



Sasamat Fire Department Incident Report



Incident: Structure Fire Turtlehead Rd, Belcarra

Date: April 9, 2017

Time: 12:52-19:09

Responding Members: 35

The SVFD was dispatched to a structure fire in Belcarra: likely the largest fire in community history.

The two homes were unoccupied at the time. As flames breached the first home, there were multiple 911 calls from North Vancouver and Belcarra residents. At 12:54, our Dispatch paged out our volunteers. Also at 12:54, the VPD Marine Unit, patrolling the area, took the first photograph of the incident (photo above). One house was engulfed in flames and the second was now on fire.



Our first engine arrived eight minutes later, roughly as the second photo was taken. Quickly surveying the scene, our crews focused on two things: attacking the fire spread on the second structure, and keeping the fire from spreading up the surrounding slopes to the rest of the peninsula.

As more firefighters arrived with additional trucks, hose lines, and equipment, our water flow reached its peak. Just over an hour into the fight, the municipal reservoir began to get low. Moving to “Plan B,” we shifted to secondary water sources.

Using hale pumps, crews attacked the fire from the ocean. Using tender shuttles, firefighters fed one engine with water, while our second engine continued to top up its supply from the nearest municipal hydrant.



Multiple trees did go up in flame and the fire threatened several times to migrate elsewhere, but the flames did not escape our defensive perimeter. After battling and containing the blaze, our crews moved onto a mop-up and overhaul phase, extinguishing hotspots and drowning embers. A fire patrol remained overnight, knocking down any areas that reignited. Final mop-up ended on April 10th. All together, 35 SVFD firefighters and all four of our fire trucks responded.

This fire was a tragic loss for the tenants and homeowners. One family lost their pet and business. Another tenant lost all their possessions. Two homeowners lost their houses. Fortunately, however, nobody was injured or killed. Containment also worked – the incident commander and firefighters did a spectacular job of holding the line.

Some Key Things to Share:

- Quick 911 calls make an enormous difference in outcome. If you smell smoke, investigate and report. Don't presume somebody else is doing it. The house that the SVFD saved on Watson Road last fall was reported before the flames could breach the walls and roof. Once the flames get out and spread, there is very little anyone can do.
- Close construction, slope, and overhanging trees were contributing factors to the blaze. Cedar building materials on siding and decks ignite quickly. Had this fire occurred in July or August, it would likely have mushroomed into a severe forest fire event. Please ensure that all trees and vegetation are well back from your homes. Please help us by following the recommendations in BC's Fire Smart manual. It is available online at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca>
- If you become aware of a fire in either Belcarra or Anmore, please help us by restricting your domestic water usage. And then please ask your neighbours to do the same. Our crew want as much water as they can get.
- Having working extinguishers and fire alarms in your home are critical tools to buy the precious minutes for emergency response.
- The Vancouver Fire Boat was requested but was tied up at a second fire. Had they been available, their involvement would have been useful but not timely enough to change the outcome. Our trucks will always be the first arrivals. When we need to attack from the water (as we did here), we can use our two large hale pumps.
- Our crews need space to work (a clogged single-lane road proved difficult for our tanker to navigate). In an incident, please do not park your car where it can conceivably be a nuisance to us. If unsure, leave your keys in the ignition so that we can move it if need be.
- The VPD were instrumental in helping us with pump transport and crowd control. Thanks to all supporting agencies (BCAS, RCMP, Fortis and BC Hydro). Thanks also to neighbours for watching out for each other and supplying us with extra fuel for our hale pumps. Great community support.
- The investigation found no evidence of foul play
- Go Fund Me pages were setup to support the victims of the blaze