The Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department will make all reasonable efforts to access emergency scenes within the jurisdiction of the Improvement District. Access to emergency scenes must be available by land. The Department will not place personnel or equipment at risk where access is deemed unsafe or unsuitable, whether it be due to weather, lack of maintenance or basic non-compliance with access specifications and requirements. The Department will endeavor to access emergency scenes using public roads, private roads, driveways or laneways, provided these routes meet minimum access specifications.

For emergency scenes not meeting minimum access specifications, the Department Incident Commander whether personnel can safely provide emergency service using portable equipment and alternate techniques within the limits of Department personnel and equipment capacity.

It is the responsibility of property owners and residents to ensure access to their properties meet the following **access specifications** in order to have a reasonable expectation of emergency service by the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department.

Access Specifications
Address/Lot Numbers: Properties are to be posted with the appropriate lot number clearly visible at each point where private driveways or laneways meet public roads. Numbers are to be a minimum of 6 inches (150 mm) in height, and clearly visible from the public road from either direction of approach, day or night.

Driveways, Laneways, Private Roads: private emergency access routes must:

- Be minimum 12 feet wide
- Have minimum 15 feet vertical clearance from all obstacles
- Be capable of supporting a load of 5000 KG per axle in all weather
- Have a turn-around suitable for the equipment at the terminus, and for every 400 feet of driveway/laneway
- Have a maximum average gradient of 12%. Short straight sections may have a maximum gradient of 16%.
- Have a minimum curve radius of 45 feet for any turns

- Have a minimum gate width of as least two feet wider than the access route top surface, and a gate that opens inward.

Gates: driveway gates MUST remain unlocked, or keys must be permanently placed with the Department.

Land access only: the Department is **limited to land access** via appropriate roadways within the constraints of the territory of the Improvement District. The Fire Department will attempt to provide emergency service to vessels provided they are accessible from the shore via a structure such as a dock that is capable of allowing safe use at any time in any weather.

Public buildings: Keys for public buildings (schoolhouse, community hall) must be placed with the Fire Department, and 24 hour contact telephone numbers of security/maintenance personnel must be provided.

Property maps/directions: Rural property owners are responsible to inform the Fire Department of the location of structures, access routes, and other access information pertaining to their properties.

Urban Interface Wildfires

Due to the rural nature of Thetis Island many structures exist in close proximity to substantial forest and brush cover. Through the April to October period each year, Thetis Island can experience long dry periods where any fire, regardless of source, could quickly spread and have the potential to become a wildfire that threatens both lives and structures. It is most likely that any wildfire will quickly exceed the capacity of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department. Department policy is to request outside resources to assist, however they may not be immediately able to respond.

When emergency situations exceed the capacity of the Fire Department, it will focus its available resources on the protection of lives and structures where the greatest chances for success are presented. Those areas or structures considered indefensible due to the proximity of vegetation, an accumulation of fuel, poor access or a lack of emergency water will be given lower priority for attention by the department.

It is the responsibility of property owners to undertake risk reduction measures to assist the Department and other agencies in expediting safe evacuation of people at risk, defending structures and those neighbouring in close proximity.

Risk reduction measures may include:

- Clearly post address(es)/lot numbers at driveway entrance
- Maintaining driveways to specified standards for emergency access
- Collection and disposal of fuel/debris near structures
- Thinning and clearing of vegetation in proximity to structures

- Storage of combustibles away from valued structures
- Installation of sprinklers in/on valued structures
- Provision for storage of water for Department use
- Clear access for Department to site water supplies

Information guides for risk reduction from interface/wildfires are published by the Ministry of Forests and are available to property owners and residents from the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department.

Summary of Property Owner and Resident Responsibilities

1. Understand the limitations of the Thetis Island Volunteer Fire Department emergency services
2. Support the Department's recruitment of volunteers
3. Understand the Provincial 9-1-1 emergency system and its use
4. Ensure access to properties meets Department minimum specifications to enable timely response to emergencies
5. Post address(es) in a clearly visible form (as per bylaw specifications) at the driveway intersection(s) with the main street
6. Provide building locations, access routes (e.g. multiple driveways, buildings, storage of flammables and explosives, etc.) and other important access information to the Fire Department
7. Take preparative measures to reduce risks of wildfires, damage to structures, ensure safe evacuation routes.
8. Assist the Department and other agencies in fire suppression and defending your structures and those of your neighbors.

Adopted by the Thetis Island Improvement District policy resolution #2008-2 on May 26, 2008.