

Officials seek info after fire boat vandalized

By Ralph Bartholdt

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When firefighter Ralph Goodrich drove the steep road north past Conkling Park Marina to the fire boat slip in Carey Bay last week, he wasn't responding to an emergency.

That is a good thing, said the assistant chief at the Worley Fire District, because the old pontoon fire boat at the landing was disabled.

Thieves had stolen the 15-gallon marine fuel tank from the boat.

It was the boat's sole fuel source and the pontoon with the water pump that is powered by a Volkswagen engine wasn't going anywhere without its gas tank.

"It can't go anywhere," said the assistant chief. "The boat is done."

He will remand that this week when he spends more than \$200 replacing the tank, fuel and gas lines.

According to the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office, the red, polymer tank was stolen between April 24 and April 30 when the theft was discovered by Mr. Goodrich.

He doesn't know who stole the tank, but hopes someone with information will call the sheriff's office, or the fire hall.

Deputies who responded to the scene said the boat was uncovered and an easy mark.

"There was no visible evidence left at the scene," reported Deputy Ron Erickson of the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office.

The concern said Mr. Goodrich, was that a fire boat was rendered useless by thieves.

"What is a big deal," he said, "is that this was an emergency vehicle."

Two firefighters living at Conkling Park can have the boat running within a few minutes of a fire call on the lake, he said. The department's nearest boat is at Sun Up Bay. It would take at least 15 minutes for that boat and crew to respond to the lower lake, he said.

He encourages anyone with any information regarding the theft to contact police or Worley fire fighters.