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# EMERGENCY RESPONDER

A PUGET SOUND REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PUBLICATION | **FALL 2024**

## BUILDING SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

**BRIAN CARSON**
**Fire Chief**

### From Fire Chief Brian Carson

Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority recently completed a new Strategic Plan that will guide the organization through 2028. The plan was driven by community engagement and built on themes that emerged via input from internal and external stakeholders. The themes then became the following six strategic initiatives for Puget Sound Fire:

1. *Investing in our people and our future.*
2. *Enhancing operational capabilities.*
3. *Strengthening our culture.*
4. *Transforming our business practices.*
5. *Investing in our infrastructure.*
6. *Connecting with our communities.*

I encourage you to visit pugetsoundfire.org to read the plan in its entirety. But in this space, I'd like to highlight #4, transforming our business practices. Our vision is effective and sustainable fire and EMS services that maximize the resources entrusted to us. We have been effective through regional partnerships, careful use of the Fire Benefit Charge (FBC), and multiple internal business units that support the larger organization, as well as many neighboring agencies. To be sustainable, our Executive Leadership Team has worked over the last year to modernize the business side of the organization.

> ***… our Executive Leadership Team has worked over the last year to modernize the business side of the organization.***

The Assistant Chief (AC) role, previously tasked with leading Operations, was re-invented as the Chief of our Business Unit. AC Dan Conroy fills this role and leads a team comprised of civilian Directors of Human Resources, Finance, and Information Technology (IT), as well as a Deputy Chief of Planning. They are supported by an outstanding staff which includes new positions for Project Management and Data Engineering. The Business Unit is standardizing the way in which we affect change in the organization, and greatly enhancing the way data is used to inform those changes.

The final step in our business transformation will occur later this fall when the Administration of Puget Sound Fire relocates from Fire Station 74 on the east hill of Kent to the 84th Avenue Business Center in the Kent Valley. Puget Sound Fire currently leases the space, and a modest remodel of the east side of the building will make it a serviceable headquarters for the organization. Further, this step will place executive leadership, including the entirety of the Business Unit, under one roof. The efficiencies created by this change will support both our effectiveness in serving you, and our sustainability throughout this Strategic Plan period. Please follow us on social media, and plan to visit the new office space when the move is completed! ■

B R C

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# PUGET SOUND FIRE PURCHASES NEW TYPE 5 ENGINES

**By Division Chief Pat Pawlak**

The likelihood of fast-moving wildland fires has increased with housing developments pushing into forested areas, Puget Sound Fire has expanded our wildland urban interface fire response capabilities by continuing specialized training of our firefighters, providing them with protective equipment, and by adding two additional Type 5 brush apparatus to our fleet.

Soon, Puget Sound Fire will be accepting delivery of these new four-wheel drive apparatus that each carry 400 gallons of water and have pump & roll capabilities. The importance of the pump & roll feature is that firefighters can be extinguishing the fire as the brush truck continues to move forward instead of extinguishing a portion of the fire then having to reposition due to the length of the hose line. This pump & roll feature is extremely beneficial along freeways and trails.

These brush trucks are also equipped with a forward-facing camera as well as a rear-facing camera on the back. It also has an infrared camera to assist firefighters with finding smoldering hot spots. One major advantage of this type of apparatus is that it can get firefighters closer to the fire so that fire extinguishment can begin sooner.

These new vehicles are crucial in addressing the ever-increasing threat of wildland fires in urban areas and will provide early extinguishment of wildland fires before they reach urban structures and will enable us to serve you better. ■

# PUGET SOUND FIRE **RETIREES**

We extend our sincere gratitude to the following individuals for their ***combined 311 years of service*** to the communities served by Puget Sound Fire.

*Thank you for your service!*

**Jack Waller**
*Battalion Chief*

**Bill Rodal**
*Captain*

**Matt Madlem**
*Captain*

**PJ Knowles**
*Engineer*

**Richard Knight**
*Engineer*

**Monte Catlin**
*Engineer*

**Matt Czuleger**
*Engineer*

**Bert Warm**
*Engineer*

**Shawn Dailey**
*Engineer*

**Kelley Jensen**
*Engineer*

**Lavina Brennecke**
*Finance Director*

# PUGET SOUND FIRE **NEW FIREFIGHTERS**

We are proud to welcome the following members to the Puget Sound Fire family. These individuals proved their dedication throughout their fire academy training, and we are excited about the depth of service and professionalism they will bring to our communities.

**RECRUIT CLASS 18**

Patrick Berry
Avery Bosworth
Gabriel Coleman
Matthew Dominguez
Richard Ellis
Justin Fulbright
Matthew Gretler
Keleian Hicks
Connor Portugal
Tyler Poston
Connor Saint-Denis
Piper Schofield
Lucas Smith
Henry Smithers
Dennis Stepanchenko
Bradley Tinsley
Bradley Vanston
Brandon Vaughan

# A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNANCE BOARD

**By Margaret Harto, Governance Board Chairperson**

The spring and summer of 2024 have brought some changes, opportunities, and exciting news. First, we have added a new non-voting position to the Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority Governance Board. Maple Valley City Councilmember Les Burberry now serves as a Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority Governance Board Advisory Member. We look forward to working with Les and hearing about the happenings in Maple Valley.

Secondly, thank you to all our firefighters who attended many community events in the past few months. In June, firefighters attended high school graduations in the Highline, Kent, Tahoma, and Tukwila school districts. It was reported back to the board that everyone had fun congratulating the young graduates as well as their families on their exciting day. The board also thanks you for stopping by and speaking with your firefighters at numerous community events in Covington, Kent, Maple Valley, SeaTac, and Tukwila. It is always great to see lines of adults and children waiting to speak with our firefighters or tour a fire engine.

Finally, the exciting news is that your Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority has achieved international re-accreditation status. This was a very long process, and the RFA Governance Board would like to thank Chief Carson and his team for their outstanding work to make this happen. Puget Sound Fire has been an internationally accredited fire agency since 2004. The board takes great pride in being an accredited agency. It assists us with setting priorities and ensuring firefighters have the needed equipment, apparatus, training, and programs to serve our diverse communities and residents professionally, compassionately, and with integrity.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you! ■

**MARGARET HARTO**
**Governance Board Chairperson**

# PUGET SOUND FIRE ACHIEVES RE-ACCREDITATION

**By Deputy Chief Sean Penwell**

Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority is proud to announce we have successfully completed the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) re-accreditation process through the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). Puget Sound Fire has been accredited since 2004, and this marks our fourth re-accreditation.

This achievement underscores our staff's unwavering commitment to excellence and continuous improvement in delivering fire and emergency services to our community. Puget Sound Fire retains its place as one of 320 fire service agencies holding accredited status internationally.

## Why Accreditation?

**(1) Enhanced Safety and Reliability** – CPSE's validated approach to risk assessment and resource deployment helps shape a swift and effective response.

**(2) Continuous Improvement** – The re-accreditation process fosters a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that Puget Sound Fire is always evolving.

**(3) Transparency and Accountability** – The rigorous evaluation and outside peer review enhance transparency and accountability in our operations, building greater trust with our community.

**(4) Operational Efficiency** – By adhering to fire service best practices and developing a strategic plan, we optimize our resources and operations, providing high-quality services while being fiscally responsible.

**(5) Community Engagement** – The re-accreditation process involves engaging with the community to understand their needs and expectations.

## What is the Accreditation Process?

The CPSE re-accreditation process is a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation that assesses a fire department's performance against established best practices in fire and emergency services. The process involves five steps:

**(1) Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover (CRA-SOC)** – Puget Sound Fire conducts a thorough analysis of our communities' risks, the adequacy of emergency response resources, and their deployment to address community risks effectively.

**(2) Strategic Planning** – Puget Sound Fire must develop and update a strategic plan that relies on input from internal stakeholders and the community. This plan outlines the initiatives, goals, and objectives the organization aims to accomplish over the next five years to increase efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

**(3) Self-Assessment** – Puget Sound Fire conducts an in-depth self-assessment against the CFAI's criteria. This assessment covers various aspects such as governance, administration, assessment and planning, goals and objectives, essential resources, and performance.

**(4) Peer Review** – A team of outside experienced fire service professionals conducts an on-site assessment to verify the accuracy of our self-assessment and evaluate Puget Sound Fire's operations and performance.

**(5) Commission Hearing** – The findings of the peer review team are presented to the CFAI Commission, which then decides whether to grant re-accreditation based on the department's demonstrated compliance with the criteria.

## The Future

As we celebrate this significant achievement, we remain focused on professionally and compassionately helping people. Re-accreditation is not the end of our journey. It is only a signpost along the way to provide future direction. We will continue to embrace innovation, enhance our capabilities, and be good stewards of the resources entrusted to Puget Sound Fire by the communities we serve.

Re-accreditation is not just a Puget Sound Fire success but, a community achievement. It assures our residents that their fire department is operating efficiently, effectively, and in line with national best practices. Achieving CPSE re-accreditation is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and professionalism of every member of Puget Sound Fire. It reflects our collective commitment to maintaining the highest standards of service and continually striving to improve. Together, we will continue to make our communities safer and more resilient places to live, work, and thrive. ■

# WINTER HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

**By Captain Cathy Browning**

Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority, Puget Sound Firefighters Local 1747, and the Puget Sound Firefighters Foundation are gearing up for the annual holiday programs which provide smiles, fun, laughter and joy throughout the communities we serve! These programs only exist because of the tremendous generosity of our residents and businesses and this year we are hopeful for continued support from past partners and excited for first time supporters to join us in our efforts.

### Toys for Joy

Toys for Joy is a long-standing holiday program where new, unwrapped toys are collected at our fire stations and local businesses. Toys are then delivered to local food banks and vetted outreach programs for distribution to families and kids in need throughout our service area. In addition to toys, non-perishable food and monetary donations are also collected. In 2023, the Toys for Joy program provided toys to more than 1,100 kids. The program also helped to support 30 adopted families with a holiday meal. Toy collection efforts will begin November 18 at all Puget Sound Fire Stations.

### Jerry Woods Holiday Engines

The Jerry Woods Holiday Engines have been around for 18 years. This program is geared towards collecting food and monetary donations for our local food banks. Puget Sound Fire apparatus, decorated with lights, drive around neighborhoods playing holiday music drawing people out of their homes while Santa and his helpers greet families with smiles and candy canes.

In 2023, the Jerry Woods Holiday Engines collected more than 26,000 pounds of food and more than $19,000 in cash donations which were distributed to local food banks through the Jerry Woods Foundation.

We are looking at expanding our Holiday Engines program this year. They will be out and about in December – stay tuned to our social media and our website for details.

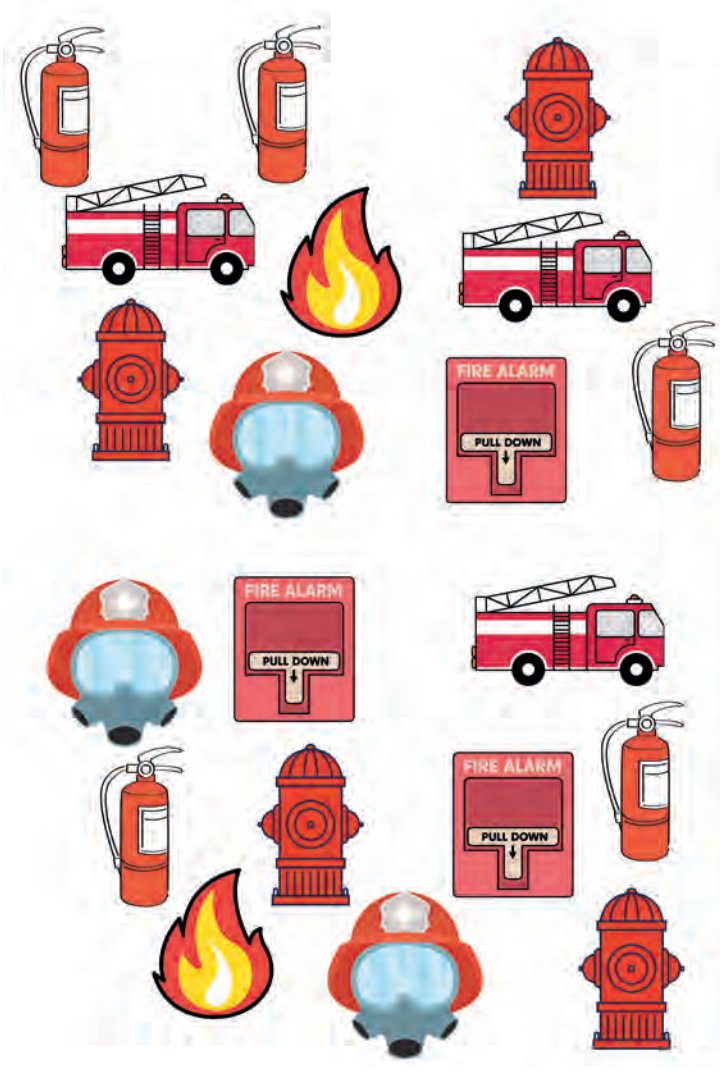
### What You Can Do

Email holidayprograms@pugetsoundfire.org with any program related questions. If you are an organization that would like to help in our collection efforts, we would love to partner with you.

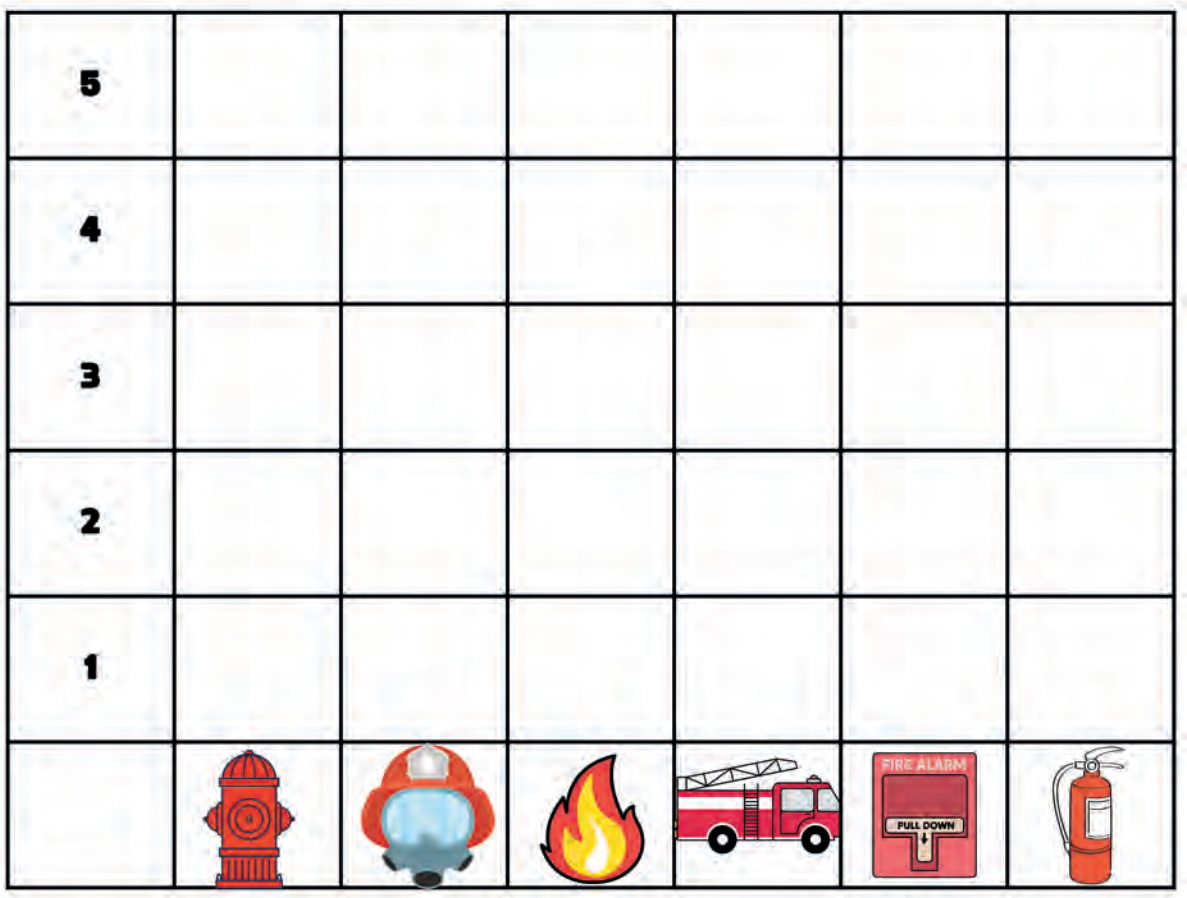
Visit our website (pugetsoundfire.org) and follow us on social media (@pugetsoundfire) for program updates and volunteer opportunities. ■

# KIDS ACTIVITY: FIRE BAR GRAPH

**By Bre Boyce, Public Educator**




Directions: Count the individual items and record the numbers on the bar graph to represent the data.



# IT WAS A FUN-FILLED SUMMER!

**By Don Maher, Public Educator**

Summer has come and gone too fast, but not before we were able to attend many amazing events throughout our community. From a beautiful weekend at Lake Wilderness for Maple Valley Days to a fun-filled Touch-A-Truck event in Tukwila, our crews enjoyed engaging with the amazing folks of our community.

Covington Days was once again a big hit. Engine 378 participated in the parade, while our public education team enjoyed talking with many patrons at our booth.

Our team joined the City of SeaTac at Angle Lake for a water safety event. Our crews came back a few days later to enjoy their annual Fourth of July fireworks show.

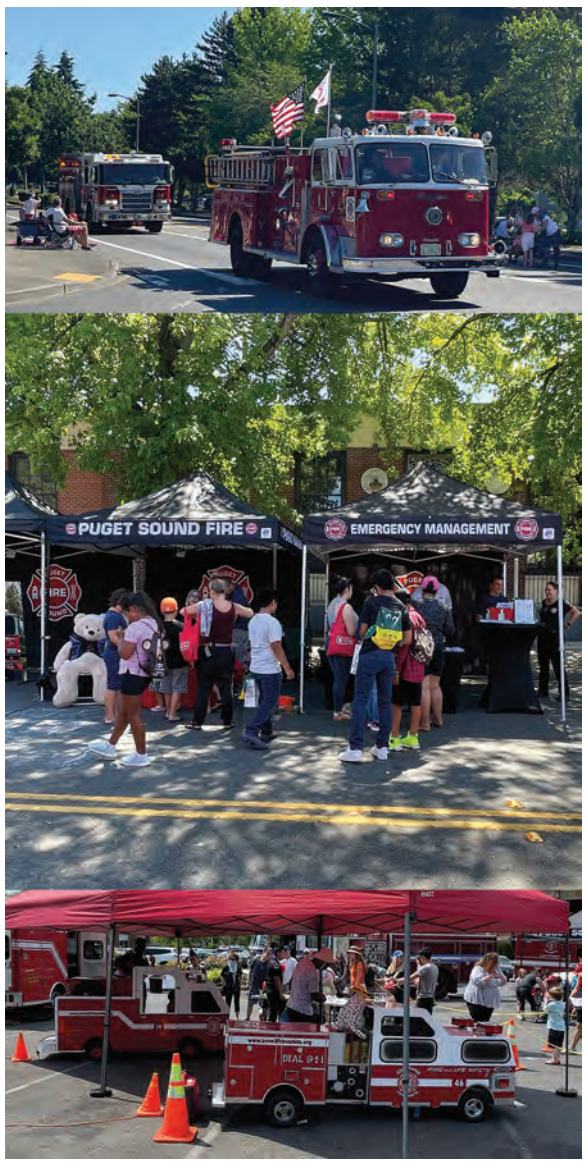
It was a hot weekend at Cornucopia Days in Kent, but that didn't stop the large crowds. Puget Sound Fire enjoyed seeing so many familiar faces and sharing summer safety messages to all that visited our booth. Several of our engines made it to Safety Street to join in on the fun.

In late August, the Tukwila Community Center held an End of Summer Bash. Crews from Station 53 joined our Public Educators to help community center members hand out school supplies.

The Cities of Covington and Maple Valley each hosted their annual KidsFest. Puget Sound Fire joined in and made sure the kids had a chance to spray the hose and climb aboard the engine.

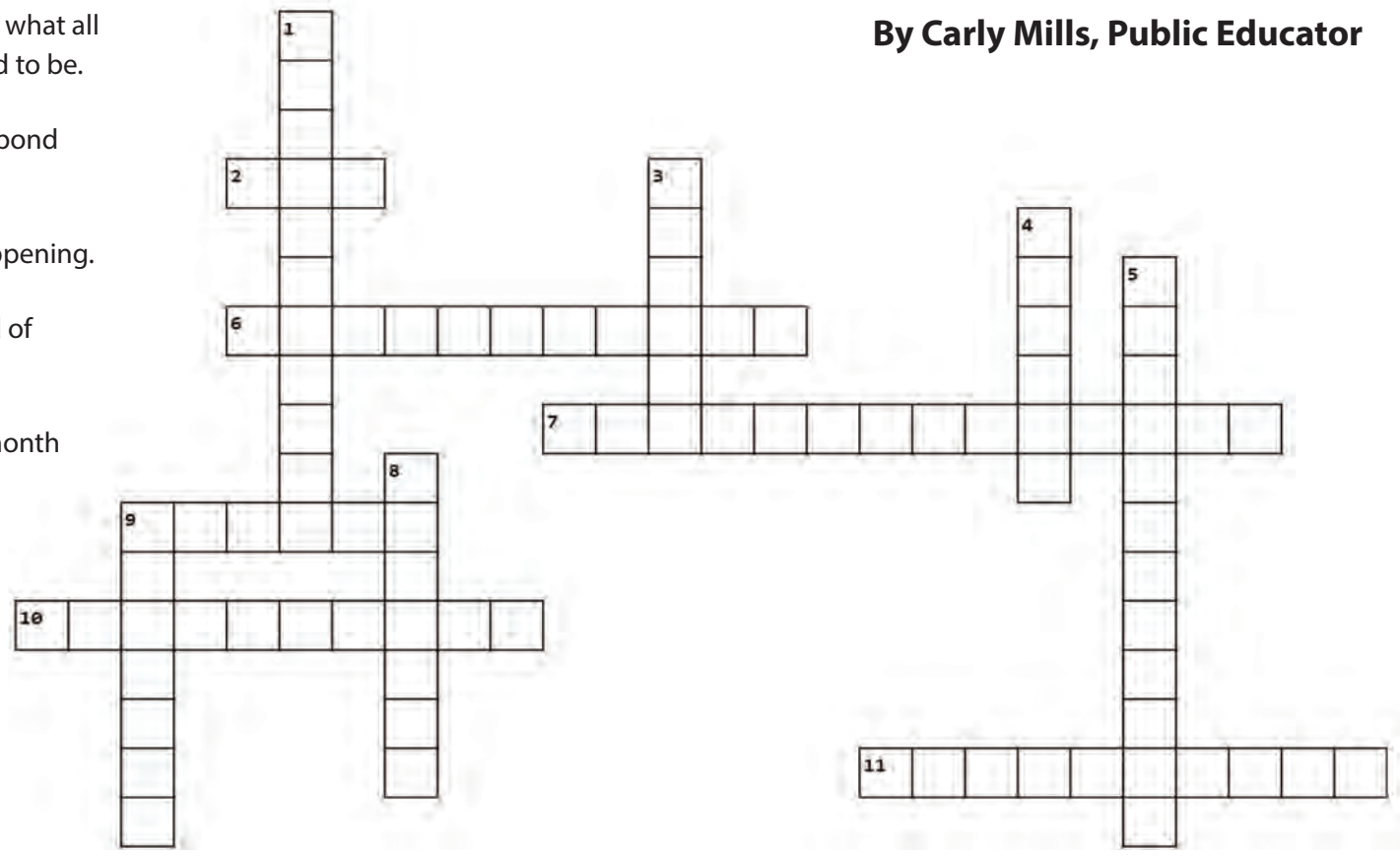
It wasn't hard to find a good summer concert this year. Every city had great live music and our crews enjoyed stopping in to pass out badge stickers or helmets to the kids, while listening to our very talented, local performers.

Puget Sound Fire is grateful to our entire community for inviting us to share in all the fun and excitement of the summer of 2024. ■




# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

**By Carly Mills, Public Educator**




## Across

**2.** A first responder with medical skills, and what all of Puget Sound firefighters are also certified to be.

**6.** A person trained to put out fires and respond quickly to emergencies.

**7.** What you practice to keep fires from happening.

**9.** A _____ door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire.

**10.** Test your _____ once every month and replace every ten years.

**11.** Make a home _____ and draw out a map of your home with everyone who lives there. Know at least two ways out of each room.

## Down

**1.** We professionally and compassionately serve the _____ of Covington, Kent, Maple Valley, SeaTac, Tukwila, and Fire Districts 37 & 43.

**3.** Home fires occur more in the _____ than in any other season.

**4.** The vehicle that transports firefighters from call to call.

**5.** Use a portable fire _____ when the fire is contained to a small area such as a wastebasket.

**8.** Our program that helps the community with issues before it becomes an emergency and is celebrating their 10th anniversary this year!

9. The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended _____.

*For an answer key, visit pugetsoundfire.org. Departments > Public Education.*

# FD CARES REACHES 10-YEAR MILESTONE

**By Captain Paul Zydek**

In January of 2010, the Kent Fire Department began working on the development of the Fire Department Community Assistance Referral and Education Service (FD CARES) program. After years in the planning stages, system piloting and testing, nationwide research, cooperation with many local private healthcare agencies, assistance from fire departments in many other states, and support of the State Legislators, the FD CARES program put its first unit into service on September 8, 2014. To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of this milestone, we're taking a look back at the evolution of this innovative program that transcends traditional boundaries, saving lives and resources while fostering a healthier community.

*FD CARES Program unit. (2014)*

*Original FD CARES Program branding. (2011)*

*Governor Jay Inslee signs Senate Bill 5591 into law. (2015)*

*Founding sponsorship event. (2011)*

## 2010-2014

- In 2010, EMS Officer, Battalion Chief Mitch Snyder identified a need for a different service for non-emergent medical calls.
- B/C Snyder worked with public educator, Tami Kapule, as she was coordinating a fall prevention program. The City of Kent's Human Services Department awarded a $5,000 grant every two years to purchase fall prevention equipment for patients of the 911 system. Approximately 800 – 1,200 patients were notified of the new fall prevention program.
- The department's Information Technology team was brought in to analyze response data. They looked at emergency vehicle reliability and how the new fall prevention program could potentially reduce the number of incidents that firefighters were responding to involving repeat 911 callers.
- The reduction in repeat 911 calls saved the department and taxpayers money and improved the delivery of service. The new approach was named the Incident Reduction Program.

### 2014

- The fire department continued to push forward to see how it could best serve the community and began working on changing state legislation.
- On September 8, a response unit staffed with two firefighters/EMTs was put into service to specifically respond to non-emergent 911 calls and provide care for the patients in the way that benefited them most effectively. This small van was available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provided a variety of non-traditional fire department medical services.

## 2015

- On April 24, 2015, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee signed into law State Senate Bill 5591- Community Assistance, Referral, and Education Services Programs enabling providers of emergency medical services to develop community assistance referral and education services (CARES) programs.
- The new FD CARES program provided community outreach and assistance to residents to advance injury and illness prevention and partner with hospitals to reduce readmissions. The fire department could now direct patients away from the emergency department, and more appropriately connect them to services such as primary care providers, other health care professionals, low-cost medication programs, shelters, and other social services. This also enabled the fire department to hire other health care providers such as registered nurses and social workers.
- The department hired its first social worker and three registered nurses.
- A 24-hour FD CARES response unit, staffed with one firefighter/EMT and one registered nurse, responded to low-acuity calls and connected patients with the appropriate level of care and resources so that emergency fire vehicles would be available for emergent 911 calls.

## 2017-2021

- In 2017, the department hired its fourth registered nurse.

### 2019

- FD CARES entered into a contract for service with the Renton Regional Fire Authority, and added one CARES unit to the program.
- Two more registered nurses were hired.
- The Washington State Nurses Association awards the 2017 WSNA Community Partner Award to FD CARES: *"This award recognizes your significant contributions toward advancing the role of the nursing profession and the health and wellness of the citizens of Washington State."*
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FD CARES unit administered vaccinations for community members in assisted living and memory care facilities, adult family homes, and testing/vaccination sites.

### 2021

- In January, the FD CARES response program changed from a 24-hour service to a 12-hour (8am – 8pm) service.
- Three additional registered nurses were hired, bringing the total to seven.

# PARTNERING WITH LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

The FD CARES program partners with the Kent and Renton Police Departments to provide co-response services which address communities' needs in behavioral/mental health, housing insecurity, and other social services that do not meet the criteria for a basic life support response. Law enforcement officers often respond to calls where people are having a mental health crisis, are intoxicated, experiencing homelessness, or are experiencing other health and social service challenges.

**How it works**

A co-responder team is a police-based intervention that pairs trained police officers with mental health professionals to respond to incidents involving individuals experiencing behavioral health crises. The co-responder model operates within the 911 system in collaboration with the fire department and the police agency.

The police department requests an FD CARES unit to be added when interacting with members of the public that can be assisted by our nurse and social worker. This provides a resource to the police department other than the emergency department, or jail, and frees the police officer up to be available for other calls for law enforcement.

Through effective training, officers learn to identify signs and symptoms of mental illnesses, and how to utilize a range of stabilization and de-escalation techniques. These innovative partnerships with law enforcement and the FD CARES team can reduce the possibility of using force, improve the patient experience and outcomes, and improve public safety overall.

*COVID-19 vaccination site. (2020)*

*Firefighter/EMTs arrive to a non-emergent call. (2014)*

*Current FD CARES members. (2024)*

*FD CARES team building event. (2023)*

## 2022

- In 2022, two additional social workers were hired.
- In November, the program's response units transitioned to staffing of one social worker and one registered nurse, and the firefighter/EMTs were assigned back to typical fire operations responses.
- A third FD CARES unit was put into part-time service.
- FD CARES entered into a contract for service with the Skyway Fire Department.

## 2023

- In 2023, the program continued to expand, hiring additional registered nurses and social workers, bringing the staff total to eight registered nurses and six social workers.
- FD CARES entered into a contract for service with the Enumclaw Fire Department.
- In March, FD CARES began partnering with the Kent Police Department to provide co-response services addressing the community's needs in behavioral/mental health, housing insecurity, and other social services.
- FD CARES operated three full-time units that responded to 2,564 proactive visits and 737 non-emergent 911 calls.

## 2024

- FD CARES now operates four full-time units and consists of a deputy chief, FD CARES captain, administrative staff, nine registered nurses, and nine social workers.
- FD CARES began partnering with the Renton Police Department to provide co-response services addressing the community's needs in behavioral/mental health, housing insecurity, and other social services.
- FD CARES continues to establish new standards for emergency response services in the heart of the Puget Sound region.

# WINTER EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY: ESSENTIAL TIPS TO STAY SAFE AND WARM

**By Jennifer Keizer, Emergency Management Coordinator**

As winter approaches, it brings with it a unique set of challenges and risks. From freezing temperatures to hazardous driving conditions, being prepared for emergencies during winter is crucial for your safety and well-being. Whether you're planning for heavy snowfall or simply wanting to be ready for unexpected winter storms, here are some essential tips to help you safely navigate the colder months:

## Prepare Your Home

- **Chimneys:** If you use a fireplace or wood stove, have your chimney cleaned and inspected by a professional. Creosote build-up is the number one cause of chimney fires.
- **Fireplace Ashes:** Place ashes in a sealed metal container and store at least 10 feet from combustible materials including your home and wood decks.
- **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** Test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change your batteries twice a year. Pro-tip: Since we still have daylight savings, change your batteries every time you change your clock.
- **Stock Emergency Supplies:** Keep a stockpile of essentials such as non-perishable food, water, medications, and blankets. Include a flashlight, batteries, and a battery-powered radio in your emergency kit.

## Winterize Your Vehicle

- **Check Tires:** Check that your tires have adequate tread and are inflated to the correct pressure. Consider using winter tires for increased traction on snow and ice.
- **Emergency Kit:** Pack a winter emergency kit for your vehicle, including items like a blanket, extra clothing, non-perishable snacks, a shovel, ice scraper, jumper cables, and sand or kitty litter for traction.
- **Maintain Fuel Levels:** Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent fuel line freezing and make sure you have enough gas to keep warm if you become stranded.

## Stay Informed

- **Monitor Weather Conditions:** Stay updated on weather forecasts and advisories. Be aware of approaching storms or extreme cold warnings in your area. Look into purchasing a NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio to receive important alerts.
- **Emergency Alerts:** Sign up for emergency alerts to stay informed about potential hazards or evacuations. Puget Sound Fire uses Alert King County to push out emergency notifications and alerts. Make sure you are signed up with your cell, email and home phone to receive these important notifications. Sign up at kingcounty.gov/alert.

## Plan for Emergencies

- **Communicate:** Ensure family members or neighbors know your plans and how to contact you in case of an emergency.
- **Evacuation Plan**: Have a plan in place for evacuating your home if necessary and know where you can go for shelter if you need to leave.
- **Medical Needs:** If you or a family member relies on electrically powered medical equipment, have a backup plan in case of power outages.

## Winter Pet Safety Tips

- **Outdoor activity:** While dogs need outdoor exercise, take care not to leave them outside for long periods of time in the cold. Dogs and cats are safer inside during inclement weather.
- **Chemicals:**
  *Antifreeze and de-icing chemicals* can be hazardous to our furry friends. In-fact many of the antifreeze solutions have a sweet taste that can attract animals. Wipe up spills and keep the antifreeze stored and sealed in containers.

  *Salt and other chemicals* used to melt snow and ice can irritate a pet's paws. Wipe their paws with a damp towel when they come inside before your pet licks them and irritates their mouth.
- **Vehicles:** Never leave a pet locked inside a car during extremely cold weather. Cars can act like a refrigerator, holding in cold air, putting your pet at risk.

## After the Storm

- **Check on Others:** After a severe storm, check on elderly neighbors or those who may need assistance to make sure they're safe and have the supplies they need.
- **Clear Snow Safely:** When clearing snow from walkways and driveways, take breaks, use proper lifting techniques, and avoid overexertion.
- **Inspect for Damage:** Inspect your home and property for any damage caused by winter weather, such as roof leaks or frozen pipes.

By taking these proactive steps to prepare for winter emergencies, you can minimize risks and increase your safety and comfort in the colder months. Preparation is key to handling any unexpected challenges that winter may bring. Stay informed, stay safe, and stay warm! ■

MAKE IT THROUGH

**For more information about preparedness, please visit www.makeitthrough.org.**

**PUGET SOUND REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY**

INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED FIRE AGENCY

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(253) 856-4300

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| **Emergency Management** | (253) 856-4440 |
| **Public Information Officer** | (253) 856-4405 |
| **Community Risk Reduction** | (253) 856-4440 |
| **FD CARES** | (253) 856-4398 |
| **Public Education** | (253) 856-4480 |
| **CPR and First Aid Classes** | (253) 856-4300 |
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