



INTEGRITY,
SERVICE,
TRUST

COMMISSIONERS

- Frank Mestemacher
- Larry Metz
- Mike Noblet

South Whidbey Fire/EMS

5579 Bayview Road
Langley, WA 98260

www.swfe.org

360-321-1533

SWFireEMS

@SWFEMS



FLASH POINT

Newsletter

Fall 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

By H.L. "Rusty" Palmer, Fire Chief

Two months ago you gave us your overwhelming support for our levy lift question for which we are very grateful. We are already making changes to improve the level of service we provide and secure necessary tools to help lower our insurance ratings.



Our emergency responders, volunteer and career, continue to do a great job of protecting our community and themselves when they go on calls. We have continued to alter our public education outreach, such as our Fire Prevention Week activities, due to the pandemic. We miss the personal interaction with you and look forward to the time when we can resume in person events.

Earlier this year our Board of Fire Commissioners approved our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. That plan, available on our website, consists of 10 overarching Strategic Initiatives. Many of those initiatives have budgetary implications. Our Board is currently reviewing our draft budget for 2021 which includes a number of requests to help accomplish those initiatives.

Two of the most significant impacts to the budget will be an increase in staffing to help relieve some of the pressure on our volunteers, and purchase a new fire engine due to the age of the majority of our fleet. Both of these will have a positive impact on our insurance ratings when we request a re-evaluation by the Washington Surveying & Rating Bureau. We will continue to keep you updated on our progress and appreciate hearing your ideas and concerns. Please visit our website to learn more, or contact me at 360-321-1533 or chief@swfe.org with questions.

FIRE INSPECTIONS

We have been working for the last two years to develop a fire inspection program, train inspectors, and implement the program for all commercial structures on South Whidbey. A partnership between the business owner and the fire department is key to reducing a devastating loss to fire. In the near future, four of our firefighters will complete their testing to be certified inspectors. After the first of the year we will be contacting our business community to discuss the program. COVID has been hard enough on businesses. We don't want to see a fire contribute to a business challenge.



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COVID-19 SAFETY TIPS

Island County and Washington are seeing an uptick in the number of COVID-19 cases. According to public health agencies, one of the causes is citizen relaxation of protective measures. We can still be in control of our exposures by following the following:

- ◆ Engage in physical distancing, stay at least six feet away from other people
- ◆ Wear a cloth face coverings in all public places when not eating or drinking, and safely recreating with social distancing of at least 6 ft.
- ◆ Stay home if you are unwell, avoid others who are sick, always cover cough/sneezes
- ◆ Wash hands frequently with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer if soap and water unavailable)
- ◆ Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- ◆ Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly

COMMISSIONER'S CORNER



By Mike Noblet,
Fire Commissioner

With COVID19, economic recession, and smoky skies, we can often overlook two very real threats we face: A catastrophic 7.0+ earthquake along the Whidbey Fault and/or a 9.0+ coastal

subduction quake. Subduction quakes occur there every 300-to-500 years with the most recent happening in the year 1700. Because multiple fault lines sit along our side of the Olympic Mountains, considerable damage to Whidbey Island is a given in either scenario. Major quakes often leave roads unsafe and access to vital services like grocery stores and pharmacies impossible for extended periods. Are you prepared? If not, consider this your wake-up call to get prepared to become self-sustaining for two weeks at least. Start by identifying and purchasing shelf-stable foods like freeze dried and canned. Purchase water bottles, full or empty, keeping this in mind: One gallon minimum per person, per day.

Stock up on prescription drugs and toiletries and keep a month's supply at all times. Don't forget to provide for your pets. Assemble your go bag, a backpack with toiletries, a clothing change with several sets of underwear, a pair of substantial shoes, and other personal items. Store it in your vehicle so that you have it whenever away from home. Preparing takes time to plan and implement, but getting educated comes first. You can start by going online to Island County Emergency Preparedness at <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DEM/Pages/Preparedness.aspx>.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The holidays are just around the corner, a time for family gatherings and giving thanks. One of our favorite events each year is helping Santa visit South Whidbey. In this time of COVID-19 we are tailoring our holiday event to include "Socially Distanced Santa." Watch for information concerning his schedule on our website. From our family to yours, we hope you have safe and healthy holidays!

