

III. Community Communications and Risk Reduction



Adopted
9 June 2020

The District serves the community with a combination of skilled career and volunteer staff on a 24 hour per day, 7 day a week basis.

The District regularly looks for ways to stretch tax dollars further by partnering with neighboring agencies.

Goals:

The District is committed to serve the community with prompt, consistent and professional fire suppression, basic life support, rescue and prevention/preparedness services.

Strengthen our involvement with the community.

Values:

The District will identify, evaluate and offer appropriate risk management programs to mitigate anticipated community hazards.

General Key Messages:

ABOUT US: The South Bay Fire Department (Thurston County Fire Protection District 8--“District”), proudly provides firefighting, emergency medical services and community risk prevention to more than 13,000 people over a thirty-one square mile area. Coverage areas include Johnson Point, Puget Beach, South Bay, Gull Harbor, Boston Harbor, Fish Trap, and Woodard Bay. We average 1,200 calls per year.

The District has been providing outstanding community service since 1953. Our primary delivery structure saves valuable tax dollars by relying on a combination of over seventy exceptionally trained volunteers and 15 full-time career staff to respond to emergency calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are debt free and have passed all accountability audits by the state.

FINANCIAL/BUDGET: We regularly look for ways to stretch tax dollars further by partnering with neighboring agencies for mutual aid and to share training and purchasing costs. In 2016, we improved our community’s fire insurance rating from an 8 to a 5, which potentially lowered premiums for some home and business owners. We have reduced the operating costs of our firestations by selling four properties that were primarily being used for storage. This saves tax-payers money by eliminating ongoing maintenance and utility costs. Proceeds from these sales may be used for both future capital purchases and operational costs as needed.

STAFFING: Our goal is to provide a consistent & professional emergency response throughout our District. We are committed to deploy our resources to ensure a response that meets our *Target Levels of Service* regardless of the incident location within our District. Our adopted *Target Levels of Service* can be stated as “to get two EMT’s to any medical call within eight minutes and to get four firefighters to any fire call within ten minutes.”

We are committed to continually improving our emergency response times and deploying our resources efficiently. To support that, we have hired several full-time fire fighters to improve round the clock service delivery. We also organize and assign our staff strategically to consistently provide fully qualified staffing at both our stations.

The District regularly supports ongoing risk reduction programs and public educational opportunities.

COMMUNITY SERVICE and RISK REDUCTION: In addition to consistent, professional emergency response, we also provide the following items free to our community: Street address markers; in-station blood pressure checks; smoke alarms; and CPR classes.

The District also regularly supports on-going risk reduction programs that include educational assemblies at our local schools; fire station tours and visits to local preschools; and providing valuable information on our website and through community newsletters.

Methods for Effective Communications:

WEB SITE: The District web site should be easy to navigate for visitors to locate information. Visitors to include the community; current career and volunteer members. The site should provide the following:

- Board meeting information (time, location, minutes, agenda);
- Possibly offer on-line, “Zoom” presented meeting opportunities;
- Current member information (login to training sites and important links);
- Potential new member information (details about positions, training, obligations, dates for recruitment, etc.);
- Community offerings (on-line request for address marker, on-line contact us form, service options: smoke alarms, CPR schedule and contact info, blood pressure checks);
- Facility usage (when available, detailed information and on-line request form);
- Station tours, field trips and assemblies (contact information);
- CPR instruction(dates, details, contact information, basic information);
- Open burning restrictions, burn permits (information and links to forms);
- Calendar with upcoming events (Board meetings, voting reminders, local events);
- Safety messages, fire prevention, emergency preparedness and fireworks safety (information & links);
- District Information (history, staff info, contact information, District Policies & Procedures, important documents);
- Other note-worthy information such as wildfire status, storm updates, health concerns, etc.; and
- Possibly include informational videos (as necessary).

The District website should be easy to navigate and have current, helpful and accurate information.

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee. Input provided by key staff.

FREQUENCY: General information is permanently on website, changes to be made on an on-going, weekly basis

Several times a year, the District should mail a one-page Newsletter with useful information.

NEWSLETTER: Several times a year, the District should mail a one-page newsletter to constituents. The newsletter should include the following:

- Recent events, progress updates, significant changes to the District;
- Recruitment advertisements;
- Reminder of service offerings;

- Notice of new topics, requests for community support, etc.; and
- Positive representation of District activities and its members (including lots of photos).

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee. Input provided by key staff.

FREQUENCY: Quarterly.

Community media should be a blend of information about the organization and helpful, educational material for the citizens.

READERBOARD: The reader board should provide current, helpful information such as:

- Board meeting date/times;
- Special event info/reminders;
- Timely safety messages;
- Reminders of services; and
- Positive, happy thoughts.

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee. Input provided by key staff.

FREQUENCY: Weekly, on-going.

COMMUNITY EVENTS: The District should use community events as opportunities to provide positive communication. Examples of events:

- School assemblies;
- School events (Fun Fair, Halloween, Open Houses, Last day of school);
- Local events (Run Like a Dog, Lakefair Parade);
- Home-owner Group Meetings;
- 4th of July event at Marina;
- Egg drop school event; and
- Duck Dash.

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee.

FREQUENCY: As needed, monthly.

Social media is a growing sector of community communications as it represents a widespread, timely and accessible mean of providing information.

SOCIAL MEDIA: The District should use Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media in a limited capacity as we do not currently have an efficient way to archive activities. Nextdoor is a more focused application that can be used to target specific areas of the District. The District should monitor this regularly and post meaningful messages, links to other sites and data, and responses to inquiries on a weekly basis.

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee.

FREQUENCY: Weekly/As needed

PRESS RELEASES: The District should consider the use of a press release to promote something significant and specific and to do so in a clear, concise way. A press release usually runs for a brief time but can be used when necessary.

RESPONSIBILITY: District Secretary/designee, Fire Chief.

FREQUENCY: As needed.

Personal contact, outside of emergency responses, are a desirable means of communicating proactively.

PERSONAL CONTACT: The District should consider personal phone calls, emails and/or in-person visits with some community members/groups depending on the nature of the circumstance.

- Responders can make personal contact on emergency calls when appropriate. (i.e. on a fall call, provide recommendations to mitigate a future fall. Provide handouts with helpful tips.) Responders could also provide a general handout that covers all the other services we provide.
- As time allows, on-duty crew can dialogue with community members to see if they have any questions or concerns about their fire department.
- The District should maintain contact information on neighborhood associations and community groups in the area. District representatives can attend community (HOA) group meetings to provide updates and answer questions.
- Community questions that are asked through the website, emails or calls should be responded to in a timely, personal and concerned manner.
- When necessary, the District should hold Community town-hall-style meetings to provide specific information regarding pertinent topics (i.e. levy, bond, new, large-scale projects, etc.). These meetings should be well advertised and targeted.

RESPONSIBILITY: Varies (Responders, Career Staff, District Secretary, Fire Chief/designee, Board).

FREQUENCY: As needed.

Additional Recommendations:

RISK IDENTIFICATION: NFPA 1300, *Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development*, defines CRR as a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. Mysidewalk online dashboards provide some statistical data but is not comprehensive. The District should perform a community-wide risk assessment to identify significant risks and focus on reduction methods.