



Okanogon County Electric Co-op Newsletter

July 2017

Office Info:

Summer Office Hours:
Mon - Thurs.
7 am - 5:30 pm

Our customer service call center is available 24/7/365 to handle most electric & propane concerns.

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Saying Goodbye to a Methow Valley Lifesaver

In 1997, Okanogon County Electric Co-Op General Manager, Roger Meader, and Ellen Lamiman, Conservation Specialist, approached Aero Methow Rescue Service about partnering with the Co-Op on a USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program opportunity. At that time, Aero Methow Rescue Service was in great need of ambulances. Three large



1998 - 3 New Aero Methow ambulances as part of OCEC - USDA Revolving Loan Fund.

ambulances could be purchased for around \$75,000 each. The Co-Op would receive the grant funds and then loan the money to Aero Methow Rescue Service (AMRS) to purchase the ambulances. Over the course of 10 years Aero Methow would pay back the loan at a small service charge of 1%. The money paid back to the Co-op by AMRS established the Revolving Loan Fund that offers zero interest loans to private and non-profit agencies and businesses in the Methow Valley.

Aero Methow agreed to the partnership, and Cindy Button (AMRS) and Ellen Lamiman (OCEC) began the lengthy task of applying for the grant.



Pictured L to R: Larry Higbee, Ellen Lamiman, Cindy Button, Leroy Debes (USDA), Nim Titcomb, Roger Meader

Funding for the ambulances was approved, and the staff and volunteers at AMRS began the process of designing the ambulances to meet their needs. During the process of designing the ambulance, Aero Methow's founding father, Dr. William Henry, died suddenly. Affectionately known as Doc Henry, He started AMRS in the 1960's with a group of citizens before EMS was developed as an industry. The first ambulance was a Suburban staffed with volunteer Advanced First Aiders and Dr. Henry.



Ambulance Ctd.

After several years of using the Suburban, Kay Wagner, the widow of Otto Wagner, owner of the local mill, purchased the first real ambulance. Even with the new ambulance, AMRS struggled to meet the needs of the growing community. There was a real need for more emergency vehicles.

Thanks to the partnership with OCEC, in October of 1998, a procession of three shiny, new ambulances entered Twisp. It was a glorious sight to see. Dr. Henry missed this sight by 8 months. The ambulances were stocked and ready for service in a matter of days.

The three ambulances served our community for 15 years. AMRS recognized that soon they would need to be replaced. A feasibility study was initiated and the next generation of ambulances was designed. However, one new ambulance would cost \$204,000, almost as much as it cost to purchase all three in 1998. In 2013, a private donor appreciated our need and funded the purchase of a new 4 x 4 Dodge Type I ambulance. To date, April 2017, we now have three identical Dodge 4x4 Type I ambulances.

OCEC was instrumental in securing the original ambulances for Aero Methow Rescue Services. Since its inception, the revolving loan fund has funded almost \$1.1 million dollars in projects for the Methow Valley.

How do you say goodbye to these original ambulances?

Some of our patients have taken their last and first breaths in these ambulances. First responders have taken their initial and final Emergency Medical Services call in these ambulances. This fleet of ambulances have traveled many miles down poorly maintained and unmarked rural roads, during hot summer days and snowy winter nights, never breaking down or leaving us stranded with a patient in our care.

-Thanks to Cindy Button, Director of Services at Aero Methow Rescue Service for her contribution to this article

Get Updates Faster During Major Outages

OCEC is committed to sending outage texts and email notifications during regular business hours and will make every effort to send them during major off hour outages. During the recent transmission outage on the Loup, Outage Texting was the fastest method of communication with our members.

Visit our website at www.ocec.coop, and click on the texting link in the lower left corner for instructions.

You may also call our office at (509) 996-2228 to request text alert setup.

