



Issue 20
October 2025

THE MONITOR

News from West
Pierce Fire & Rescue

*Proudly serving the communities of Lakewood,
University Place and Steilacoom*

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LETTER FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

As we approach a new year and look back on 2025, it has been another rewarding year for our department. We have seen significant changes and implemented several new programs with more changes to come in the near future.

To date, our calls for service are slightly ahead of last year, making 2025 one of the busiest years on record. While we had a high number of small brush fires this summer, we were able to extinguish them quickly before any could turn into a major wildfire. A big part of this was due to milder weather and new programs we have implemented. We now have two squads operating during peak times. While they can respond to a variety of calls, they are also brush fire apparatus designed for operating in and around areas where wildfires can spread. Additionally, we have increased our firefighters' training standards related to wildfires. With new training

and equipment, our firefighters are better prepared to mitigate wildfires than they have ever been.

Another big success this year was achieving a fire Protection Class 2 (PC2) rating from the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau. Every five years, fire departments across the state are rated and assigned a fire protection class of 1 through 10, where PC1 indicates exemplary fire protection capabilities, and PC10 indicates the capabilities, if any, are insufficient.

Achieving a PC2 rating is not only a reflection of our department's services and capabilities, but also the high level of support our community provides in order for us to be successful in our mission. Currently, West Pierce Fire & Rescue is the only fire department in Pierce

County with a PC2 rating. In fact, less than 2.5% of all fire departments in the state are able to achieve a PC2.

Although we are very proud of our success, we definitely don't plan on sitting idle. Looking ahead to next year, we plan on making another big investment in community safety. In January, we will be placing a second ladder company in service. This is something we have been working to establish for some time. Starting next year, we will have one ladder company located at our Steilacoom Blvd. station in Lakewood, and one placed in our University Place station.

I am very proud of everything we have accomplished so far this year, and look forward to all of the great things we will be doing in 2026. On behalf of myself and every member of our department, we greatly appreciate the support we receive from the community and look forward to providing you with the best services possible.

Jim Sharp, Fire Chief



Chief Sharp is the only WPFR employee to have served in both departments prior to the merger and is currently the district's longest-tenured employee!

Congratulations to Fire Chief Jim Sharp on his upcoming retirement after 39 years of dedicated service!

Chief Sharp started his career in the fire service in 1986 and rose through the ranks in both University Place and Lakewood. When the departments merged in 2011 to form WPFR, he became Fire Chief in 2013 and has held the role since. Chief Sharp will continue to lead the department until a new Fire Chief is appointed in the first quarter of 2026. Thank you for all the heart, hard work, and leadership you've given to the department and community!

Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • BE NICE!

Connect with us!

Looking for more information, upcoming events or recent news from West Pierce Fire & Rescue?

Station 31 (Headquarters)
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University Place WA 98466

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communications@westpierce.org
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Find us on social media!



@westpierce



/westpierce



@westpiercefire



WHY SO MANY RESPONDERS?

Maybe you've seen it before... you look outside and notice several fire department vehicles lining your street. The first thought is often: why so many for just one call?

At West Pierce Fire & Rescue, we take cardiac emergencies extremely seriously. What you see in the photo above is an accurate picture of what a cardiac arrest response looks like inside a home. Our crews bring the same level of care you'd receive in an emergency room – right to your living room.

A cardiac arrest requires a full team to give the patient the best chance of survival. Ideally, eight trained personnel respond: two perform CPR, three operate advanced medical equipment, one documents the care, and two direct treatment.

Just like fighting a fire, greater risks require more resources. Emergencies such as cardiac arrest, respiratory failure, serious trauma, or shock demand both the right equipment and enough trained hands to act quickly. According to the American Heart Association, cardiac arrest claims more lives than colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, influenza, pneumonia, auto accidents, HIV, firearms, and house fires combined. Every second counts, and sending multiple firefighters and paramedics ensures life-saving care can begin immediately.



October is Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month

Cardiac arrest can happen anywhere – and fast. Immediate CPR can double or even triple someone's chance of survival.

Sign up for WPFR's **CPR, First Aid & AED class** happening **Dec. 13, 2025!**

Can't make it? Check www.westpierce.org for upcoming 2026 classes.



GUIDE TO SERVICES



CUSTOM-FIT HELMETS & LIFE JACKETS

Fittings are scheduled by appointment and the wearer must be present in order to purchase. Please call or visit our website to schedule an appointment. Helmets are available for \$11-\$15 and life jackets for \$19.



PRESCHOOL & DAY CARE EDUCATION

Fire safety programs are available for preschools and day cares to use in the classroom at no cost.

Teachers conduct several lessons of the curriculum and WPFR personnel come in to teach the final lesson so small children learn firefighters are their friends.

CAR SEAT INSTALLATIONS & CHECKS

Did you know that more than 50% of children are improperly restrained in vehicles?

Residents within the fire district may schedule an appointment with a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician to have their car seat installed or checked for proper installation.



STATION TOURS

Station tours are available for schools and community groups. Safety lessons and tours of the station and apparatus are held, all while learning what it's like to be a firefighter.

If you would like to bring a group to the fire station for a visit, please call or visit our website to schedule.

CONNECTED CARE PROGRAM

The Connected Community Access, Referral and Education (CARE) Program supports community members who need services outside the 9-1-1 system. Led by Program Manager Karen Gilbert, a Registered Nurse, CARE helps individuals navigate healthcare access, transportation, food, social services, chronic disease management, and behavioral health. Since its launch, CARE has surpassed a milestone of over 1,000 referrals, including 419 so far in 2025 – an average of approximately 46 referrals a month.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

WEST PIERCE CARES

West Pierce CARES provides essential services that taxpayer dollars can't cover, including bike helmets, smoke alarms, assistance for fire victims, and nonemergency transportation to healthcare. CARES is a 501(c)(3) charity funded by employee and community donations and grants. By addressing these critical needs, CARES ensures community members have the support and resources they need when they need it most. To learn more, visit www.westpiercecared.org.



WEST PIERCE

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COALITION

In 2022, the Town of Steilacoom and the Cities of Lakewood and University Place partnered with WPFR to form the **West Pierce Emergency Management Coalition (WPEMC)**.

The purpose of the coalition is to create a more resilient community through emergency preparedness and planning activities.

Visit www.westpierceemergency.org to sign up for emergency alerts, access preparedness resources, and learn tips on the different ways to prepare each month!

THANK YOU, EMPLOYEES!

Since our last publication, 7 employees have moved on to the next chapter in their lives: retirement! In July, past and present employees gathered at Station 21 to chow on some hot dogs and celebrate retirements (picture below). The Fire Service Family is a beautiful community and WPFR is nothing it is today without the love and dedicated service our retirees shaped it to be! Congratulations and thank you, West Pierce employees, on a job well done!

DAVE EMMONS
Captain

MIKE HARN
Battalion Chief

DAVE HENDERSON
Facilities Maintenance Tech

SCOTT KELLY
Assistant Chief

JO KUMMERLE
Firefighter/Paramedic

MIKE SHUSTER
Fleet Manager

JENNY WEEKES
Community & Media
Relations Manager

TWO RED KNIGHTS RECRUIT ACADEMIES



Since our last publication, the Red Knights Recruit Academy had TWO recruit classes graduate academy! The academy, taught alongside East Pierce Fire & Rescue, had twelve graduates in February and eleven in May. A total of nine of those combined graduates joined WPFR as probationary firefighters. Congratulations to our new probationary firefighters – and the 80+ instructors who shaped them for success!

CLASS OF 2024 - PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTERS
William Awadjie
Mason Egan
Trevor Kvinsland
Brighton Noble

CLASS OF 2025 - PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTERS
Annalise Coleman
Kyle Dedden
Matthew Durham
Thomas Mixon
Erryl Roberson



MORE HEADLINES

From Grants to Gear

New resources making a real difference on the front lines!

Thanks to our largest-ever equipment grant (\$1.1 million) crews were able to start using brand-new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) this summer. The upgraded gear is lighter, offers clearer communication, and comes with a longer-lasting battery life. Other recent grant funding includes \$717,000 for EMS defibrillators, \$100,000 from the Department of Energy, and \$900,000 from the Department of Emergency Management for new generators.



Health & Wellness

Pursuing holistic balance on and off the job!

WPFR is putting its people first, investing in programs that prioritize the health and wellness of its crews. Whether it's upgraded gear, fitness initiatives, mental health support, or resources for nutrition, stress, and sleep management, these efforts help firefighters stay strong and ready to serve the community. By focusing on overall well-being, the department ensures that its teams aren't just prepared for emergencies: they're balanced both on and off the job.



2026 PROGRAMS TO GET EXCITED ABOUT

→ Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)



What could go wrong in the first few minutes before responders get to the scene of the emergency? Or...what could go *right*?

Sign up for the FREE Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training to learn how to prepare for and respond to disasters in those crucial first minutes and beyond. In six classes, you'll learn everything from first aid to search and rescue and more!

→ Safe Sitter Babysitting Classes



The Safe Sitter babysitting class teaches students ages 11-13 how to stay safe while caring for younger children, whether at home or

while babysitting. Participants learn valuable skills including childcare, CPR, choking rescue, first aid, and how to run babysitting as a business.

→ Youth Academy



West Pierce Fire & Rescue's Youth Academy is a great way for students ages 14-18 to experience what it's like to be a firefighter. This two-

day FREE academy offers students the opportunity to learn about various disciplines within the fire service, while gaining hands-on experience. The application period typically opens in May and the orientation, academy, and graduation take place in June.

→ **2026 dates aren't solidified just yet. Make sure to check back on [westpierce.org](https://www.westpierce.org) or follow WPFR's social media pages for upcoming dates on classes, programs, and events!**



THE SIMPLEST WAY TO SAVE A LIFE

Working smoke alarms are vital for alerting you to potential fires and providing critical seconds to escape.

Your home should have alarms inside and outside every sleeping area and on every level. Smoke alarms should be less than 10 years old, whether hard-wired or battery-operated.

According to the NFPA, nearly three out of five home fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or with alarms that fail to operate. Having alarms on every level of your home and near sleeping areas dramatically increases your chances of safely escaping a fire.

Thanks to a grant, WPFR offers free smoke and carbon monoxide alarm assessments and installations in Steilacoom, Lakewood, and University Place. Appointments typically take 15 to 45 minutes and are conducted by trained personnel who guide you through your home. Our team includes bilingual staff fluent in Spanish so more community members can benefit from this life-saving service.

To schedule a free home assessment and make sure your smoke alarms are working properly, visit <https://www.westpierce.org/smoke-alarms/>.



PRACTICE MAKES PREPARED

A fire department is nothing without its training. The WPFR training division is constantly sharpening the skills of crews – both experienced and new. Training never stops despite how knowledgeable a responder may be. These photos reflect the variety of training scenarios firefighters and recruits face throughout the year at the WPFR drill ground, the WA State Fire Training Academy, empty homes or businesses in the district, on the water, and elsewhere. From fire and EMS to marine training, wildland, rescue swimmers and divers, rope rescues, hazmat, confined spaces, structural collapse, and vehicle extrication, there's never a lack of preparedness.







WEST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE

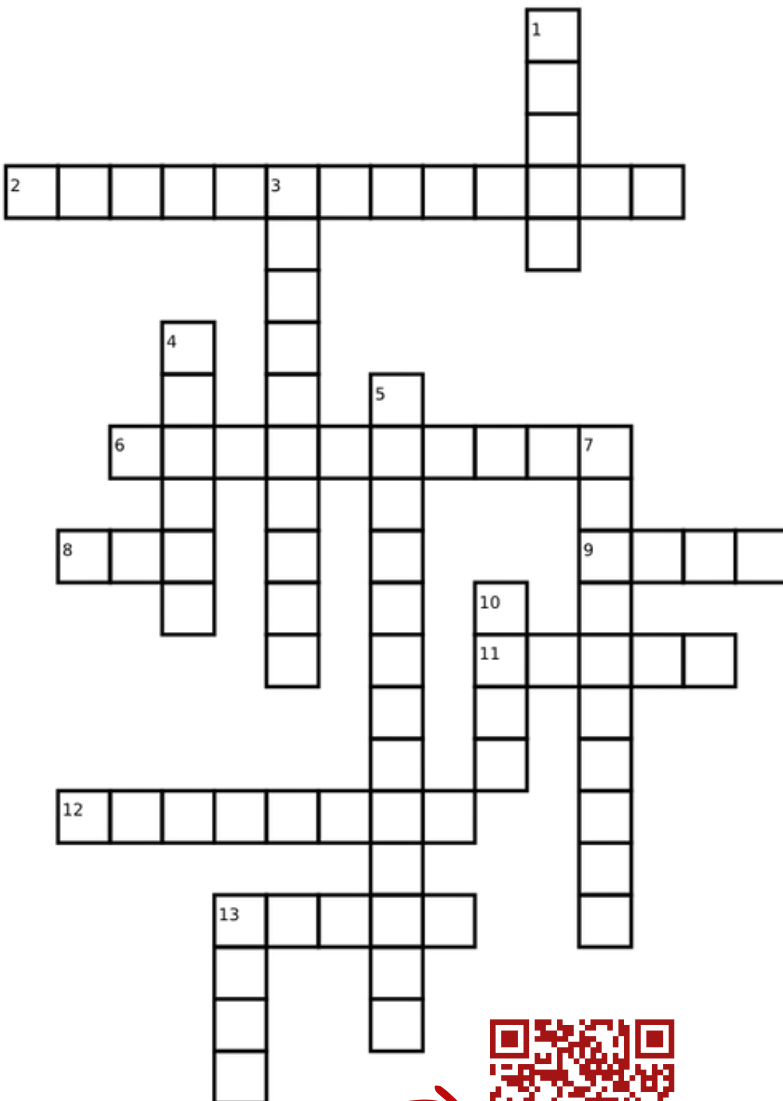
3631 Drexler Drive West

University Place WA 98466



DID YOU READ THE MONITOR? LIKE, REALLY READ IT?

Test your WPFR knowledge in the crossword puzzle below!
All answers can be found in this issue of The Monitor.



DOWN:

- 1 - WPFR's largest equipment grant ever was for upgraded ____
- 3 - ____ Recruit Academy
- 4 - One of WPFR's biggest successes this year was achieving a Protection Class 2 (PC2) ____.
- 5 - October is ____ Awareness Month
- 7 - West Pierce Emergency ____ Coalition
- 10 - What free classes does WPFR offer to prepare for and respond to disasters?
- 13 - The Connected ____ Program

ACROSS:

- 2 - A second ____ will start Jan. 2026
- 6 - WPFR proudly serves the communities of Lakewood, University Place, and ____
- 8 - Smoke alarms should be less than ____ years old.
- 9 - Respond Efficiently • Execute Flawlessly • Be ____!
- 11 - How many personnel is an ideal cardiac arrest response?
- 12 - What kind of firefighter training standards did WPFR increase this year?
- 13 - ____ provides essential services taxpayer dollars can't cover

Scan the QR code to visit our
website and check your answers!

