

## Kremmling Fire Annual Update

- Charts here: <https://www.kremmlingfire.org/annual-statistics-2021>
- Roadway emergencies are high – volunteer numbers low
- Tools and training help to overcome the challenges of low numbers
- Priority concern: Declining volunteer membership
- Plan of action: Create a paid Firefighter and Recruiter position

*When we look back at the past year in Kremmling Fire, two numbers tell the story of our present operations and the focus of our continuing efforts in the next few years: 59 and 11.*

During 2021, Kremmling Fire's volunteer firefighters responded to 119 calls. This number is down slightly from 2020, but still about 10% higher than the 5-year average for calls. The high number of incidents is consistent with our expectations and with trends throughout Grand County, so it's not really noteworthy.

However, it is noteworthy that, while overall calls came down in 2021, the number of roadway incidents did not. In fact, Kremmling's volunteers responded to vehicle crashes, vehicle fires, and other highway hazards just as often as the previous year— 59 calls to hazards on the road. Thus, roadway responses as a subset (classified as *Rescue* in our annual statistics data) increased in 2021 and account for 50% of our total call load this year.

To put this increase in perspective, consider that over the last decade roadway incidents have accounted for between 30% and 40% of our annual calls. Whereas, 2021 is the third year in a row that rescue calls have

reached the 50% mark. The road is busier. Have you noticed?

Within these 59 roadway incidents, crashes resulting in victim entrapment continue to occur regularly. Such crashes, where injured people are trapped inside a wrecked car, are among the most critical situations that first responders face.

Successful crash rescue requires a wide array of skills and tools that must be put to work safely and quickly. This is why Kremmling Fire makes patient-extrication a high priority for both training and equipping our firefighters.

To this end, in 2022 we plan to upgrade the extrication tools in our primary rescue truck to a full complement of battery-power hydraulic tools. This includes a cutter, a spreader, and a telescoping ram.

Tools such as these, without separate power units and hoses, are a significant advantage for responders because they can be put to work more quickly with fewer firefighters.

Moreover, a self-contained battery tool is more easily carried to a crash that is well off the roadway (a frequent occurrence on our mountain roads). These new tools should be in service this spring and we have scheduled several company training sessions to give our volunteers tool time with this new equipment.

Speaking of tool time, this is a great opportunity to acknowledge the generous contributions of Mike Osario and his crew at East and West Towing. East and West has supplied us with vehicles for extrication training and has donated both time and expertise to haul cars to our training highway and take them away when we are done. Hats off, boys!

What is, perhaps, more important about these 59 calls to the highway is that this number tells us where we spend a large portion of our time – working in moving traffic. We take the act of placing our volunteers on the roadway very seriously. Simply put, the more often we are out on the road, the more our people are at risk.

Hence, we are always working to improve our training and tools to achieve the fundamental principles of Kremmling Fire's rescue operations: Be capable, be visible, be gone in 20 minutes. Visibility on the roadway is essential for the safety of our firefighters and all first responders. All of our rescue trucks are outfitted with a variety of lighting components to ensure

that we can see our work area and that individuals can be seen by passing cars.

In addition to using personal and portable lights, as well as truck-mounted lights, we have added personal warning lights to our toolbox. If you are passing through an accident scene, expect to see firefighters with reflective striping, Class II Safety Vests, and now shoulder-mounted flashing warning lights working at the scene.

Thanks to all of you who take it slow when passing first responders working in the roadway. Special thanks to the crews at Colorado State Patrol and the Grand County Sheriff's office for showing off their personal warning lights so we could get some too!

As you can see, maintaining safe and effective highway response is a defining attribute of Kremmling Fire operations, but there is another characteristic that impacts our organization even more so. The number 11.

During 2020 and 2021, we served our community with two paid staff and 9 volunteers for a total of 11 firefighters. Among the 11 of us, the number of firefighters available to respond to calls is consistently less than half. This is the smallest number of firefighters since the formation of our organization in 1946.

Consequently, volunteer membership is the highest priority for Kremmling Fire for 2022 and beyond. In the last two years, we have used tactics and tools that allow our volunteers to

work safely and effectively with smaller numbers of firefighters.

In this way, we have maintained a high level service to our community, despite having few firefighters. Nevertheless, a strong volunteer program is essential to the continued operations of our district.

This is why we have decided to create a third paid position at Kremmling Fire for a firefighter/officer who will also fill the role of recruitment and volunteer coordinator. This new staff person will fill two essential needs for our district and, ultimately, our community.

First, most volunteers are working out of town during the week, so our weekday calls get the lowest volunteer turnout. A third paid firefighter will provide an additional responder at these critical times.

Second, we feel our community is not devoid of new volunteers, but we must reach out and engage with residents and businesses in new ways to highlight the opportunities available with Kremmling Fire. We plan to hire this person in the next year and invest in our volunteer program over the next three to five years to bring our membership levels up.

It is our intent to continue to provide the service you expect while keeping the costs to the community as low as possible. In short, this means keeping our volunteer program healthy and growing by dedicating staff time to

cultivate this vital component of our community.

As always, it is our pleasure to serve the town of Kremmling and western Grand County. We could not operate without the dedication and professionalism of our volunteers and the support of their families and employers. Thank you. — Chief Tucker