



South Kitsap Fire and Rescue information release

June 3, 2014

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue (SKFR) is implementing changes to its operations following a five month strategic overview of its finances, physical resources and staffing levels. The review process involved SKFR's board of commissioners, representatives from each SKFR labor group, administrative staff, and the citizen's budget review committee. Each group, in cooperation with the others, was asked to help evaluate the current and future needs to best meet SKFR's mission.

This process was prompted in part by the ongoing recession with decreasing assessed valuation (AV) of properties in the district. While the district has been able to maintain a stable budget up to and through the current budget cycle, these decreases have pushed SKFR to its taxing limit of \$2.00 per thousand of AV. This factor combined with the ending of a federal staffing grant in 2014 which provided funding for 12 firefighter/EMT positions over the past six years, has brought about the need for the changes.

During the past six years as the federal staffing grant diminished, SKFR has deferred purchasing and maintenance in order to maintain the 12 positions in accordance with the grant requirements. With the grant obligation now met, the district is in the unfortunate position of needing to reduce its force back to the pre-grant staffing numbers in order to maintain and balance the budget while directing a portion of revenue to apparatus, tools, and facilities updating.

At this time, SKFR has reduced seven of the 12 positions through attrition and will continue to work with labor representatives in determining the best path to reduce the final five positions in a reasonable timeframe. I appreciate the work and support of our labor organizations, citizen's budget review committee, and commissioners in helping me make some tough but necessary decisions. Once this is accomplished SKFR will have 72 career line positions and a volunteer force of approximately 50.

Operationally, the impact from the reduction in career staffing has brought about the opportunity to address the deployment of resources in the South Kitsap community. As a combination career and volunteer agency serving predominately rural communities, adjustments were required to meet the needs of the evolving community for the most effective use of the limited resources available.

In order to adjust to the evolving community, SKFR will be closing three volunteer stations that are out of date with our current deployment needs and have not been active in responses for over six years. These areas are served currently by other stations and do not need to be kept as active volunteer stations. Station 7 (Wye Lake) will become a district support facility, stations 18 (Port of Bremerton) and 20 (Rocky Point) will not be renewed for lease.

In addition, the daily career staffing of two personnel will be moved from two rural stations to offset the reduction in force and to address staffing deficiencies in the higher call volume urban areas. Stations 10 (Banner) and 17 (Glenwood) will remain open as active volunteer stations. Staffing at SKFR's headquarters station at Orchard Heights will be increased from two to four personnel due to service demands and a high call volume. This staffing change occurred on June 1<sup>st</sup> and SKFR does not anticipate any significant impacts to response times or level of service throughout the majority of the fire district. There will be slight increases to travel time in some rural areas and an improvement in reliability of units in the suburban and urban areas. Once the re-deployment is completed, SKFR will maintain six staffed and six unstaffed stations in the 117 square mile service area.

These changes are intended to allow SKFR to meet community needs under current economic conditions. This new level of service will better reflect the changing community demographics and provide sustainability for SKFR into the foreseeable future. All of us at SKFR are committed to maintaining a transparent and responsive agency that always keeps the safety of our community as our number one priority.



Steven T. Wright  
Fire Chief