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Brewer Fire Department, monthly report for February 2006

SO WHAT CAN THE BREWER FIRE DEPARTMENT DO?

Every now and then someone asks a question that roughly means “what is the Brewer Fire Department capable of doing?” The answer varies depending on what the questioner is asking about. As a general answer the best thing to say is that within those things fire departments do the Brewer Fire Department does just about everything. The answer to more specific questions are below.

Does the Brewer Fire Department fight fires? Needless to say the answer is yes we fight fires; structure fires, car fires, trash fires, woods fires, just about any type of hostile or dangerous fire.

Does the Brewer Fire Department have a hazardous materials team? The answer is “sort of”. While we have not declared ourselves to be a haz mat team, and while we don’t expect to be seen as a team soon, the fact is we have most of the equipment and we have enough training to use it. Hazardous materials training is a three part process. Step one is Awareness training, step two is Operations level and step three is Technician level. Many so called haz mat teams only have a few people at the Technician level. Those Technicians can direct Operations level personnel through the operation or job at hand.

We have all of our personnel, 35 people, trained to the Operations level. We also have a few people trained to the Technician level. We have a trailer with much of the needed equipment in it. The fact is all haz mat teams do is secure the dangerous material and remove victims. Then special clean up contractors arrive to take the spilled material away. In most cases we are equipped to secure the scene and “hold the fort” until the clean-up contractors arrive. In those few cases where we don’t have the appropriate equipment to deal with some certain material we can hold the fort until the regional haz mat team can arrive. Either way Brewer is in good shape in the event of a haz mat spill.

Does the Brewer Fire Department have a water rescue ability? The answer is that we have a boat, we have cold water/buoyancy rescue suits and soon we will have a hovercraft. We do train for water rescues and so we are relatively ready for such calls. Real water rescue requires being near the need. Long travel for water rescue can’t really work. We can attempt rescues in the river or in other places in Brewer with possible good results. Waiting for rescuers from far away to arrive can never result in a life saving operation. People just don’t survive that long in or under water. Having a local rescue ability can be quite important. Brewer has a water rescue team in the Brewer Fire Department.

Can the Brewer Fire Department de-water my basement? Yes, we have multiple portable pumps and do remove water from flooded basements rather regularly. We also can get water out of buildings where fire sprinkler or other pipes have broken.

Does the Brewer Fire Department have a program to teach people to be safe and not to have fires? Yes, the Public Education Program of the Brewer Fire Department teaches classes in the Brewer Public Schools every month school is in session. The classes use nationally recognized programs to teach the young people how to be fire safe. We teach fire extinguisher use for businesses and CPR to various groups of citizens and employees. In March of 2006 we will also be presenting a public wood stove safety clinic.

Does the Brewer Fire Department conduct safety inspections of motels? Yes, and not just in motels. In conjunction with the City Health Inspector and the Code Enforcement Officer we inspect all businesses, including motels, restaurants and retail places for fire safety. We also inspect all the schools and other public buildings. Some people call to have their chimneys inspected and the Inspection Division of the Fire Department does that too.

Your ambulances on the street all the time, is this a big part of what you do? Maybe the biggest, we respond over 2000 times a year to reported medical needs. No medical call is too big or too difficult. We are the front line of emergency medical help between the public and the hospitals. Just call, we respond.

Our medical operation is the first transport agency for a resident population of more than 16,000 people in Brewer plus 6 other towns. We generate more than \$170,000 in incomes to the City each year while helping those with medical needs.

Is that the end of the list of things you do? No, we burn grass in the spring to rid the community of deep growths of grass near buildings that if ignited could burn a building. We also take in old or dangerous fire extinguishers. We put up civic banners and signs for public events. We also honor requests for public showings of our equipment as part of various civic events. We open locked doors when citizens lock themselves out of their homes. We also assist the Police Department with door opening and scene lighting. Yes we'll get a cat out of a tree (if the cat has been in the tree for a long period of time). We stand-by at football games in case of injuries and we inspect fire extinguishers periodically in every department of the City including the schools.

What don't you do? Well that could be a long list but, if you have a need you reasonable think we could fill please call us and ask.

Given all the variety of things you do why is it called a fire department? Tradition.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard B. Bronson, Jr.
Fire Chief