

Rist Canyon Volunteer Fire Department – 2006

In 1975 a group of dedicated residents in Rist Canyon joined forces to create Rist Canyon Volunteer Fire Department.

Thirty One Years Laterwe thank them for their vision and foresight – a vision that has lasted, evolved and grown with our community. What they started with hard work, donated equipment and their own personal signatures guaranteeing a loan to build RCVFD Station 1 has grown today into a well funded (still not a tax district), dynamic and effective fire department that provides EMS and Fire Protection in an enlarged area.

Today, Rist Canyon Volunteer Fire Department is a group of dedicated individuals and community supporters who work together to provide fire and emergency medical response in a 100+ square mile area north west of Fort Collins. In 1978 RCVFD published its “Capabilities and Commitments” which stated that:

“RIST CANYON VFD is committed to the prevention and prompt extinguishment of wildland fires, and to the control of structure fires within the 38 square mile Rist Canyon – Stove Prairie areas...”

Today, after 31 years of **donation supported operations**, Rist Canyon VFD operates 10 emergency vehicles out of 4 stations, Rist Canyon, Stove Prairie, Whale Rock and the Buckhorn Canyon. Astute readers familiar with RCVFD will note that this is down from 12 trucks and 5 stations last year. Is RCVFD losing capability? In fact, no, RCVFD has grown it’s capability by replacing old military rigs with modern and effect engines such as the one shown above. This has actually allowed us to simplify our fleet, while providing more capability.

Upgrades in 2005 include:

- E631 – Type 6x wildland truck attack truck, new in 2005, responding out of station 3
- E613 – Type 6x wildland truck, new in 2004, responding from station 1.
- Upgraded diesel pumps on primary response equipment including E611, our 2001 rescue pumper from Station 1.
- Replaced 1963 Jeep 5/4 in station 4 (Whale Rock) with 1990 GMC. E641 was upgraded as a result of the new E631.

Planned for 2006:

- In 2006, RCVFD will take a major step forward by purchasing a new Rescue Pumper equipped with a Compressed Air Foam System. This truck, being built by Monroe truck equipment this summer, will be based upon a GMC 5500 4x4 Medium Duty truck and will

RCVFD Newest Engine - E631 located at Station 3. Built by Monroe Truck Equipment and delivered June 2005.



be equipped with an Odin Foam Derringer CAFS system. At \$180,000 this truck represents the largest RCVFD has ever made – but also represents a major increase in capability. This is not simply a ‘new truck’ but a true step forward in our capability. The new engine will allow us to retire our 1978 E534 and move the current E611 rescue truck to Station 3 in Stove Prairie. At that point all of RCVFD’s primary responds vehicles will be modern, reliable vehicles and both Stations 1 and 3 will represent fully capable fire/rescue fleets.

- RCVFD also received a grant this year for a Thermal Imaging Camera. This camera will allow us to better identify hot spots in wildland fires, structure fires – even locate injured parties that may have fallen or wandered away from a car crash. The Thermal Imaging Camera, a \$10,000 piece of equipment, will be received this fall after RCVFD receives required training for the equipment.

RCVFD responds to all fires, medical emergencies, car accidents and other emergencies. We have responders living throughout our response area, from Whale Rock to the upper Buckhorn. RCVFD responders carry digital alphanumeric pagers, 24-hours a day, and are dispatched by Larimer County Sheriff Dispatch. Officers and many of the RCVFD’s volunteers carry modern, multi-channel scanning radios.

When RCVFD started, the RCVFD fleet was based upon World War II (yes WWII) vintage military trucks converted to fire trucks. Today, nearly all of RCVFD’s primary response vehicles are under 10 years of age. While our two largest trucks are 1960’s vintage Military 2.5 ton 6x6’s trucks provided through a lease program from the Colorado Stated Forest Service, they have been rebuilt and modernized to provide very effective large truck response. Frankly, these rugged off road vehicles are ideal for our rugged responses area. RCVFD’s fire fighters and medical responders are equipped with current state of the art equipment including full structural gear and extrication equipment (‘jaws of life’).

Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating

In 2005 RCVFD received ISO-9 rating for stations 1 and 3. This rating helps your insurance company determine the protection class for your fire insurance. If you live within 5 miles of Station 1 or Station 3 you are in an ISO-9 classification. For further information visit <http://www.rcvfd.org> and follow the links to homeowners insurance information. There you can enter your address into a web page and calculate the distance from Station 1 or 3 to your home (provided your home address is in Mapquest).

RCVFD Response Profile.

RCVFD responds to between 50 and 100 calls per year. Currently, the mixture is about 50/50 fire/medical (rescue). RCVFD is a classic Urban Interface (houses in the woods) fire department and faces all the challenges created by that. As the population density and number of visitors to our area increases, RCVFD continues to see a more diverse set of responses and a higher level of expectation. It is important that, if you visit or live in a rural area such as RCVFD’s response area, you understand the limitations imposed upon emergency response by that area. The fact that we have no hydrant system and must deal with diverse weather and topography and long travel distances (not to mention volunteer staff) means that RCVFD will probably never provide the 4-

minute response expected in town. This means that we (RCVFD and the community) must work together to provide appropriate and timely responses. RCVFD is committed to providing the very best professional emergency services we can and continually strive to improve or expand our services. Your support is critical.

How can you help?

RCVFD is always looking for volunteers – from emergency responders to people to help with fundraising, organization, maintenance, record keeping, etc. Running a department such as RCVFD purely on donations and volunteer labor is quite a challenge. If you are interested in helping, contact one of the volunteers or your area representative.

Funding: RCVFD is funded by 2 mechanisms. Direct donation by area residents provides our basic operations budget. Special fund raising events like the RCVFD Mountain Festival and Richard Schmid Fine Art Auction pay for upgrades and capital improvement. RCVFD receives no direct tax funding though we do apply for and occasionally receive grants.

Current Funding needs: Some years ago RCVFD embarked on a concerted effort to update our primary initial response equipment to trucks of less than 10 years age. While older trucks are acceptable in secondary roles, primary response vehicles need to be modern, drivable and reliable. With the purchase of E631 this year, RCVFD has nearly achieved that goal. This year we will replace E534, a 33 year old international and achieve this goal for stations 1 and 3.

- **Replacement of E534 with a new rescue/pumper.** This truck which is under construction will be put in place in Station 1, allowing the current E611 to move to Station 3. The truck will be built on a Chevy C5500 4x4 chassis and delivered after the RCVFD Festival this fall. It will carry 325 gallons of water and be equipped with a Compressed Air Foam System. Compress air foam (CAFS) is a new technology initially developed for oil fires and for wildland structural protection. As the systems have developed, CAFS has been recognized as a very effective fire suppression technology for structural fire fighting in water limited situations. For more on CAFS – see CAFS upgrade in the next section. This truck will cost \$180,000. RCVFD applied for a FIRE ACT grant for this truck last year, but that grant was not approved. Currently, RCVFD is between \$40,000 and \$60,000 short of the full funds for the truck. A number of fund raising efforts are under way to close that gap, and we fully expect the cash to be there before the truck is delivered as we do not want to borrow the money.
- **CAFS (Compressed Air Foam System) upgrade** to E611 to match the CAFS system on the above truck. Why CAFS? A CAFS system works by injecting high pressure air into the water stream and creating foam. The consistency of this foam can range from “wet” (like soapy water) to dry (shaving cream). CAFS system effectively multiplies, in terms of fire suppression, the water carried by a truck by between 5 and 10 times. That means a 325 gallon truck equipped with foam is comparable to a 1500 to 3000 gallons of water on a conventional truck. Water is RCVFD’s biggest limit in fire fighting, particularly structural fire fighting, which makes CAFS very compelling. In addition, CAFS is particularly effective in exterior attack structural fire fighting – exterior attack, where the fire fighters do not go into the building, is the most appropriate structural fire attack method for RCVFD. In addition, CAFS is much less damaging in terms of

water damage than conventional water only attack methods. The downside – CAFS is very expensive. A CAFS system configured as we need is on the order of \$70,000.

- **Second set of “Jaws of Life”** for the rescue/pumper out of station 3. This \$10K piece of equipment is required to complete the equipment on that truck.

RCVFD Stations and Apparatus (trucks).

RCVFD Station 1:

Located in Rist Canyon, RCVFD Station 1 is a 5 bay station and is our most active station. Engines from Station 1 respond on all calls.

- Engine 611: 2001 Ford F550 Rescue/Pumper. Located at RCVFD Station 1, this engine responds first out to all car and structure fires as well as car accidents and rescue situations and second out to wildland fires. It carries our extrication gear (jaws of life), our Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and is equipped with a 5000 watt 120V electrical system and 3000 watt scene lighting package.
- Engine 412: 1967 American General Type 4x (1000 gallon 6x6) Provided to RCVFD by Colorado State Forest Service, this turbo-diesel truck is our station 1 primary large fire engine - again, carrying both wild land and structural response gear. This truck responds on every large fire response.
- Engine 613: 2004 Chevy 3500HD based Type 6x (250 gallon initial attack wildland truck) – this truck is first out to wildland fires and second out to other fires.
- Engine 14: 1995 Suburban QRT (Quick Response Team) medical vehicle. Provided by a state EMS grant, engine 14 has more than fulfilled it’s primary role of accessing patients quickly regardless of where. The vehicle, which is equipped with onboard oxygen and a patient cot fully compatible with PVH and TVA ambulances, has been a tremendous tool for RCVFD EMS crew.
- Engine 15: 1996 Suburban Support Vehicle – Donated by Larimer County Engine 15 is a real workhorse for the department. It carries extra equipment, extra SCBA, is used as a scouting and wildfire crew truck.

RCVFD Station 3 (Stove Prairie):

Located just east of Stove Prairie school, RCVFD Station 3 is our second most active station. Engines from Station 3 respond to all calls west of Whale Rock upon page and to all calls upon 2nd alarm.

- Engine 631: 2005 Chevy 3500HD type 6x fast attack truck (250 gallon 4x4). Purchased and custom build by Monroe Truck Equipment in Monroe, Wisconsin, E631 provides initial attack wildland coverage out of station 3. This new truck is probably our most capable wildland truck.
- Engine 433: Similar in configuration to E412, this 1968 Military turbo diesel 6x6 type 4x (1000 gallon 6x6) responds to all large fires west of Ford hill and to all calls upon second alarm.

- Engine 534: 1978 International Type 5x (500 gallon, 4x4) is our primary structural/rescue truck operating out of station 3. This truck is scheduled to be replaced this year as it is not reliable enough for it's primary role.

RCVFD Station 4 (Whale Rock):

- Engine 641: 1990 GMC 3500 HD Type 6x (250 gallon, 4x5). Engine 641 was previously located at station 3 – and was called Engine 631. Donated by Anheuser Busch this truck has been our most active and reliable engine. Moving to the Whale Rock Fire Station – we expect E631 to continue to provide yeoman service. The current truck at station 4 will move to the Buckhorn.

RCVFD Station (location) 5 (Buckhorn):

This is a summer-only location – the truck is stationed at a volunteer's residence in the Buckhorn.

- Engine 651: 1967 Jeep 5/4 ton truck, this type 6x was previously located in Whale Rock. It is moving to the Buckhorn to replace the 5/4 currently there – and broken.

Other equipment owned by RCVFD:

- SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) for responder protection in smoke filled structural or vehicle fire situations. RCVFD currently owns 10 modern Scott 4.5 SCBA units and 20 extra air bottles. This equipment, valued at over \$70,000, is a result of our FEMA Fire act grant in 2001.
- Extrication equipment: RCVFD has hydraulically powered extrication gear (jaws of life) as well as battery powered 'saws-all' cutoff saws that can slice through cars and other obstructions.
- Low-angle rescue gear: RCVFD does not do high angle rescues (we call Larimer County Search and Rescue), but we do have low angle rescue equipment such as ropes, slings and a 'stokes' to allow safe work on steep hills and roofs.
- Roof ladders: to deal with those steep roofs in our area.
- "Bunker Gear": All RCVFD responders now have fully modern and NFPA certified structural bunker gear as well as wild land gear.
- Medical response kits: EMT's carry extensive medical kits which include oxygen as do our primary response trucks. Other responders carry more limited medical kits.
- Radios: RCVFD operates modern scanning radios on 16 frequencies including our own tactical channel. In the works is addition of a 2nd tactical channel that will have a repeater located on Buckhorn mountain and will allow RCVFD responders to communicate from one side of Ford Hill to the other. This will be a major benefit as our VHF radios are line-of-sight which means that somebody at RCVFD Station 1 cannot talk to somebody west of Ford Hill.

Why does RCVFD need all this stuff (and do we?)

The answer is "Because RCVFD is a diverse department that has a very diverse response area and needs". RCVFD needs to be able to respond to medical emergencies, wild land fires, structural fires, car accidents, natural and other disasters (yes, we've responded to floods)... nearly anything you

can imagine (often more than we can imagine). In addition, we need to do so in all weather in a very rough area.

For these reasons, RCVFD's philosophy has been to have widely dispersed trucks and responders and heavy emphasis on communications combined with diverse training. This philosophy has proven quite effective.

RCVFD Contact Info:

EMERGENCY: Dial 911

Fire Chief: Bob Gann. (970) 898-9387/(970) 482-4808 (w/h).

Email chief@rcvfd.org

RCVFD Web page: <http://www.rcvfd.org>

RCVFD Message phone: (970) 493-1501 (not for urgent or emergency contact!)

President: email president@rcvfd.org