

Spooner Summit fire station ready for USFS to occupy

By Kathryn Reed

SPOONER SUMMIT – Tucked off the side of the road near the top of Spooner Summit is a new fire station that belongs to the U.S. Forest Service.

The contractor finished the nearly \$1 million project last month. Half of the money for the structure is from Forest Service coffers, while the other half came from the Aramark Corporation. Aramark is the concessionaire – operating as Zephyr Cove Snowmobiles. The two entities share the building.

The two old structures that had been on the property were destroyed. They were in such sorry shape the regional Forest Service office in Vallejo condemned the structure in 2006 for winter use because of cracks in the beams and the threat it wouldn't hold the snow.



The fire station is on the left, the snowmobile operation on the right. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“We started the process nearly a decade ago,” Mike Gabor, USFS engineer, said of the agency’s desire to create a functioning facility. Funding was the hold up.

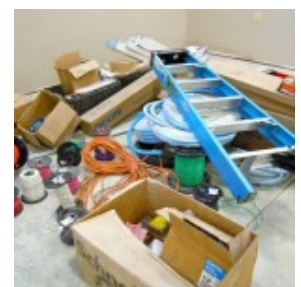
No longer are rodents running around. No longer must a porta-potty be used. No longer is the inside temperature similar to the outside chill. No longer does the fire engine have to be kept outside.

The old buildings didn’t even have foundations, let alone running water.

Gabor said crews used to operate out of a 20 foot by 30 feet one-room building.

Although the fire station does not have an engine year-round, with the snowmobile operation going on, the site will be used 12 months.

During fire season one engine with five crew members and one fire prevention technician will be stationed at the building. However, the men and women sleep in their own bed each night.



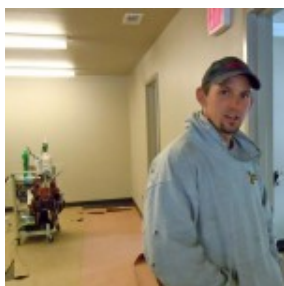
A pile to clean up a week before the USFS took over.

The Forest Service has space for three offices, a weight room, and break room-training area, in addition to the bay for the engine.

The snowmobile side has a slightly smaller bay for storage of the sleds, an efficiency kitchen, and restrooms that can be accessed from the outside for the public during operating hours.

The structure is built to LEED standards, but because of the cost involved to get the green building certification the USFS opted not to go that route.

Cory Jennings, with Building Solutions out of Reno, is the superintendent on the project. Despite contending with snowstorms, he said drilling the six 200-foot holes for the pipes for the geothermal system was the trickiest part of the job.



Cory Jennings,
construction
superintendent
, talks about
the energy
efficient
building.

The engine bay has heated floors. Passive solar is being used for the heat exchange.

Neither diesel nor propane is on site.

Recycled blue jeans were used as the insulation.

This acreage on the south side of Highway 50 just before the junction of Highway 28 has an interesting history. Concrete

from the ski hill the Bliss family operated in late 1940s-early 1950s still exists behind the new firehouse.

Prior to that, the area was known as the Spooner Station and Summit Camp during the Comstock era.

In 1961, the state of Nevada built tent housing at the site for working inmates. Two years later a Carson City motel was brought up the road to provide some housing, office space and a dining area. The Spooner Honor Camp stopped operating in 1970.

Speculation is during this time is when the structures that were destroyed this summer were built.

The Forest Service acquired the property in 1971, using the old motel as a fire station starting in 1972. That structure was destroyed a few years later.