

Foothills 911 finds a new home

Emergency: FRESC relocating from Oilfields Hospital to Okotoks in October

By Krista Conrad
Staff Reporter

Foothills 911 has found a new home in Okotoks.

The Foothills Regional Emergency Services Commission (FRESC) is relocating from Oilfields Hospital to a location in Okotoks this October.

"We've outgrown our space at Oilfields Hospital in Black Diamond," said FRESC chair Suzanne Oel. "We have this opportunity to expand to a larger space and upgrade technology to provide a better service to residents."

FRESC has been located at the hospital for 23 years, setting up its operation in

1994. It suited 911 operations over the years, but the time has come to move and make necessary upgrades, she said.

Being part of the emergency services infrastructure in Okotoks will provide access to things like fibre optics and the chance to use the Alberta First Responder Radio Communication System (AFRRCS), the new province-wide system designed to help agencies communicate with one another. The system was first tested by Okotoks Municipal Enforcement in July 2016 and is now being incorporated by municipalities and emergency services units across Alberta.



SUZANNE OEL
FRESC Chair

Oel said moving FRESC to a new location has been in the works for some time, but there is still a lot of work to do in order to relocate. For the next two months new equipment will be ordered and installed at the new location, she said.

It's all about increasing the level of service the commission can provide to the region, she said. The commission currently serves 26 municipalities and 32 fire stations - approximately 130,000 residents altogether.

"We're hoping to just add to service," said Oel. "Upgrading to new technology and expanding the size of our space is all part of that."

One of the upgrades will be upgrading technology to use Next Generation 911, which will allow residents to text or email emergency services and include photos or video clips that may help first responders, she said.

Having more space will also allow FRESC to expand some of its operations, such as monitoring community peace officers and municipal enforcement in addition to answering 911 calls for emergency services. That includes work-alone monitoring, which allows officers to check-in while on shift, she said.

The Black Diamond location will be kept in-tact as a back-up operations facility, she said.

"We always have back-ups for eventualities," said Oel. "So, if there's an overflow of calls we can do that, if there's a situation where we have to move out of the building, then we have a back-up situation where we can operate out of our secondary location."

FRESC has been saving funds to finance the move for some time, she said. Some of the upgrades will also be paid for through

provincial 911 grant funding, she said.

Okotoks protective services director Scott Roberts said the Town of Okotoks was pleased to be able to find space within its emergency services environment to house FRESC. The location cannot be disclosed due to security of 911 operations, which is considered critical infrastructure, he said.

The move won't change how 911 operates within the community, but will allow the organization to improve its services, he said.

"From a technology perspective, this will give them cutting-edge technology," said Roberts. "They're going to be in the most advanced position they can be in terms of technology. From a community perspective it doesn't really change anything but it will certainly bring us closer together as far as our partnership goes."



Downtown Summer Thursdays

Art on the Lawn @ the Gallery

5 PM to 8 PM | Shop the local mini market at the Okotoks Art Gallery! Artist vendors are still welcome to participate. Phone 403-938-3204 for more information.

Open Mic @ the Gallery

6 PM to 8 PM | Listen to the sounds of live local musicians on the front porch of the gallery. Each week a different artist will host the stage! No pre-registration required to perform! Show up at 5:00 to sign up for your slot.

Kids Fun @ Triangle Park

5 PM to 7 PM | Kids can burn off steam at our family fun zone with different activities each week. In the event of poor weather, activities will take place in the Art Gallery Studio.

Outdoor Activities @ the Plaza

6 PM to 8 PM | The downtown plaza heats up with fitness classes & live performances for the whole family each week! Family fitness from 6:15-6:45 PM. Regular adult fitness class at 7 PM. Each week is different with Yoga, Booty Barre, Zumba, HIIT, PiYo, Pound, Bellyfit, Kickboxing and more! Free, however donations for the Heart and Stroke Foundation are being gratefully accepted. In the event of poor weather, fitness classes will move to downstairs in the Rotary Performing Arts Centre.

Shop & Dine Local

Check out the late night shopping, cafes & dining throughout downtown! Take a stroll down Elma, Elizabeth, and North Railway Streets to discover shops open late every Thursday.



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Coun. Carrie Fischer said the current ban is directly related to consumption through July and residents shouldn't be worried about current development impacting water systems.

"For the last two years pretty much the only way to get development approved is if [developers] they bring their own water licence, or if we bought a water licence and can begin to allocate to the developers in queue," said Fischer.

The Town continues to wait on funding for a water pipeline that would bring a more secure water source from the Bow River. Once it is in place, the Town will be able to approve developments currently waiting to break ground, she said.

"We've got land even within our pre-annexation boundary, and within that 30,000 cap that we can't approve for development because we don't have water," said Fischer.

She said the wait for water is having a broader impact on the Town of Okotoks and developers, and a sustained water source via pipeline can't come soon enough.

place, a lot of the seasonal woes should be mitigated, she said.

"But it doesn't mean, to me, that we ever get to a place where we can water seven days a week in the Town of Okotoks," said Fischer. "I think those days have sailed in consciousness as a whole, because I just don't think it's a responsible use of water."

"In the world we're in today, with the awareness we have of water scarcity, we need to be conscious of how we're using this resource in a responsible way."

It starts with maintaining scheduled water days and adhering to water bans, she said.

It's part of long-term management, because there's no way to know when the rain will come, she said. The most important part is maintaining water levels for indoor use and firefighting, she said.

"It's better to take a prudent conservation approach now and manage that through the fall until we get some rain, rather than getting to a point where we're in an emergency situation where now we can't use any water," said Fischer.

Once a waterline is in