



# West Pierce Fire & Rescue

## Annual Report

2020



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Letter from the Chief*  
5

*About West Pierce Fire & Rescue*  
6

*Calls for Service*  
8

*Overcoming Challenges of COVID-19*  
10

*Training Hours by Category*  
12

*Training Firefighters  
Amidst a Pandemic*  
13

*Strengthening Disaster Response  
Through Partnerships*  
14

*Community Risk Reduction  
& School Programs*  
16

*Helping Neighbors in Need*  
19

*2021 & Beyond*  
22

## **WEST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE**

3631 Drexler Drive West | University Place, Washington 98466  
www.westpierce.org | 253.564.1623





# OUR MISSION

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West Pierce Fire & Rescue is a community partner dedicated to saving lives, improving health and safety, and protecting property.

# OUR VISION

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To be a progressive community and industry leader that readily adapts to the needs of current and future generations.

# OUR MOTTO

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Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • **BE NICE!**



## LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

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2020 was a year like no other. The challenges our community and department faced were unprecedented. Fortunately, our department is filled with dedicated hardworking employees who helped us overcome these challenges and make 2020 a successful and productive year.

Like most businesses, many of our employees worked modified work-from-home schedules for most of the year. However, as an emergency response agency, the vast majority of our employees need to be on-site to perform their work. Providing a safe work environment was a top priority for our organization. Altered work schedules and telecommute plans were implemented for those employees who could work remotely, new social distancing rules were implemented for those employees who needed to be on-site, and new personal protective equipment was purchased for all of our first responders. Even in the high-risk environment we work in, we were able to maintain a relatively healthy workforce throughout the year.

One of the unique challenges we faced was training our new employees. At the beginning of the year, we hired sixteen new firefighters. This was the largest recruit class in our history. When the stay-at-home orders were implemented, we were only halfway through our academy and it had to temporarily shut down. Fortunately, our training division came up with a new training curriculum that met appropriate social distancing standards and all sixteen of our recruits successfully graduated on time.

Maintaining a balanced budget was another challenge. Due to the pandemic, we were faced with a number of unbudgeted COVID-related expenditures. Fortunately, we continued to aggressively seek out grants and were extremely successful. In total, we received over \$1.35 million in grant funding to help us maintain a balanced budget. Funded projects included a heavy rescue vehicle, auto extrication equipment and training, emergency management programs, and hazardous materials equipment.



While the pandemic slowed a bit during the summer, wildfires did not. Significantly hot, dry weather coupled with unusual high wind patterns led to a very dynamic wildfire season. Not only were we extremely busy throughout West Pierce, we also provided assistance across the county and the West Coast. Teams were involved in fighting major wildfires in Graham and Bonney Lake, and West Pierce members of the Washington Urban Search and Rescue Team responded to assist with the firefighting efforts in Oregon.

2020 was a difficult year, but our department is prepared to take on any challenge. We are extremely proud of the services we provide the communities of Lakewood, University Place and Steilacoom. Even in these trying times, each and every West Pierce employee remains committed to compassionately delivering the high-quality services you deserve and have come to expect from your fire department.

Jim Sharp, Fire Chief



# BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

**Bart Dalton**, Chair  
Position 1, 2020-2025

**John Clancy**  
Position 2, 2016 - 2021

**Daniel Rankin**  
Position 3, 2018 - 2023

**Dave Durr**  
Position 4, 2018 - 2021

**John Sheeran**, Vice Chair  
Position 5, 2020-2025

# EXECUTIVE STAFF

**Jim Sharp**, Fire Chief

**Mike Boltz**, Deputy Chief

**Hallie McCurdy**, Deputy Chief

**Scott Adams**, Assistant Chief

**Norm Fiacchi**, Assistant Chief

**Ernst Hebeisen**, Assistant Chief

**Ryan McGrady**, Assistant Chief

**Koree Wick**, Director of Administrative  
Services & Finance

**Tammy Lamb**, Executive Assistant

**Julie Walker**, Human Resource Manager

**Jenny Weekes**, Community & Media  
Relations Manager

# ABOUT WEST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE

As a fire district, West Pierce Fire & Rescue (WPFR) covers 31 square miles and serves a population of approximately 100,000 people. WPFR provides full service to the cities of Lakewood and University Place, which are incorporated within the fire district. WPFR provides contracted emergency services to the Town of Steilacoom. There are currently six fire stations, operating 24 hours a day and located strategically throughout the District.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue responds to a vast array of incidents on a daily basis. Services provided to the community include: fire suppression, emergency medical services and transport, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, special operations, fire prevention, inspections, code enforcement, fire investigation, and fire and injury prevention education.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue protects many bodies of water throughout the District. Fireboat Endeavor is moored at Narrows Marina for incidents occurring on Puget Sound and is a regional asset to surrounding jurisdictions. Two other boats are in service for incidents occurring on any of the many lakes. Due to the different types of water responses, WPFR has specialized teams, including marine pilots, divers and rescue swimmers.

*The workforce at WPFR is categorized into eight divisions:*

**Administrative Services/Finance** – Manages all aspects of the District’s finances and supports all other divisions.

**Communications & Planning** – Coordinates emergency communications, analyzes data and provides GIS support for the organization.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** – Manages the medical side of WPFR’s services. The EMS division provides continuing medical education in a variety of ways.

**Information Technology (IT)** – Responsible for implementing and maintaining all technological systems and programs for District facilities and personnel.

**Legislative** – Governed by five elected officials, the Board of Fire Commissioners meets twice monthly, on the first and third Tuesdays, to conduct business.

**Logistics** – Manages the District’s fleet, facilities and supply purchasing.

**Operations/Suppression** – Encompasses all emergency response programs. These personnel are the firefighters (both EMTs and Paramedics) who respond to 9-1-1 calls.

**Prevention** – Educates residents on fire and life safety topics, inspects buildings to ensure fire safety, investigates fire scenes and manages code enforcement. This division also includes emergency management and disaster preparedness.

**Training** – Facilitates ongoing training of all District personnel on new and existing procedures and equipment.

# OUR STATIONS

**Station 20**  
10928 Pacific Highway SW  
Lakewood

**Station 21**  
5000 Steilacoom Boulevard SW  
Lakewood

**Station 22**  
8517 Washington Boulevard SW  
Lakewood

**Station 23**  
14505 Grant Avenue SW  
Lakewood

**Station 24**  
8310 87th Avenue SW  
Lakewood

**Station 31**  
*Headquarters*  
3631 Drexler Drive W  
University Place

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# TOTAL CALLS FOR SERVICE

## 16,130

In 2020, West Pierce Fire & Rescue responded to 16,130 calls for service. The charts on these pages demonstrate the breakdown of not only 9-1-1 calls by month, but by type, showing more than 70 percent of WPFR's call volume is for medical aid.

Once the pandemic started in 2020, all medical aid calls were treated as a potential COVID-related calls. This means crews responding wore all appropriate PPE to protect themselves during these types of incidents, even if there wasn't a confirmed COVID case present. This was imperative to keeping crews as safe as possible.

One consideration in the chart on the next page is the optics that the Fire & Hazards category is the smallest portion of WPFR's call volume. Although these incidents occur much less frequently, they are extremely dangerous, require more resources, and pose significant risk to the community.

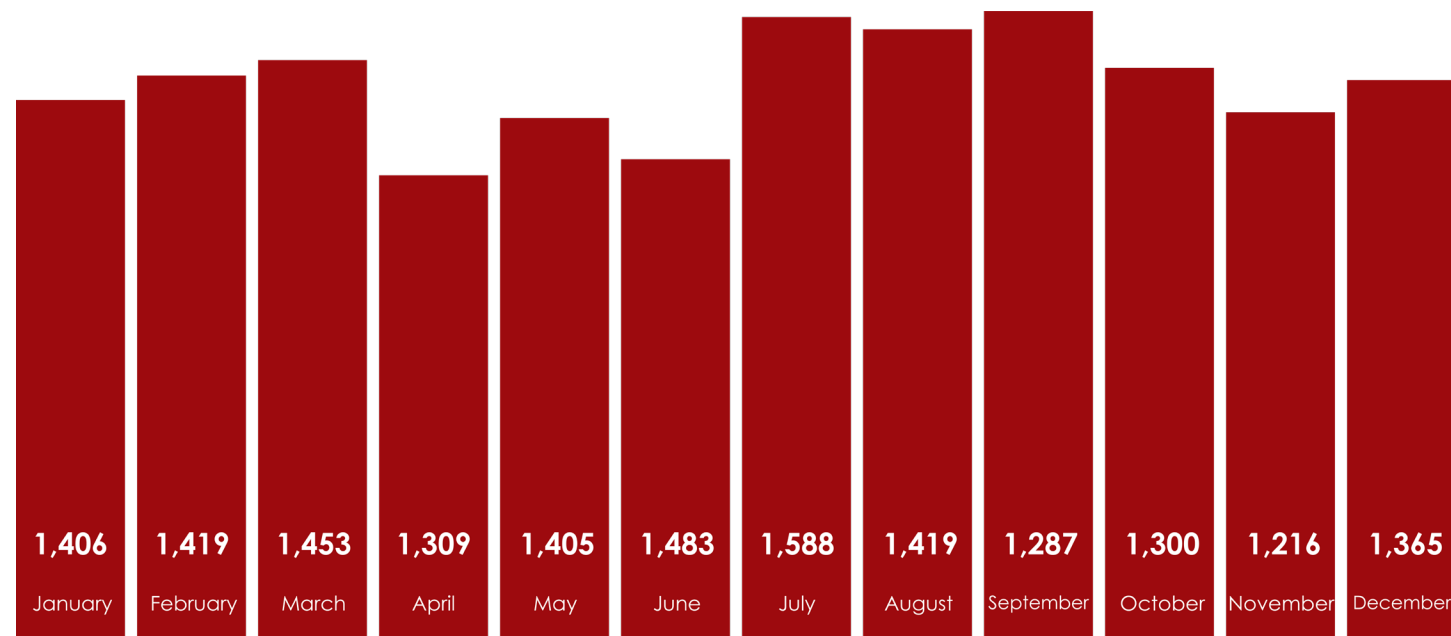
The types of responses within that category include all types of fires, combustible/flammable spills and leaks, chemical releases, structural collapse, or electrical issues, such as downed power

lines. While only seven percent of the call volume is attributed to fires and hazardous condition calls, this still amounts to more than three high risk incidents each day in the community.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue clearly responds to a variety of emergencies and firefighters are trained to respond to each and every one of them. Every firefighter is an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and nearly half of them are trained to the level of Paramedic. There are also firefighters specially trained in technical rescue, hazardous materials response, water rescue and dive rescue.

In addition to 9-1-1 responses shown on these charts, WPFR's team of Peer Support Advocates/Chaplains invested more than 2,992 hours meeting with residents in need, supporting WPFR personnel and their families, training responders on the importance of self-care, and assisting with District events and trainings.

Rest assured, when anyone calls 9-1-1 for an emergency, WPFR will Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • *BE NICE!*



# 9-1-1 RESPONSES

## BY CALL TYPE

### EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

11,490

### GOOD INTENT

May include calls where firefighters were dispatched and canceled en route, such as controlled burning and steam, or other gas mistaken for smoke.

2,135

### SERVICE

May include patient assists, such as a person who has fallen out of bed, lockouts with hazard, water problems, smoke or odor problems, animal rescue and public agency assistance.

1,255

### FIRE & HAZARDS

The below categories make up the entire number of Fire & Hazards response numbers.

1,250

FALSE ALARM: 571

FIRE: 472

HAZARDOUS CONDITION: 145

RUPTURE / EXPLOSION: 11

OTHER: 51



# OVERCOMING CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic first reached Washington State in January 2020, very few forecasted the impact it would later have on our federal, state and local resources. Like most emergency response agencies, the impact on WPFR has been profound and left a significant mark on daily operations. Many of the changes will likely become a permanent fixture, such as virtual meetings and new, increased levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) usage and cleaning.

During the initial onset of the pandemic, day-to-day operations shifted instantly. The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) division restructured their work schedules to function 24/7. It was also necessary to bring additional personnel into the division to help carry the workload until internal systems were in place and able to sustain the operation.

They worked to secure patient tracking, manage internal

contact tracing, develop new PPE decontamination guidelines and training, draft operational directives for managing medical aid calls and minimizing exposures, track PPE inventory, and resupply stations daily. One of the highest priorities was acquiring adequate levels of PPE. National shortages upon the onset of this pandemic made initial acquisition very difficult and therefore supplies on hand needed to be closely tracked and monitored.

Many of these changes have significantly increased the work of firefighters, as they conduct daily employee health screenings, increased daily station decontamination and detailed PPE inventory management. Even the method of putting on and taking off PPE has become increasingly complicated, in order to comply with current safety recommendations. Additionally, new challenges with communications on calls arose while wearing new, bulkier respiratory filtration masks, making it difficult to

be understood when speaking. Now training occurs with these masks on, in order to get used to this “new normal”.

District-wide, a number of operational directives were implemented and continue to be updated as needed. These include measures that address wearing a mask and appropriate PPE, social distancing practices while at work, increased station cleaning and decontamination, minimizing personnel movement from station to station and facilitating alternative work schedules. Many WPFR personnel are still working alternative schedules and/or remotely.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has also caused several instances where personnel had to be quarantined as a result of an exposure. This involves extensive communication with health department epidemiologists and infection control specialists to ensure proper procedures are being followed. When an employee is quarantined, the EMS division coordinates check-ins with the individual, which includes monitoring for symptoms and addressing any special needs. Depending on the situation, employees may not be able to safely quarantine at home, so additional considerations are taken into account, such as housing, food, medical care, etc.

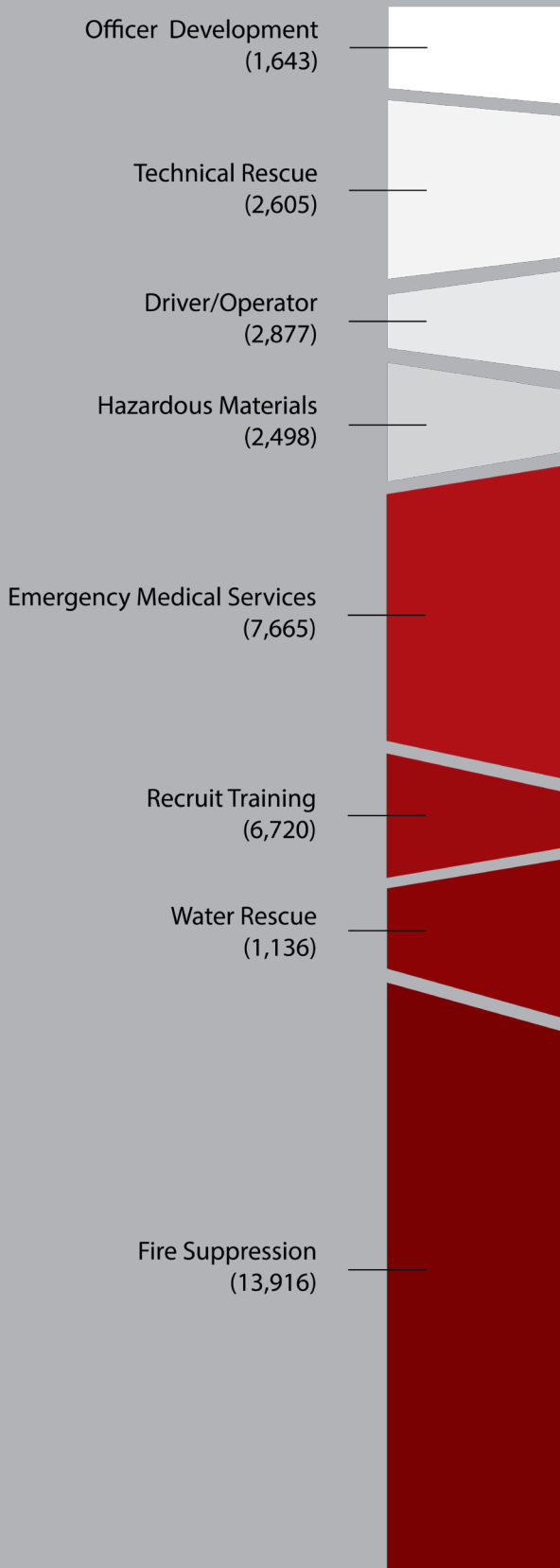
At the end of 2020, vaccination efforts began for first responders. In direct coordination with Pierce County EMS and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, WPFR’s administration and union leadership worked together to develop a prioritized system based on those most at risk, on and off duty. Beginning in December, WPFR personnel started receiving their first dose of the vaccine and to date, approximately 80% of employees are vaccinated.

In addition to vaccination efforts of WPFR personnel, discussions began surrounding WPFR EMTs and Paramedics to become trained on how to administer the vaccine to the community. This includes training provided by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to ensure everything is done correctly and administering the vaccine in various locations. In addition, WPFR is providing medical aid standby at mass vaccination events that have occurred within the District’s jurisdiction.

While COVID-19 forced WPFR to shift its focus to adequately provide service to the community, it’s something that continues to happen. With every step forward in the pandemic, WPFR is dedicated to keeping the community and its personnel safe.







39,060 TOTAL TRAINING HOURS

## TRAINING HOURS BY CATEGORY

The fire service has drastically changed over the last few decades and it is imperative to reflect the needs of a complex society. As the community grows and evolves, so does the risk associated with an increased population.

When it comes to responding to an emergency, being properly equipped and trained to handle any incident is crucial. As shown in the graph to the right, 39,060 hours of training were completed by firefighters. The categories portray the training firefighters maintain on an annual basis.

**Technical Rescue** – Encompasses specialized training for firefighters who respond to incidents including trench rescue, rope and rescue rigging, structural collapse and confined space.

**Recruit Training** – Includes all training, for both recruits and instructors, during the Red Knights Recruit Academy.

**Driver/Operator** – Includes training of driving emergency response vehicles.

**Hazardous Materials** – Includes hazardous conditions training, both at the operations level for all firefighters and for those specially trained to respond to such incidents.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** – Includes continuing medical education for Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and Paramedics.

**Water Rescue** – Includes all water-related training fields, such as rescue swimmer, dive and marine pilot programs. These categories include training throughout the District's many lakes and the Puget Sound.

**Officer Development** – Includes continuing education and leadership training as personnel move up in rank, whether when promoted or acting in a supervisory position.

**Fire Suppression** – Includes all training at the operations level for firefighters, such as training center drills, live fire, firefighter rescue, active shooter, etc.



## TRAINING FIREFIGHTERS AMIDST A PANDEMIC

The Red Knights Recruit Academy began in January just as others before it. The 16 recruits from West Pierce Fire & Rescue spent their first five weeks in EMT school to earn their certifications. On February 10, 2020, they began their firefighting academy, expecting to graduate in the middle of May.

The first five weeks of the academy went as planned and were very successful. Unfortunately, that was the beginning of COVID-19 restrictions in our state and gatherings larger than five people were no longer allowed. At that time, the academy was forced to suspend all operations.

While other learning opportunities were being evaluated, the recruits were utilized to help the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and other agencies in support of their COVID-19 response efforts. The recruits assisted at testing events, in the Pierce County Emergency Operations Center, and with WPFR's logistics and EMS divisions. Some of their duties included securing and delivering PPE to all of the stations, and establishing necessary storage for shipments and supplies needed by WPFR crews, just to name a few. During this unprecedented time, WPFR needed to make sure the needs of

first responders were met and having recruits available to assist in such tasks was extremely helpful.

Over the course of the following month, WPFR's training division worked tirelessly to determine how to hold a modified academy and graduate these recruits as close to on time as possible. Once they were able to do so, they broke the recruits into groups of four and continued working through the remaining fire academy curriculum. To say this was a strain on the instructors is an understatement, as they taught their classes repeatedly to ensure all of the recruits passed their required testing. At the end of May, all 16 recruits graduated from the academy, ready to serve the community.

WPFR is very proud of the time and dedication the training division, recruit academy instructors, administrative staff and logistics personnel put into these efforts. Without their diligence in ensuring these recruits got back into the classroom and on the drill ground, they would not have been able to graduate and start serving the community, quite possibly when they were needed most.





## STRENGTHENING DISASTER RESPONSE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Emergency Management is a very important aspect of West Pierce Fire & Rescue as an organization. Often the work done in this area is behind the scenes; preparing for the worst, yet hoping for the best and that we will never need to use it.

Emergency Management is charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters. There are four phases of emergency management, which include mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The Emergency Management Division at WPFR creates plans in each of the four areas and conducts community outreach through the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program.

2020 brought a new opportunity to partner with the cities of Lakewood and University Place. In January, the West Pierce Emergency Management Coalition (WPEMC) was created. The purpose of the partnership is to create cohesive, comprehensive emergency management plans so when a disaster strikes, everyone is operating under the same guidelines.

The coalition was just starting to create these plans when the

challenges of COVID-19 hit. The WPEMC took this challenge and used it to identify planning priorities. The group met virtually each week to ensure all agencies were moving in the same direction. Discussions included topics such as supply acquisition, policy creation surrounding working from home and working safely in the office, and economic recovery strategies, just to name a few.

The key benefit of this partnership has been the power of collaboration. A portion of this program is funded through the Washington State Emergency Management Preparedness Grant, while the rest of the costs are shared amongst the partners. Through this partnership, it was possible to acquire supplemental grant funding to create pandemic plans for all three agencies, based on the lessons learned through COVID-19. The early results of the WPEMC are promising and WPFR is looking forward to seeing how it will benefit the communities in the coming years as this partnership grows stronger.







# COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Community risk reduction programs are a vital part of the community's success. At West Pierce Fire & Rescue, the Prevention Division focuses on a variety of fire and injury prevention programs. This type of education provides families with the knowledge to make educated choices about fire and life safety risks. The most successful community risk reduction programs at WPFR are those taught in the schools. Students who attend schools in Lakewood and University Place have the opportunity to take part in these programs.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, only five of the 20 elementary schools were able to have an in-person visit from WPFR educators before schools closed. As an alternative, WPFR educators created video lessons for teachers and parents to use to educate students about safety.

In preschool, the focus is on general fire safety and teaching children that firefighters are friends who want to help them. These fire safety messages are reinforced in Kindergarten, with additional topics such as creating a fire escape plan and what to do if they hear a smoke alarm.

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of preventable deaths and injuries to children in the United States. First grade

students learn about child passenger safety and the importance of booster seats to stay safe in cars. Fire safety topics are reinforced once again in second grade to include the science behind fires. This program teaches children about the fire triangle and tips for preventing fires in the home.

In third grade, a water safety curriculum is taught utilizing a partnership with the Lakewood YMCA. In fourth grade, the focus is wheeled sports, such as skateboards, scooters and bikes. Topics include how to properly fit a bike helmet, rules of riding your bike on the road or sidewalk and wearing bright colors so drivers can see you.

In fifth grade, the first aid program focuses on personal safety and when to call 9-1-1 or an adult for help. It also addresses basic first aid skills, such as assisting someone who is choking and how to control bleeding.

The education students receive from these programs at each grade level are experiences that can stay with them for a lifetime and make a real difference. The more families reached with these programs, the stronger, safer and more resilient our community becomes. WPFR values the strong relationships with local schools and looks forward to partnering with teachers and administrators throughout the school year.

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS

Outreach is achieved in various ways and West Pierce Fire & Rescue strives to engage with the community in as many ways as possible. Education during a pandemic looks very different than in typical years, but that didn't stop WPFR from working to reach as many community members as possible in various ways.

While elementary school programs are one of the most successful public education efforts, WPFR also teaches CPR to high school students and hosts babysitting courses for young teens each year.

Outside of the classroom, WPFR attends public events, provides custom-fit life jackets and helmets, inspects car seats for proper installation, installs smoke alarms in residences, conducts code enforcement to ensure public safety and much more.

Another program that has been a proven success is the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. This training provides community members with the skills needed to help protect lives and property and to assist their neighbors until first responders arrive in the event of a disaster.

This year, however, due to COVID-19 restrictions, WPFR was not able to host CERT classes as held in the past. Instead, the current CERT members stepped in assisting WPFR in various ways, including making cloth face coverings, volunteering during hygiene supply giveaways, and many other community-centered events.

The CERT members have dedicated many hours to helping the community during this time of need. While often times, this type of support is needed during a large incident, such as an earthquake or storm, a pandemic was something new to navigate and WPFR's CERT members volunteered to help immediately. Their generosity and dedication was greatly appreciated.

To the right is an overview of the public education and outreach efforts by WPFR during 2020.

## 815 Students reached

- 750 Elementary school students visited
- 65 High school students taught CPR

## 1,164 CERT volunteer hours

- 472 Training hours completed, including drills and classes
- 20 Hours participated in CERT-related meetings
- 56 Hours volunteered at community events
- 616 Hours responded supporting needs of WPFR

## 1,965 Fire & Life Safety actions

- 484 Fire and life safety inspections
- 263 Fire protection systems inspections
- 282 Plans reviewed
- 936 Confidence Tests reviewed

## 1,138 Personal safety measures

- 938 Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed
- 172 Helmets and life jackets were custom-fitted
- 28 Car seats were inspected and/or installed

## 36 Community presentations

- 21 New CERT members trained
- 2 Community fire and life safety presentations
- 6 Career presentations given to junior high and high school students
- 7 Station tours

## 6 Community events attended





# ASSISTING NEIGHBORS IN NEED

When wildfires strike in Washington State, it is not uncommon to be asked the question, “is West Pierce sending firefighters to help?” Typically, the initial reply is “no,” but there is much more to the answer.

WPFR’s jurisdiction is one of the most densely populated in Pierce County, meaning there are no large rural spaces like in neighboring fire districts. Because of this, WPFR does not train its firefighters in wildland firefighting, as that skill set is not commonly used and requires additional hours of annual training to maintain appropriate wildland certifications. However, this doesn’t mean WPFR isn’t equipped to handle brush fires, as crews are properly trained and equipped to respond to such calls.

While WPFR firefighters do not respond to wildland fires in a traditional sense, they do respond when a structural team is requested. This means firefighters respond to protect the structures nearby threatened by a wildfire. This most recently happened in both Bonney Lake and Graham, as these incidents required protection of homes and businesses, which is where a structural team of firefighters is most commonly used.

In addition to on-duty firefighters assisting locally in neighboring jurisdictions, many WPFR personnel are highly trained members

of local incident management teams as well as FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams.

Recently, the Washington State Task Force-1 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue team was deployed to Oregon to assist in search and rescue missions following devastating wildfires. Three WPFR personnel deployed with the team for approximately two weeks.

West Pierce personnel were also activated as part of the Pierce County Incident Management Team. Members of the team spent nearly a week in Bonney Lake supporting the mission of the Sumner Grade fire. Subsequently, additional members were deployed for two weeks supporting the COVID-19 response of the Chelan-Douglas Health District. Earlier this year, this same team responded to assist the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department with their COVID-19 response, so many of these individuals were already prepared to assist in this environment.

These teams have been requested by various agencies in need locally, statewide and nationally over the past few years. While they may not be directly involved in fighting wildfires, these skilled professionals are able to fulfill critical roles during large-scale incidents and disasters of all types.





# 2020 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

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## ***Retirements & Resignations***

Deputy Chief Paul Tinsley, 36 years  
Fleet Manager Steve Hodge, 36 years  
Firefighter/Engineer Greg Tatom, 30 years  
Captain Loren Defazio, 29 years  
Firefighter/Engineer Gerald Foss, 29 years  
Captain Michael Hamilton, 27 years  
Firefighter/Paramedic Gary Glasgow, 27 years  
Finance Manager Stephanie Roth, 25 years  
Firefighter/Engineer Brian Bouton, 13 years

## ***Promotions***

Deputy Chief Mike Boltz  
Deputy Chief Hallie McCurdy  
Assistant Chief Scott Adams  
Assistant Chief Ernst Hebeisen  
Battalion Chief Lance Nelson  
Battalion Chief Erik Morin  
Battalion Chief Mike Willy  
Captain Peter Kilga  
Captain Nick Harris  
Captain Lynda Henderson  
Captain Andy Millard  
Captain Jason Wilson  
Medical Services Officer Travis Smith  
Firefighter/Engineer Kari Anderson  
Firefighter/Engineer Troy Heidal  
Firefighter/Engineer Jayme Lind  
Firefighter/Engineer Kelly McElroy  
Firefighter/Engineer Collin Murphy

## ***New Hires***

Firefighter/Paramedic Gabriel Gonzalez  
Firefighter/Paramedic Colten Russell  
Firefighter/Paramedic Corey Tatman  
Firefighter Joel Anthony  
Firefighter Grant Boere  
Firefighter Hillary Green  
Firefighter Peter Ihrie  
Firefighter Landon Macy  
Firefighter Lucas Mayne  
Firefighter Joshua McDowell  
Firefighter Jacob Parra  
Firefighter Tyler Savage  
Firefighter Scott Sumner  
Firefighter Nicholas Terry  
Firefighter Zachary Tindol  
Firefighter Jason Volberding  
Mechanic Colby Gates  
Emergency Management Assistant Joshua Brown



# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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West Pierce Fire & Rescue personnel are involved in many community groups, service clubs & professional associations. These memberships provide networking, training & collaboration opportunities, which help build partnerships with our valuable community-oriented organizations.

*American Leadership Forum • American Red Cross • Boys & Girls Club of South Puget Sound • Caring for Kids • City of Lakewood • City of University Place • Clover Park School District • Clover Park Technical College • Communities in Schools • Elevate Health • Emergency Food Network • Families Unlimited Network • International Association of Fire Chiefs • International Association of Fire Fighters • Joint Base Lewis-McChord • Kiwanis Club of Clover Park • Kiwanis Club of Steilacoom • Lakewood Chamber of Commerce • Lakewood First Lions Club • Lakewood Knights Lions Club • Lakewood Neighborhood Associations • Lakewood United • Lakewood Water District • Light My Fire of Puget Sound • Northwest Physicians Network • Nourish • Pacific Lutheran University • Partners for Parks • Pierce College • Pierce County Chaplaincy • Pierce County Citizen Corps • Pierce County Department of Emergency Management • Pierce County Fire Chiefs Association • Pierce County Fire Commissioners Association • Pierce County Medical Reserve Corps • Pierce County Mobile Community Intervention Response Team • Pierce Transit • Providence St. Joseph Health Global Partnerships • Puget Sound Energy • Red Cross • Rotary Club of Clover Park • Rotary Club of Lakewood • Rotary Passport Club of Pierce County • Safe Kids Pierce County • Sound Transit • South Sound 911 • South Sound Military & Communities Partnership • St. Clare Hospital • Tacoma Narrows Rotary • Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department • Tacoma/Pierce County Habitat for Humanity • Tillicum-American Lake Gardens Community Center • Town of Steilacoom • University Place School District • Washington Emergency Management Division • Washington Emergency Public Information Network • Washington Fire Chiefs • Washington Fire Commissioners Association • Washington Service Corps • Washington State Council of Fire Fighters • Washington State Association of Fire Marshals • West Pierce CARES • Western State Hospital • YMCA of Pierce & Kitsap Counties •*



# 2021 AND BEYOND

2020 was an extremely challenging year for WPFR and the community. Going into 2021, WPFR is feeling optimistic and looking towards the future. There are a lot of anticipated positive changes within the organization in 2021 and into the coming years. One example is the work being done to completely reinvent the way the way services are provided within the community.

One of the biggest changes will be emergency medical response models. Previously, medic units were staffed with two paramedics equipped to manage advanced life support (ALS) medical aid calls. The vast majority of basic life support (BLS) calls were transported by private ambulances. With BLS calls increasing at an exponential rate and private ambulances no longer available, it was time to re-imagine this decades-long business model. On March 1, 2021 a fifth medic unit was added to the fleet and all medic units were re-staffed with one Paramedic to manage ALS calls and one EMT to manage BLS calls. Not only does this add 25% additional transport capacity, but it also provides better depth of medical resources. If there is a major incident which requires multiple ALS units, WPFR can provide it. If responding to a BLS call, it can be managed without taking a dedicated ALS resource out of service.

Just changing the EMS response model wouldn't be successful if fire responses weren't adapted as well. Rather than sending a medic unit to every BLS call, now a fire engine is sent first to determine if there is a need for a medic unit. While this greatly improves the availability of medic units, it requires a fire engine to respond to numerous calls that don't really require a large piece of fire apparatus. Beginning January 1, 2021, the first squad unit was implemented. A squad is a small SUV-type vehicle staffed with two personnel and used to respond to minor calls in place of a fire engine. The squad allows crews to respond with a much more appropriate vehicle and improve availability of fire engines for critical calls. The squad will be in service seven days a week during the busiest time of day, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

Another key EMS change that will be implemented in the near future is a Connected CARE program (CARE being an acronym for Community Access, Referral and Education). People struggling with a variety of challenges such as mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, etc. contact 9-1-1 for assistance, yet the fire department and an emergency room aren't the best solution for the situation. The goal of the Connected CARE program is to assist these people in finding the correct community resources, so they can move away from using 9-1-1 and access appropriate assistance for their specific needs.

Another big agenda item that requires continual work is improving our diversity. As an industry, the fire service greatly lacks diversity. WPFR is determined to reverse this trend and is prepared to take on the long-term efforts required. In 2020, our first fire engine was fully staffed by female firefighters. This was a watershed moment for the organization. WPFR is very proud the number of female firefighters within the organization is double the national average, yet it is understood the work is not done. It is important to continually seek out and promote diversity throughout our organization. WPFR is committed to establishing an inclusive and equitable workplace that strives to appropriately connect and reflect the community we serve.

WPFR is excited about the future changes being implemented to better serve the community and look forward to the challenges ahead with optimism and confidence.







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University Place, WA 98466

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