



Randolph Fire District #1
Randolph Center, VT 05061

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Newsletter to our consumers

As we slowly emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Randolph Fire District #1 (RFD1) Prudential Committee offers this newsletter edition to inform and update District members about activities and ongoing issues. Since the last newsletter, the Prudential Committee, other District officers, and other volunteers have been busy. While many of us may take water from the tap for granted in modern life, a lot of work, maintenance, time, and attention make it happen. This work did not stop during the pandemic! Since we have some new customers in our neighborhood, let's start with a brief historical recap:

History: RFD1 was chartered by the Vermont State Legislature in 1939 as a municipal corporation. The water system in Randolph Center dated back to 1850 when it was known as the Randolph Hydraulic Company. Today, the Randolph Center Water System functions as the combined water systems of the Vermont Technical College (VTC) and RFD1. The VTC system supports all VTC properties. RFD1 services the residences, church, and businesses within RFD1's boundaries. RFD1 also provides fire protection services through 16 fire hydrants throughout the water system.

Operations:

Both RFD1 and VTC pump into and use water from the elevated 250,000-gallon steel reservoir (aka "the tower") which provides excellent water pressure to our system. RFD1 pumps water from its covered spring and has continual "rights" to 50,000 gallons of storage in the tower. RFD1 has a separate 20,000 gallon reservoir and is responsible for maintaining the main lines of the system. VTC pumps water from its Penny Brook well and is responsible for maintenance and operation of the water tower and the system that serves all college-owned properties.

Certified Water Operator: State of Vermont oversight over community water systems has steadily increased. One State requirement is the use of a Certified Water System operator for bi-weekly checks of system pumping facilities and for all water testing.

Testing: RFD1 is required to submit two coliform bacteria samples for testing each month. Tests for other potential water contaminants such as nitrates and lead are also required. Testing requirements have increased -- last year's testing cost was over \$2000.

Pump House: The pump house contains two 50 gpm centrifugal pumps, a chlorine storage tank and pump, a piping system consisting of pipe, valves, meters, pump controls and other related equipment. Many improvements were made in 2020-2021, replacing aging equipment, including new pumps and electrical components.

Distribution System: There are approximately two miles of 6" and 8" water mains, 34 gate valves, 16 hydrants, 7,500+ feet of service lines, and 70 curb stops.

System Maintenance: Some components of the RFD1 water system are over 80 years old. And, especially given our climate, pipes and valves periodically break and require repair or replacement. A proactive analysis of our system, sponsored by the State of Vermont, was completed in 2021. It helped identify what parts of the water system are vulnerable and it will allow RFD1 to strategically plan, prioritize, and budget for future necessary maintenance.

RFD1 Leadership and Administration:

The RFD1 decision-making group is called the **Prudential Committee** and consists of three rotating, elected positions. Although these officers are elected to serve, it's important to note that they too are *volunteers*. Other elected positions that support daily operations are Clerk, Engineer, Treasurer, a Collector of Rents and Taxes, and 3 auditors. Additional volunteers are always needed for special projects or tasks. Help from the community is essential and always greatly appreciated.

Finance:

RFD1 operates within an annual budget supervised by the RFD1 Treasurer. 2021 income from customer water rents, taxes, and State payments (PILOT-payment in lieu of taxes) was \$45,800 while expenses totaled \$39,200. An operating reserve fund is maintained for emergency repairs. Additionally, a capital reserve fund exists for future improvements to the system.

Future Issues:

- For quite some time, the district's population has had minimal population growth with its average age increasing. Consequently, the RFD1 leadership has observed that the population base of the fire district does not have capacity to sustain an all-volunteer operated and managed public water system of our size, due to the nature of our customer base and the average age of system infrastructure. For this reason, we have been exploring ways to sustain the water system operation and management by the town of Randolph, through its village water department. At this time, progress has been limited to initial discussions regarding the concept, with further discussions necessary to reach a point where this is ready to be brought forth to the residents of the fire district for a vote to authorize such a change in operations and management.
- **Long-term viability of RFD1:** An all-volunteer operated and managed water system can only be sustained with a dramatic change from the current situation. If eventual operation and control of RFD1 by the Town of Randolph is a concern, we simply must have more volunteers from the community to serve in elected and other positions. **This is absolutely critical!** Future organizational health and independence of RFD1 depends on greater customer involvement to manage required functions. Please consider volunteering today! The future of RFD1 may depend upon it!
- **On-going Maintenance:** Projects at the pump house, on water lines and valves, hydrants, curb stops, and residential meters. Efforts are both proactive and reactive!
- **RFD1 Water Ordinance revision:** Updates to our water ordinance include language added to outline steps toward service disconnection due to account delinquency and increased awareness and response to leaks and water abuse.
- **Continued encouragement of RFD1 customers to pay invoices on-time.** The District depends on regular, reliable revenue from quarterly invoicing. If timely payment is difficult for you, please contact an RFD1 representative to discuss options.
- **Continued commitment to water conservation.** System leaks will be identified and repaired. Water conservation is critically important for us all and we need all RFD1 customers to do their part.

Save the Date!

- **Monthly RFD1 Prudential Committee meeting:** held every third Thursday at Red School House (pandemic permitting) or virtually via Microsoft Teams. All are welcome to attend and get involved!
- **Annual Membership Meeting: Tuesday, May 17, 2022.** Time and place TBD.
- **Annual Customer Picnic: Summer 2022.** Time and place TBD.

Remember to visit the RFD1 website for much more including contact information for RFD1 leadership, past newsletters, meeting minutes, Treasurer and Engineer reports, RFD1 water and sign ordinances, fire district boundary depictions, and a Randolph Center photo gallery.

The RFD1 website lists the volunteer jobs and roles that are needed to keep the water system operating. This list is not all-inclusive. There are many ways you can contribute and help keep RFD1 independent and a provider of clean and plentiful water.

You can even pay your quarterly bill by credit card via a website link to PayGov.US.

Please take a few minutes and visit our website to learn more about YOUR Fire District!

www.RFD1.org