

New fire station more roomy



From left, South Tongass Fire Department Chief Scott Davis talks to volunteers Dale Lowell, Keith Knowles, Jeff Owings and Lt. Josh Workman in the engine bays Wednesday at the department's new station overlooking the Mountain Point boat ramp.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

South Tongass firefighters appreciate all the space

By **ANDREW DAMSTEDT**
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Ask any member of the South Tongass Volunteer Fire Department for their favorite aspect of the new fire station and the same answer likely will follow: More space.

"The space, the ability to do larger classes," Lt. Josh Workman said. "We could only fit 12 people in the old station, at most."

Volunteer firefighter Dale Lowell concurred stating that he liked the larger area to train and the bigger spaces for the vehicles.

The new fire station built near Seawatch Drive is about five times larger than the former station. An open house is planned for 7 p.m. Tuesday.

"You could fit the entire (former) station into half of the (newer station's) bay," Chief Scott Davis said.

Dawson Construction started work in April and completed the \$2.1 million station earlier this month.

The department moved into the new station

the weekend of Nov. 21. Only a few items remain to complete the station, such as installing the fire pole. One of the bigger unfinished aspects is finding funds to complete the commercial kitchen, according to Davis.

That funding could come from proceeds after selling the former fire station, as no other Ketchikan Gateway Borough department expressed any interest in taking over that facility, Davis said.

The station has two drive-through bays for the larger rigs, plus two more bays for other vehicles. There's also a storage area, a biohazard room and offices for the department's two employees. The department has 39 volunteers in addition to its two employees.

There are three apartments, a workout room, a small kitchen and a living area in the new station. Davis said the station complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and has a public restroom on the first floor and a community center on the second floor.

"The bridge that goes somewhere," Davis said, of the wooden bridge that leads to the station's second floor.

The community center's floor was painted so people can play shuffleboard, checkers or chess, hopscotch or tic-tac-toe. A playground is in the works, according to Davis. Also in the community center are photographs of department members, which auxiliary chairwoman Traci Davis was hanging Wednesday.

"I think it's going to be a community center for the South Tongass area," she said of the new station. "It's my favorite part; there's more room for training of members."

While there is more space in the new station, it might take members a while to get used to the extra room.

"After we moved in, we were having lunch in the new kitchen area, and we were all sitting there tight and huddled," Scott Davis said. "We're just not used to it."

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