

# Fire chief to teach safety tips

By Tanya Kostiw

Staff Reporter

Grass or wind fires can devastate homes and fields in a short period of time and it is important for people to learn how to prevent such tragedies and be more mindful of fire safety.

The High Country Rural Crime Watch Association will host its annual general meeting Feb. 20 and will include a presentation from the new MD of Foothills fire chief Jim Smith. The event will give residents the chance to meet Smith and learn about fire prevention and fire services, said association vice-president and MD Coun. Suzanne Oel.

"I know he's been working



JIM SMITH

MD of Foothills fire chief

closely with all the different fire departments that represent the MD," she said of Smith, "but this is an opportunity for the people, for the residents, to meet him."

Smith will discuss fire incidents over the past year, which Oel said should be interesting given the fire in Priddis on Christmas Day. There have been a lot of other fires recently in the municipality as well, she said.

Residents can also learn some fire prevention tips, which can include dangers related to areas with trees, grass and wind-related fires and safety within the home, she said.

Oel explained Smith's presentation could serve as a good re-enforcement of fire safety knowledge and added education is often about repetition.

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"It's always good to get a reminder of these issues because maybe it's something you thought about doing, forgot and now you're just hearing that one more time and you might just get on it," she said.

Smith said the MD of

Foothills is averaging about five fires per month, which is more than usual and attributed them to weather and people being careless. A cigarette caused a fire back in November, he explained.

Smith said the risk for fire is higher in agricultural areas and there is always a fire risk even if there is snow on the ground. He said the fire department is focusing on

preventing fires.

"Typically our travel times are not like those of the city, it takes us a while to get to a fire scene so we want to be really careful and prevent fires before they happen," he said.

Smith is the former deputy fire chief for the Okotoks Fire Department and said it can be challenging managing more staff spread over a large

area and to see everyone.

When asked how he was enjoying his new role, Smith said he was "havin' a hoot."

He added he was looking forward to meeting with residents and opening up lines of communication.

A Turner Valley RCMP member will also speak at the meeting, which will be held Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. at the Priddis Community Hall.