



INTEGRITY,
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COMMISSIONERS

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South Whidbey Fire/EMS
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 SWFireEMS
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FLASH POINT

Newsletter

Summer 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

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

As is true for everyone, this has been a challenging year for us. We greatly appreciate the care and concern that you have shown us as we all have coped with the COVID pandemic. We also appreciate the steps you have taken to protect yourselves, which makes our job easier.



We are planning for reopening to the public and transitioning staff back into the offices, all while being as safe as possible. We follow guidance from the State for reopening and hope to have in person Board of Commissioner meetings again soon. We are on track resolving many of the issues we raised in support of the levy lift you voted for. We anticipate hiring our first full-time firefighters this summer. We will convert our eight part-time firefighters to full-time and hire one additional Lieutenant and three firefighters. We are in the midst of our hiring process and hope to have our newest members in place by August 1st.

We have also applied for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant (SAFER) through the federal government to help with the increased costs to the overall budget by hiring more employees. While our chances are good, these competitive grants are no sure thing. If unsuccessful, we will continue to find ways to reduce costs and reallocate funds to help cover these important needs. For information about our short and long term goals, and progress in our Strategic Plan, please visit our website at www.swfe.org. 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.

OPEN BURNING

Last year Washington experienced it's most severe wildfire year in history. Notably, many of the significant fires were on the west slope of the Cascades. As our climate warms, areas of our state that have been resistant to wildfire have experienced an increase in the number of fires. This year is predicted to be no different. Many of us use fire for yard clean up, campfires, cooking fires, etc.

Open fires require a County permit and to avoid a fire beyond your control, follow these safety tips. Permits can be obtained Monday through Friday (8:00am - 3:00pm) at the Public Health Department in Coupeville or Camano Island.

The following conditions need to be met:

- ◆ Fires must not exceed 10 feet in diameter X 10 feet high.
- ◆ A shovel or rake must be on site.
- ◆ Water must be on site. Fires less than 4 feet must have a charged garden hose capable of reaching the fire or 10 gallons of water and a bucket.
- ◆ Fires 4–10 feet must have a charged garden hose or a 55–gallon water source with a pump and enough hose capable of reaching the fire.

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OPEN BURNING *Continued from previous page*

- ◆ One person age 16 or older who is capable of putting the fire out must be in attendance at all times and must have a method to call 911 if needed.
- ◆ Only one pile may be burned at a time, and each pile must be extinguished before lighting another.
- ◆ Do not burn during periods of air stagnation.
- ◆ All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground). The firebreak must equal the size of the pile. The fire must be 50 feet from any structure, standing timber or power lines.

Small Residential Burning: (no-cost)

For residential fires smaller than 4' x 4', call the Information Hotline at [\(360\) 240-5526](tel:3602405526) to listen to required conditions. This is considered a verbal permit.

COVID-19 SAFETY TIPS

Even though more of us have access to vaccines, many are still unvaccinated. COVID variants are complicating vaccine efficacy as well. It is imperative that we continue to protect each other by following the basic principles of COVID safety. Until the large majority of us are vaccinated, we can still be in control of our exposures. Even if you have had the vaccine adhere to the following:

- ◆ The individuals that qualify for the vaccine is ever changing, so get the vaccine as soon as it is offered to you.
- ◆ 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/drinking/safely recreating.
- ◆ Stay home if you are unwell.
- ◆ Wash hands frequently with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer).
- ◆ Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- ◆ Disinfect surfaces and objects regularly.

ACADEMY UPDATE

The 2021 Island County Fire Academy ran from January 18 to April 17, 2021 with 10 fire candidates from Central and South Whidbey fire departments. We are excited to welcome three successful new graduates: Gene Reynolds, Station 31, Freeland; Cooper Ullmann, Station 32, Clinton; and Carson Wrightson, Station 31, Freeland. Lessons were delivered virtually via Zoom during the week and we followed state mandates with social distancing and face coverings when possible for the Saturday hands-on practical. The Island County EMT Academy begins in August and run to December. The next Island County Fire Academy will start February 2022. To apply visit www.swfe.org.

