



# West Pierce Fire & Rescue

## Annual Report

2021

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## OUR MISSION

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

## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MOTTO

*Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • BE NICE!*





# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

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Much like 2020, 2021 proved to be very difficult. COVID continues to be at the forefront of our challenges, but even with the burden put forth by the pandemic, we managed to have a very successful year. All of our employees continued to provide great service to the community without interruption. Their dedication has allowed our department to excel, even in a time of crisis.

In January of 2021, we made significant changes to our emergency medical services (EMS) programs. By restructuring our staffing, we were able to establish a fifth advanced life support (ALS) medic unit 24-hours a day. This represents a 25% increase to our ALS services and puts a full-time medic unit in five of our six stations.

Also in January, we established a new squad unit that operates 12 hours per day. A squad is a small two-person vehicle that responds to a variety of minor emergency calls typically handled by a fire engine. After a successful pilot program in 2020, the squad is now a permanent fixture at Station 21 on Steilacoom Boulevard. In 2022, we will be standing up an addition 12-hour squad unit at Station 31 in University Place.

One of the newer challenges we are facing is large fires in wooded areas bordering residential neighborhoods. In the fire service we use the term wildland/urban interface (WUI) to refer to these high-risk areas. Historically, these areas were only a concern for places like Southern California or Eastern Washington. Unfortunately, changing weather patterns over the last decade have created constantly drier and hotter summers in Western Washington. With this, large fires in WUI areas are becoming a constant risk for our community. To address this concern, we obtained federal grant funding in the amount of \$394,000 for specialized WUI equipment and training for all of our firefighters.

Maintaining adequate staffing levels continues to be a primary focus for the department. With a substantial number of retirements over the past few years and expanded services



like the squad, we have been hiring new recruits at an unprecedented rate. In 2021, we had a recruit class in January and a second class in October, the first time we have ever held two academies in the same year. Additionally, we have our largest academy class starting in January of 2022. With all the new employees we are hiring, training is a primary focus. In 2021, we set a record for total training hours as well as 9-1-1 calls for service.

2021 was another difficult year, but we remain ready for any challenge. We are extremely proud of the services we provide to the communities of Lakewood, University Place and Steilacoom. Even in these trying times, every West Pierce employee remains committed to compassionately delivering the high-quality, professional services you deserve and have come to expect from your fire department.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Sharp'.

Jim Sharp, Fire Chief



# 2021 CALLS FOR SERVICE

## 17,776

In 2021, West Pierce Fire & Rescue responded to 17,776 calls for service, where nearly 80 percent were for medical aid. WPFR is committed to enhancing its service delivery to adapt to the community's changing needs. More information about service delivery and changes made in 2021 may be found on page 15.

Of the call type categories to the right, the Fire & Hazards category represents our high risk, lower frequency calls. These calls place responders in dangerous situations, require more resources, and pose significant risk to the community, whether high life hazards, economic and/or environmental.

The types of responses include all types of fires, combustible/flammable spills and leaks, chemical releases, structural collapse, and electrical issues, such as downed power lines. Many of these calls require specialized training to mitigate them safely. While crews respond to fewer fire and hazardous conditions calls than medical aid, WPFR averages more than three of these incidents per day.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue 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 one quarter 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 Chaplains spend their time 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 9-1-1 is called for an emergency, WPFR will **Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • BE NICE!**

# 9-1-1 RESPONSES

## BY CALL TYPE

### EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

14,187

### GOOD INTENT & SERVICE

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

*Service calls 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.*

1,520

### FIRE & HAZARDS

*This category is a combination of call types, such as fires, combustible/flammable spills and leaks, chemical releases, structural collapse, ruptures, explosions, etc.*

2,069

## BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

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**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

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**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

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West Pierce Fire & Rescue (WPFR) covers 31 square miles and serves a population of approximately 100,000 people. WPFR provides 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.

WPFR 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.

WPFR 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 Management** – Writes plans and provides training for WPFR, the cities of Lakewood and University Place, and the Town of Steilacoom to ensure an effective, cohesive response when disaster strikes.

**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

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### 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

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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# LOOKING FORWARD: THE NEXT 20 YEARS

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In 2001, the communities of Lakewood and University Place both funded bonds that were used to build new fire stations, remodel older stations, and purchase new fire engines. These were 20-year bonds that expired in 2021.

Over the past 20 years, the fire district has changed dramatically. Call volume has more than doubled, community needs and expectations have changed, and of course the Lakewood and University Place fire districts merged in 2011 to form West Pierce Fire & Rescue. With this growth and change, it is time to address several key needs to adequately prepare for the next 20 years.

One of the top priorities is a new fire station. In 2014, the District closed and sold Station 32 in University Place. It has always been the District's goal to reopen this station in a location close to the border between the cities of Lakewood and University Place to enhance service delivery. Prior to the merger, this area represented the outer border of each district, therefore no fire station was located there. After the merger, this area now represents the center of the jurisdiction. A new station will greatly improve distribution of resources and response times in historically isolated areas of the fire district.

Another area of focus is our logistics division. Logistics covers several key operational support areas, most notably vehicle maintenance, facility maintenance and supply distribution. Currently, our vehicle maintenance division is in a small facility which was designed 20 years ago to support only the Lakewood Fire Department.

Due to the merger, the size of the district's fleet of vehicles has increased by more than 50%. The facility maintenance division is housed in this same location, including the personnel and equipment required to maintain the District's more than 100,000 square feet of facilities and nine acres of grounds. Supply distribution includes everything from uniforms and personal protective equipment to medical supplies and fire hose. Lacking sufficient room in any one facility, supplies are located in multiple

locations including shipping containers stored outside of multiple fire stations. Consolidating these critical services in a single location is a key part of our 20-year plan.

Training is another area being evaluated for updates and improvements. The cornerstone of our current training ground is our tower. While this tower has served the district very well, it is now over 50 years old.

The tower is designed for live fire training, however live fire training 50 years ago consisted of actually lighting combustible materials on fire inside the tower. This type of burning, even for training firefighters, is no longer allowed. Current standards require the use of natural gas fires, something our training tower was never designed for.

Through the support of our community, we have been able to maintain very good facilities throughout our fire district. However, some facilities still have issues to be addressed such as seismic retrofitting, sprinkler systems, and remodeling to accommodate increases in staffing. Our goal is to develop a plan that will allow for us to continue maintaining the quality of our facilities as well as provide appropriate resources to support our operations for the next 20 years and beyond.





# TRAINING CENTER





# TRAINING HOURS BY CATEGORY

It is imperative for the fire service to reflect the needs of a complex society. As the community grows and evolves, so does the risk associated with an increased population. Therefore, training is the cornerstone to ensure the safety of the community served on a daily basis.

When it comes to responding to an emergency, being properly equipped and trained to handle any incident is crucial. In 2021, 44,116 hours of training were completed by firefighters, the highest number of annual training hours to date. 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.

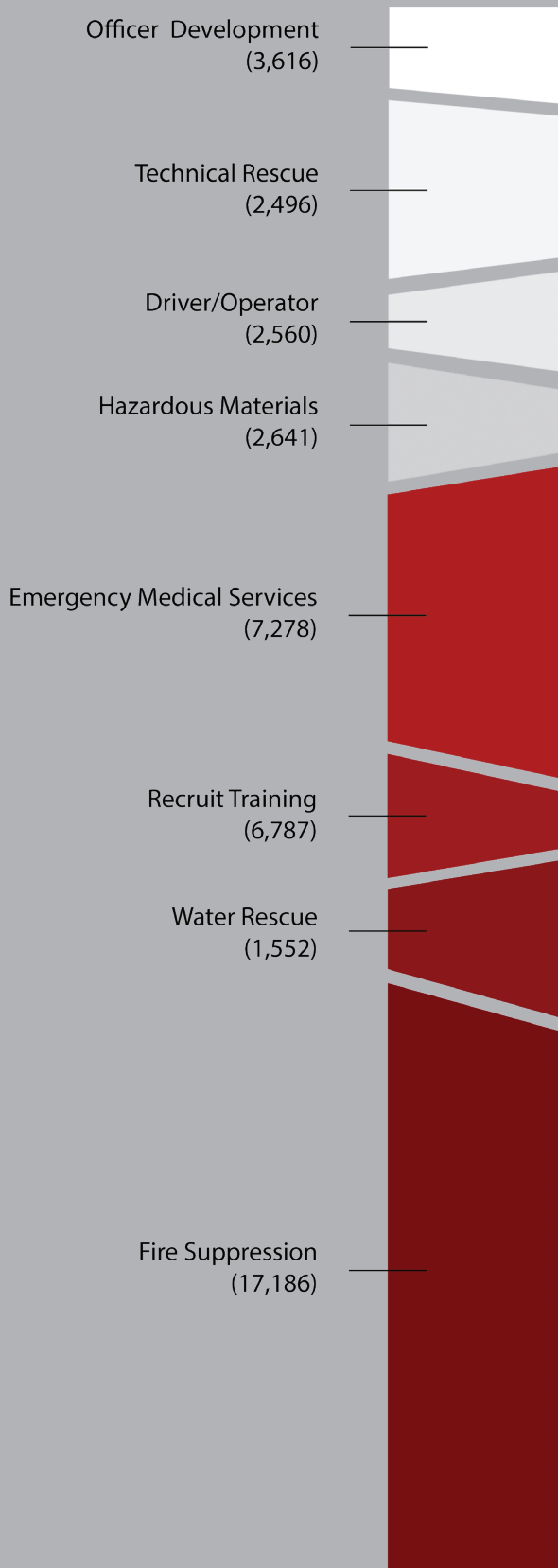
**Hazardous Materials** – Includes hazardous conditions training, both at the operations level for all firefighters and for those specially trained to respond to such incidents.

**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.



**44,116 TOTAL TRAINING HOURS**





## ADDRESSING WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE CHALLENGES

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The 2020 Sumner Grade Fire in Bonney Lake was a stark reminder of the increasing threat of brush fires in western Washington. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is considered the area of transition from unoccupied land and human development.

In a concerted effort to better prepare for the growing challenges of brush fires that continue to threaten our communities, WPFR has focused on training being a critical element. Coupled with training is a plan to have smaller equipped vehicles available to complement our traditional fire engines during these fire emergencies.

Traditional structural firefighting is very different from wildland firefighting. It takes training and equipment to better prepare our firefighters to operate safely and effectively in these hazardous environments. Wildland Urban Interface training is designed to

decrease the loss of human life and homes due to the increasing risk of wildfire ignitions.

WPFR was successfully awarded over \$350,000 through a federal grant to train every firefighter in this area. This grant funding will provide firefighters with the critical skills necessary to operate effectively in the WUI environment.

Another essential element to fight WUI incident is the use of passenger truck-sized vehicles. Outfitted to deliver water through hose lines, “brush-style” rigs are smaller vehicles that provide an off-road capable platform far more maneuverable than traditional fire engines. The combination of solid training and specialized vehicles are significant strides in addressing the realities of longer, warmer, dryer fire seasons.





## COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION OUTREACH PROGRAMS

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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 looked 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.

WPFR public educators teach a variety of educational community risk reduction programs and due to COVID-19 restrictions, many of these resources were available to teachers, students and parents in the form of a virtual classroom, available at WPFR's website.

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.

In 2021, WPFR was not able to host CERT classes in person, but offered a variety of training to current members and many supported local community efforts and events. The CERT members have dedicated many hours to helping the community during this time of need, especially over the past two years. Their generosity and dedication was greatly appreciated.

Here is an overview of the public education, code enforcement and outreach efforts by WPFR during 2021.

### ***2,944 Fire & Life Safety actions***

- 1,097** Fire and life safety inspections
- 488** Plans reviewed
- 1,307** Confidence Tests reviewed
- 52** Fire investigations completed

### ***827 Personal safety measures***

- 733** Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed
- 52** Helmets and life jackets were custom-fitted
- 42** Car seats were inspected and/or installed

### ***17 Community events attended***



# SOCIAL MEDIA AT A GLANCE

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West Pierce Fire & Rescue takes pride in the connecting with the community, especially through social media. Since the pandemic started, online interaction became increasingly important due to the lack of in-person opportunities. Below is a snapshot of social media use in 2021.

Each platforms offers a glimpse into all WPFR has to offer. A variety of information is shared, including incident response, community engagement, public relations, upcoming events, safety information and much more.

**FOLLOWERS**  
**20,278**

**IMPRESSIONS**  
**2,216,031**

**ENGAGEMENT**  
**132,449**

## TWITTER



**NUMBER OF  
FOLLOWERS**  
**9,311**

**NUMBER OF  
POSTS PUBLISHED**  
**271**

[twitter.com/westpierce](https://twitter.com/westpierce)

## FACEBOOK



**NUMBER OF  
FOLLOWERS**  
**8,053**

**NUMBER OF  
POSTS PUBLISHED**  
**260**

[facebook.com/westpierce](https://facebook.com/westpierce)

## INSTAGRAM



**NUMBER OF  
FOLLOWERS**  
**2,914**

**NUMBER OF  
POSTS PUBLISHED**  
**365**

[instagram.com/westpiercefire](https://instagram.com/westpiercefire)





# ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY

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With 9-1-1 calls for service continuing to grow every year, West Pierce Fire & Rescue continues to evolve as an all-hazards response provider. Adaptive approaches in resource deployment to address the demands of increased call volume has been essential to the needs of the community.

It is important to evaluate these needs on a regular basis to ensure the highest quality services are delivered. WPFR has implemented changes to enhance both fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) resource delivery to better serve our communities. In 2021, two major changes to service delivery were made, including a Squad and an additional medic unit.

In 2020, WPFR implemented a two-person resource known as a “Squad” on a trial basis. That unit was implemented permanently in 2021, after much success during its trial period.

The Squad responds in a heavy-duty passenger-style pickup truck with a cache of tools and equipment. The primary task of this smaller resource is to provide some relief to the busier, larger, conventional apparatus like engines or a ladder truck during peak times throughout the day.

By targeting specific 9-1-1 call types, the smaller resource can adequately respond and provide the necessary service to the community. The redistribution of calls responded to by the Squad has additional benefits, such as saving on fuel usage, wear and tear of large apparatus, and improving resource availability, especially that of medic units.

While focusing on a more adaptable EMS staffing model, the number of transport-capable medic units staffed 24 hours per day was increased from four to five. This additional medic unit was placed into service in the Oakbrook neighborhood of Lakewood, responding from Station 24. This additional resource increases response and transport capabilities to serve the community while addressing growing call volume.

A timely response with the appropriate resource to each call is crucial to a piece of WPFR’s motto: *Respond Efficiently*. WPFR

relies on South Sound 911 for dispatching and much like any call taking and dispatch system, there are inherent challenges to collecting accurate and timely information while sending the right resource to each type of emergency.

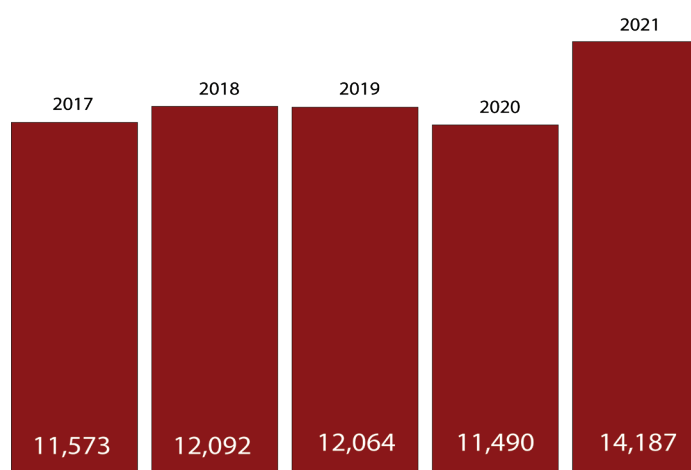
It is impractical and unsustainable to simply send more resources to every 9-1-1 call to ensure adequate personnel and tools are available to mitigate emergencies.

Each of the five medic units has at least one paramedic and one Emergency Medical Technician. This staffing approach is better adaptable to occasional dispatch discrepancies and can deliver the best care to the patient while utilizing specialized skills of firefighters staffing the medic unit. These improvements will allow WPFR continue to provide a high level of service while addressing the increased number of emergency calls.

The adaptive strides WPFR has been able to make with the support of the community is something to be proud of. WPFR looks to expand the Squad resource with a second unit in the summer of 2022.

## EMS RESPONSES BY YEAR

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# 2021 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

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## ***Retirements & Resignations***

Firefighter/Engineer Greg Langlow, 31 years

Firefighter/Paramedic Murray MacDonald, 30 years

Battalion Chief Bill Barber, 29 years

Captain Karl Hospenthal, 28 years

Captain Troy Gardner, 26 years

Peer Support Advocate/Chaplain Larry Huffman, 16 years

Peer Support Advocate/Chaplain Dianne Huffman, 16 years

## ***Promotions***

Captain Matt Garrels

Captain William Zabelka

Captain Steve Jeffcoat

Captain Bryson Lane

Captain Chad Erskine

Captain Chris Pfaff

Firefighter/Engineer Clint Jenkins

Firefighter/Engineer Robert Duhamel

Firefighter/Engineer Bryan Copeland

Firefighter/Engineer Brian Stice

## ***New Hires***

Firefighter/Paramedic Michael Stroobant

Firefighter/Paramedic Michael Jarzombek

Firefighter Nathan Hollenback

Firefighter Benjamin Weathers

Firefighter James Kelley

Firefighter Matt Dutton

Firefighter Joshua Willson

Firefighter Quinton Hines

Firefighter Andrew Bartell

Firefighter Nathan Bailey

Firefighter Blaze Manglona

Firefighter Jacob Lex

Firefighter Jorel Cornier

Firefighter Sean DePuma

Firefighter Nicholas Russo

Firefighter Jason Lech







# 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 • 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*

# 2022 AND BEYOND

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West Pierce Fire & Rescue was optimistic in 2021 to be working towards our new normal. Unfortunately, 2021 was similar to 2020 in many ways. Fortunately, 2022 is already shaping up to be a very dynamic year for WPFR.

Several operational changes will be happening in 2022. In 2011, when the Lakewood and University Place Fire Departments merged to create WPFR, there were two battalion chiefs to manage day-to-day field operations. Due to lingering financial challenges related to the recession, the District eliminated one of these positions. Since then, call volume has increased over 30%, showing that re-establishing a second battalion will greatly improve overall emergency scene supervision and firefighter safety. The new battalion chief will be located at and respond from Station 31 in University Place.

Another emergency resource being established in 2022 is a second squad unit. Squads are small two-person response vehicles that can handle a variety of non-emergency problems typically handled by a fire engine. After a successful pilot program in 2020, a squad was established in 2021 at Station 21 on Steilacoom Boulevard in Lakewood. The second squad will be located at Station 31 in University Place and both will operate 12 hours per day, during peak times.

One key change being implemented is a Connected CARE (Community Access, Referral, and Education) program. People struggling with a variety of challenges such as mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, etc. contact 9-1-1 for assistance. Often times, a fire department response and an emergency room visit are not the best solution for their situation. The goal of the Connected CARE program is to assist 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. This new position will be filled in early 2022.

A large focus for 2022 will be wildland urban interface (WUI) fire protection. WUI zones are locations where heavily wooded areas border residential neighborhoods. For the last several years, weather patterns have continued to create hotter, drier summers in Western Washington. Due to this, the fire risk in these WUI zones is significant. In 2021, WPFR obtained a federal grant for WUI equipment and training. Each of the squad units will be outfitted with specialized equipment and all firefighters will receive training for these types of fires prior to summer.

2022 will also be a busy year of planning. In 2001, the communities of Lakewood and University Place both funded bonds for new stations and equipment. Those bonds expired in 2021 and now WPFR is in the process of determining capital infrastructure needs for the next 20 years. In 2014, Station 32 in University Place was closed and sold with the intent of placing a new station closer to the border between the cities of Lakewood and University Place. Planning for this new station as well as other station and facility improvements will represent a significant area of focus over the coming year.

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.







3631 Drexler Drive West  
University Place, WA 98466

253.564.1623  
[www.westpierce.org](http://www.westpierce.org)

**CONNECT WITH US:**



[communications@westpierce.org](mailto:communications@westpierce.org)



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