FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Puget Sound Fire's FD CARES 10-Year Anniversary

Kent, WA – September 6, 2024

Puget Sound Fire is proud to announce that on Sunday, September 8, our FD CARES program will be 10 years old. To celebrate this milestone, here is a look back at the evolution of this innovative program that transcended traditional boundaries, saving lives and resources while fostering a healthier community. While this FD CARES program is 10 years old, the foundation for this program began in 2010 when Battalion Chief Mitch Snyder (ret.) identified a need for a different service for non-emergent medical calls. After extensive research and collaboration was completed, our first FD CARES response unit was put in-service on September 8, 2014. This response unit was staffed with two firefighters to specifically respond to non-emergent 9-1-1 calls.

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. This led to Puget Sound Fire hiring our first 3 registered nurses and 1 social worker. The staffing model was changed to one firefighter and one registered nurse. This unit responded to low-acuity calls and connected patients with the appropriate level of care and resources so that on-duty firefighters would be available for emergent 9-1-1 calls.

Over the years our FD CARES program has expanded, and we now employ 9 registered nurses and 9 social workers and staff four full-time FD CARES units. This important service is provided to the community members in Covington, Kent, Maple Valley, SeaTac, Tukwila, and Fire Districts 37 and 43. Puget Sound Fire also provides this valuable service to the communities that are served by the Renton Regional Fire Authority, King County Fire District 20 (Skyway), and the Enumclaw Fire Department. To assist with addressing the community's needs, Puget Sound Fire has partnered with the Kent and Renton police departments to provide co-response to behavioral/mental health, housing insecurity, and other social services.

For the past 10 years, Puget Sound Fire has taken great pride in expanding this important community program and is committed to establishing new standards for emergency response services in the heart of the Puget Sound region. Puget Sound Fire Deputy Chief Aaron Tyerman stated, "The lives changed by the men and women who work on our FD CARES unit for our community members over the last 10 years is truly unbelievable. This is a special group of people, and a great addition to our organizations."

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