



Thurston County Fire Protection District 8 South Bay Fire Department News

Volume 13, Issue 3

WWW.SOUTHBAYFIRE.COM

FALL 2021

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS:

Gloria Zvirzdys
gzvirzdys@southbayfire.com
Milt Harper
mharper@southbayfire.com
Pamela Long
plong@southbayfire.com
Douglas Kilpatrick
kilpatrick@southbayfire.com
Daniel Bivens
dbivens@southbayfire.com
FIRE CHIEF:
Brian VanCamp
vancamp@southbayfire.com
ASSISTANT CHIEF:
Brandon LeMay
lemay@southbayfire.com
DISTRICT SECRETARY:
Heidi Stumpf
heidis@southbayfire.com

JOIN US!

Join us for our monthly Board meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, beginning at 5:30 pm, normally held at our South Bay Station 8-1.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and in conjunction with Washington State's safety mandates, meetings may be held virtually.

See our website for link.
www.southbayfire.com

FIRE SAFETY BURN BAN IN EFFECT



**No outdoor yard-waste burning
July 15th -
September 30th**

Residents are encouraged to use alternatives to outdoor burning, such as chipping, grinding, or composting.

Visit orca.org for more information.



Chief Brian VanCamp

CHIEF'S CORNER: STAFFING CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the Fire Service. The District is responding to challenges it presents. I'd like to highlight some of these challenges and the cumulative effects that drive us to reconsider how we will operate and the revenue requirements needed in the future.

Volunteer Staffing

We are very dependent on volunteer firefighters and EMTs. To maintain our numbers, we plan for about 15 new volunteers each year. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, there are labor shortages across the nation, and our volunteer program is not immune to these trends. COVID-19 has



completely disrupted the volunteer recruiting and training process. As a result, our number of new volunteer responders has been drastically reduced. Applications for new volunteers has fallen dramatically and some training programs for new recruits have had to be canceled or delayed.

Another issue we face is the tenure of existing volunteers, which has decreased from an average of six years to three years. COVID-19 has only accelerated this trend. Due to the shorter duration, we've been limited in our ability to train volunteers to safely drive a fire engine or to serve in officer roles - resulting in a significant decline in the ranks for those positions.

As conditions allow, we have made adjustments, but the impacts from COVID-19 and shorter tenures will have a lasting effect, resulting in a lower number of volunteers who serve in our department.

Career Staffing



For many years, the District has hired full-time career responders to help fill positions that we were unable to staff with volunteers, such as weekdays when volunteers were typically

unavailable. Up until four years ago, night and weekend staff were totally volunteers. With the increased inability to staff key roles with volunteers, we have assigned many of these roles to career responders - requiring us to hire more career staff and adding additional costs.

This growing use of career staff is part of a universal trend in the fire service throughout the country. Expanded geographic mobility, the demands of the job, and the ever-increasing requirements for ongoing training have made it very hard for volunteers to devote their time and energy.

Mandatory Vaccinations

With Governor Inslee's Proclamation 21-14, all Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responders will be required to be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus by October 18th. As in the general population, several of our members have chosen not to be vaccinated up to now and will be faced with a choice regarding their continued eligibility to serve. This factor could potentially further erode EMS staffing. I have encouraged and supported all our members to get vaccinated, but we are also developing contingency plans to address potential shortfalls in EMS staffing.

Service Demands

The COVID-19 virus patient load in hospitals has been at critical levels, causing a severe delay in admitting new patients through the emergency room. This has presented a challenge for EMS



providers as they transfer patients from their ambulance, often waiting hours to be placed back in service. While we are authorized to provide basic life support level transport, we have typically relied on local private ambulance companies to provide this service. As a result of these delays, we are more frequently transporting patients ourselves. This reduces our availability

Continued next page

CHIEF'S CORNER: STAFFING CHALLENGES (CONTINUED)

to respond to additional EMS or fire calls. Even though we are working with Thurston County Medic One and our neighboring fire departments to address these issues, we expect to continue to see delays in response.

Planning

The District's current staffing goals provide for round-the-clock coverage at the South Bay and North Olympia fire stations. All the staffing impacts noted above have resulted in the inability to continually staff the North Olympia fire station, also referred to as "browning out." We continue to work on solutions, but unfortunately, expect to experience staffing shortages and potential service delays in the future. To address these challenges going forward, our strategic planning includes

considerations to add career staff to fill key operational vacancies, and future revenue needs to ensure fiscal stability, while balancing service levels that are acceptable to taxpayers. This is an ongoing process that will involve more communication and public input along the way.

Monthly Reports

Every month I publish a report that includes key staffing and operational aspects I have discussed above. Copies of each month's report can be found on our website at www.southbayfire.com. I encourage you visit our site and learn more about YOUR fire department.

Chief Brian VanCamp

South Bay Fire Dept. News

Thurston County Fire Protection District 8
3506 Shincke Rd. NE Olympia, WA 98506
(360)491-5320 | www.southbayfire.com

FREE FOR OUR COMMUNITY!

Blood Pressure Checks

Stop by our South Bay Station
8-1 any time and receive a
free blood pressure check.

Home Address Markers

We can't help you if we can't
find you. If you need a free
home address marker, please
call us or order one on our
website.

www.southbayfire.com

BLOOD DRIVES TO CONTINUE

Our recent Blood Drive was a huge success! We've decided to continue to host them at our headquarters every eight weeks. The next Blood Drive held by Cascade Regional Blood Services Bloodmobile, will be held on **Thursday, September 3rd from 9 am - 2 pm** at our South Bay headquarters, located at 3506 Shincke Road NE.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, there has been a critical need for blood products. A decrease in blood drives has resulted in a low community blood supply while the need for blood has rapidly increased. Hospitals have resumed elective surgeries and continue treatments for cancer, other diseases such as sickle cell anemia and daily traumas. If you are healthy and eligible we encourage you to donate!

Donations By Appointment Only!!

Please sign-up to make your Blood Donation. Visit our website at www.southbayfire.com for the link or visit directly at: https://donor.crbs.net/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/33565.

What Can I Expect When Donating?

The process is an 'essential service' and very easy and safe. Bring photo id with you. You will be registered, and fill out a questionnaire to confirm that you are eligible to donate that day. In a private area, a friendly phlebotomist will give you a 'mini' physical exam, checking your blood pressure, temperature, pulse, and iron level. You will be led to the donor area and relax on a comfy bed for your donation. They collect about one pint of blood in a sterile bag. Afterwards, you'll enjoy refreshments and then be on your way.

If you have any questions about the process or qualifications for donating, please contact Cascade Regional Blood Services directly at 1-800-24-BLOOD (25663).



Volunteers Needed!

The South Bay Fire Department is looking for dedicated, responsible, and ambitious Volunteers to help support our community.

The district employs career staff who support over 50 Volunteers who provide emergency response and public service to the South Bay area. If accepted as a Volunteer, we provide training to be a Firefighter and/or an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician). Volunteers respond from our local fire stations and are rewarded for their service.

We are now accepting applications for our next Firefighter/EMT recruit cycle. Please see our website for application requirements. To be considered for Fire/EMT Academy this cycle, the application must be submitted by October 1st. We recruit twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall. To learn more about becoming a Volunteer, visit our website at www.southbayfire.com or call our Recruitment Specialist, Assistant Chief LeMay at 360-491-5320.