



# FIRE HOUSE NEWS

SERVING THE CITIZENS OF BONNEY LAKE, EDGEWOOD, MILTON, LAKE TAPPS, THE RIDGE COMMUNITIES, SOUTH PRAIRIE, SUMNER, TEHALEH AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Fall 2021



**FROM THE CHIEF**  
**Jon Parkinson**

A huge thank you to our community for supporting our EMS levy, which the voters approved in

## EMS LEVY PASSES!

August. This levy reflects 25% of our voter-approved tax revenue and represents stable funding for our emergency medical services for the next ten years. The EMS levy is used to fund our paramedic program and provides advanced life support to medical patients. Additionally, the EMS levy provides medical transports with no out-of-pocket cost for District residents.

*Thank You!*

To learn more, see "EPFR Residents Benefit From "No Out-of-Pocket Ambulance Expense" Program" on page 3. ■

## Regular Fire Levy - Proposition 1 on November Ballot

This November, the East Pierce Fire & Rescue Board of Fire Commissioners will be asking voters to consider a lid lift of the regular fire levy, which will restore the levy to its previous voter-approved amount. As you may recall, this levy was on the ballot in August but failed to receive the votes necessary to pass.

area is experiencing. As our community grows, so does the demand placed on your fire department. In 2021 alone, we have experienced an increase in emergency responses of over 10%, resulting in more than 2,500 additional emergency unit responses this year. At the same time, we are all experiencing an increase in the cost of goods and services. The lid lift allows East Pierce Fire & Rescue to keep pace with the population growth and increased demand for services.

Below are some frequently asked questions we have received regarding the regular fire levy:

**Q:** What is a levy lid lift?

**A:** In Washington State, a lid lift allows voters to approve a taxing district to reset its levy to the statutory limit set by the state. In the case of a fire district, that limit is \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Our current levy rate is \$1.36 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

**Q:** My property tax valuation continues to go up each year. Doesn't that mean you are getting more money from my property taxes?

**A:** One of the most common questions we receive is why the fire department needs additional money when property values continue to climb. In Washington State, fire districts are limited to a tax collection growth of 1% per year regardless of residents' increase in property values. As our population and 9-1-1 emergencies grow at a rate far greater than 1% per year,

See **FIRE LEVY** page 2

## Welcome Deputy Chief Bill Mack

In July, newly appointed Deputy Chief Bill Mack joined East Pierce Fire & Rescue and brought with him 29 years of fire service experience.

Beginning his career in 1992 with the City of Auburn Fire Department, which became the Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) in 2007, Bill worked his way through the ranks serving a large portion of his years as a captain and leaving VRFA as battalion chief. Overall, Mack spent nearly eight years in the training division, four with VRFA and four with the South King County Fire Training Consortium.

During his time in the fire service, Mack earned both his Associate Degree and Bachelor's of Science Degree in Fire Command Administration, and completed the Seattle Fire Department Executive Leadership Academy through the UW Foster School of Business.

While Deputy Chief Mack may be new to EPFR, he is very familiar

with the community. He and his wife Jane moved their family to Bonney Lake in 1998, where they built a home and raised three boys. Bill has coached baseball, football and volunteered for several community groups. He is excited to have the opportunity to serve the community that has given so much to his family over the years and hopes his local contacts and relationships will assist EPFR in providing a high level of public service. ■



Deputy Chief Mack joined the EPFR family in July 2021.

## Bond Update: Seeing Progress

In November 2018, voters approved a bond to replace all six frontline East Pierce Fire & Rescue fire engines and ladder truck, replace four fire stations, and build a new fire station in Tehaleh. Many projects slowed due to COVID impacts but are once again moving along.

Here is an update of completed projects and anticipated timelines for remaining projects.

### VEHICLE STATUS

- Ladder 113 and Engines 111, 112, 114 and 118: Received and in-service.
- Engines 116 and 119: Anticipated delivery in November 2021 and in-service December 2021.

### FIRE STATION ANTICIPATED CONSTRUCTION START DATES

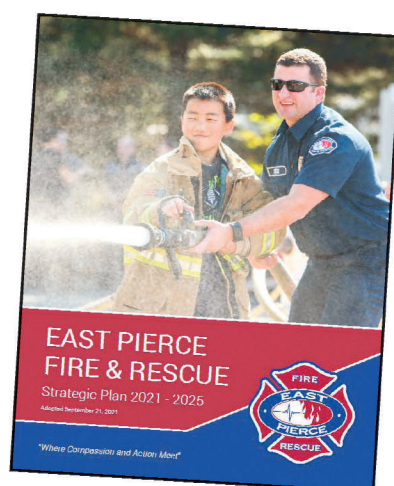
- Station 118 - Edgewood: Under construction.
- Station 111 - Bonney Lake: Early 2022.
- Station 114 - Lake Tapps: Summer 2022.
- Station 117 - Tehaleh: Late fall 2022.
- Station 112 - Prairie Ridge: Spring 2023.



EPFR's Station 118 in Edgewood officially started demolition on September 21, 2021. Construction is slated to be complete and the station staffed with personnel in October 2022.

## Commissioners Approve Strategic Plan

We are excited to announce the Board of Fire Commissioners unanimously approved EPFR's new Strategic Plan at the September Board meeting! This document sets the direction for our organization over the next five years by building upon our strengths, prioritizing needs, and identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement. We will use our adopted Strategic Plan to align around shared priorities and allocate resources. Visit [www.eastpiercelfire.org](http://www.eastpiercelfire.org) to view the full document. ■



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# HEALTH WATCH

## Flu Season Is Coming

*With COVID-19 in the community, it's more important than ever to get vaccinated for the flu.*



The flu season is expected to start later this fall in Washington State. Given our ongoing experiences with COVID-19, we're sure the flu is the last thing you want to think about! But even if you don't usually get a flu vaccination each year, this would be an excellent year to start!

The local health system, area hospitals, and your East Pierce Fire/EMS crews are struggling with increased call volume resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospital ICU beds are incredibly scarce. A nasty flu season could impact medical care for people who become seriously ill.

In most healthy people, the flu will go away in five to seven days. However, in some cases, the flu can result in a life-threatening illness. East Pierce Fire & Rescue's firefighters and paramedics transport seriously ill flu patients to local hospitals each year. Getting vaccinated against the flu helps protect you, your family, and your friends.

Who is at most significant risk for serious illness? Children under five, pregnant women, seniors, and people with chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and emphy-

sema. In these patients, a flu infection can lead to pneumonia, sepsis, or death.

The flu (influenza) is a contagious respiratory disease. Common signs and symptoms include:

- » Fever
- » Cough
- » Sore throat
- » Muscle or body aches
- » Headaches
- » Fatigue

Occasionally, people may also experience vomiting and diarrhea, although this is more common in children. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you may have a norovirus which is often mistaken for the flu.

### FLU vs. COVID-19?

Unfortunately, flu and COVID-19 often have similar signs and symptoms. Healthcare providers will be unable to determine which disease - flu or COVID-19 - a patient has without diagnostic lab tests. This can lead to delays in care.

Getting the flu vaccine is a critical step in preventing influenza. Ev-

ery year scientists try to match the vaccine against the most probable strains of the influenza virus expected to appear and circulate during the flu season. The vaccines are inexpensive and covered by health

insurance, usually with no co-pays.

Serious side effects from the flu vaccine are infrequent (about 1 in 5 million doses). There is no live virus in flu vaccinations, so flu shots cannot give you the flu. Also, there is no link between autism and flu vaccines which has been disproven by reputable research organizations, hospitals, and pediatricians.

Most experts recommend getting a flu vaccine by October. Even if you don't have a family doctor, most pharmacies can give the flu vaccine.

If you're over age 65, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about whether you should get the "high-dose" vaccine designed to elicit better immune responses in older persons.

"Vaccinated patients may sometimes still get the flu—but will often have less serious symptoms," says East Pierce Assistant Chief Russ McCallion. "But remember that it takes a full two weeks after getting the vaccine for antibodies to develop in the body to provide maximum protection." ■

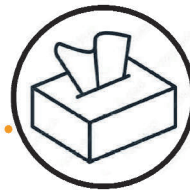
### When to call 9-1-1 for the flu?

If a person has flu-like symptoms (which could mimic COVID-19 symptoms) with the following "emergency warning signs," contact your physician or consider calling 9-1-1.

- Difficulty breathing or feeling short of breath.
- Severe headache or stiff neck
- Sudden dizziness, confusion, or trouble staying awake.
- Children who are difficult to arouse, not interacting, or who are irritable when being held.
- Signs of dehydration (parched mouth, or no urination in more than 8 hours).
- Babies younger than three months old with a high fever or any fever lasting more than five days.



Get Vaccinated



Help Stop the Spread of Flu Viruses



Take Antiviral Drugs if Prescribed



### Outdoor Burning Permits Now Available Online

Residential fire permits are available online beginning October 1st in designated areas of the fire district.

Visit [www.eastpiercefirer.org](http://www.eastpiercefirer.org) for details to obtain a burn permit and view regulations and burn area boundaries.

OR take a **greener route!** Rather than burning, consider chipping, composting, mulching, or hauling excess yard debris to a local recycle/transfer station.



### Did You Know?

Burning trash and burning in barrels is illegal in Washington State not to mention toxic and can yield hefty fines through Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.



### FIRE LEVY, cont. from page 1

we struggle to meet the growing demand to provide service.

**Q:** Is this a new tax?

**A:** No, this is not a new tax. This proposition only restores the levy to its previous voter-approved amount.

**Q:** Can you use the money from the 2018 bond to hire firefighters?

**A:** No, the bond issue passed in 2018 cannot fund operational costs. The bond is limited to funding capital projects and is committed

to building five fire stations and upgrading our emergency vehicles. By state law, it cannot be used for operational costs such as hiring firefighters.

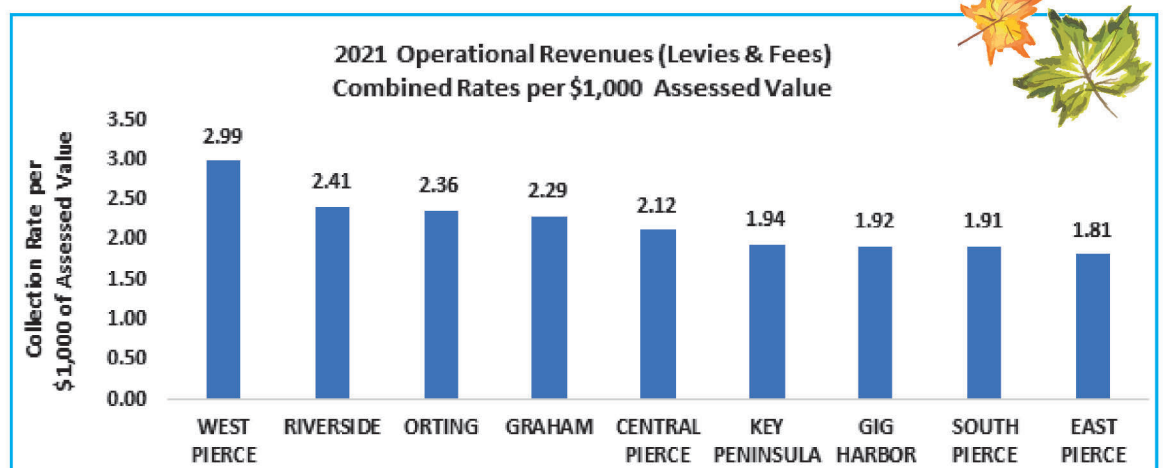
**Q:** Does East Pierce Fire & Rescue charge more than other Pierce County fire departments?

**A:** No, as you can see below, East Pierce Fire & Rescue remains the most cost-effective fire department in Pierce County. EPFR is one

of the few departments to operate without additional tax revenue streams, such as an excess levy or a fire benefit charge.

For more information about the

regular fire levy, please visit [www.eastpiercefirer.org](http://www.eastpiercefirer.org). To schedule a meeting or discussion with your group, please email [chief@eastpiercefirer.org](mailto:chief@eastpiercefirer.org). ■



## EPFR Residents Benefit from “No Out-of-Pocket Ambulance Expense” Program

If you are an East Pierce resident and are transported to a hospital by an East Pierce Fire & Rescue medic unit (ambulance), you shouldn't have to pay any “out-of-pocket” ambulance fees.

This ambulance transport program isn't really “free”. However, any costs that you would typically need to pay, such as medical insurance or Medicare co-pays, are “written off” against the funds received through our voter-approved EMS Levy.

The fire district will bill your insurance company, Medicare, or Medicaid to recover payments for ambulance transport. Usually, the EMS billing service can obtain the required health insurance billing information straight from the hospital (patients sign an authorization permitting us to bill your insurance plan directly). In these cases, patients never need to be contacted regarding the ambulance billing process.

Patients may receive “Explanation of Benefits” paperwork from their

health insurance provider. If you are an East Pierce resident, don't worry about the “your responsibility” part of the ambulance bill. This amount is “written off” against the EMS Levy funds which East Pierce Fire & Rescue collects.

In some cases, if you are transported to the hospital by an EPFR medic unit, we may need some additional information. Our ambulance billing service, Systems Design EMS, will mail paperwork to you to complete and return. Correct, updated information is crucial for us to successfully bill insurance providers. It also ensures that you are covered by the “no out-of-pocket ambulance expense” program.

If you have no insurance, the entire ambulance bill is written-off against the EMS levy.

For legal reasons, this program only covers EPFR residents. Non-residents who become injured or ill while visiting the district must pay any costs not covered by their insur-

ance.

Almost \$2.7 million in ambulance transport fees were collected last year from health insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid. These funds help cover a portion of the costs of providing EMS response and transport services to the community.

East Pierce Fire & Rescue has four medic units available 24/7. Last year they responded to more than 7,800 medical calls and transported over 5,500 patients to area hospitals.

EPFR crews transport almost 99% of patients taken to the hospital each year. However, 50 to 60 times per year, when all our medic units are all busy on other 9-1-1 calls, we need to call in “mutual aid” from neighboring fire departments and



EPFR crews responded to more than 7,800 medical calls and transported over 5,500 patients to area hospitals in 2020.

private ambulances. These units respond to emergency medical calls inside our district when we don't have any available medic units.

We have reciprocal “mutual aid” transport agreements with most of our neighboring fire districts. Their medic units will respond into the East Pierce fire district when our system is overwhelmed and transport you to the hospital. If this happens, you receive the same “no out-of-pocket ambulance expense”

See **AMBULANCE** page 4

## New Ladder 113 Hits the Streets

Have you seen EPFR's new ladder truck around the district? Ladder 113 is a 2020 Pierce Arrow XT with a tractor-drawn aerial (TDA) design. L113 was officially placed in service on August 5th, following more than two years of design and manufacturing and seven months of equipment upfitting and personnel training.

Ladder 113 is 64-foot long, weighs nearly 80,000 pounds fully loaded, holds 300 gallons of water, and is equipped with a heavy-duty 107-foot ascendant aerial ladder.

Why a TDA? Maneuverability, compartment space, and faster setup time are a few benefits.

**Maneuverability:** A TDA is highly maneuverable because of the fifth wheel articulation and the ability to steer the rear of the trailer around obstacles. A tillerman steers the back. L113 can better navigate our district's smaller roads and alleys, apartment complexes, tight housing developments, and businesses.

**Compartment Space:** L113 has more than three times the compartment capacity compared to a straight-frame aerial. The additional storage capacity accommodates the tools and equipment needed for confined space rescue, heavy vehicle extrication, man vs. machine, and rope rescue incidents. The TDA carries 221 feet of portable ground ladders compared to 125 feet on the previous ladder truck. These ladders are used to access roofs and windows during structure fires. Because the TDA carries more equipment and ladders to the scene, other responding crews will have the tools needed at their disposal during emergencies.

**Faster Setup Time:** A TDA has only two outriggers compared to four on a straight-frame

aerial which saves valuable minutes setting up the aerial during a fire or rescue.

The TDA carries specialized equipment and is staffed with technical personnel that combines the benefits of both a fire engine and ladder truck in one apparatus.

EPFR is fortunate to have our own mechanic with Pierce Master certification to keep L113 in tip-top shape.

Ladder 113 is one of seven apparatus funded by the voter-approved 2018 Bond. Four engines are already in service in their communities, and the two remaining engines should be in service by the end of the year.

The old Ladder 113 has served the community well for more than twenty years. Thank you for passing the bond that allowed a new and improved Ladder 113 to continue serving the EPFR communities for many more years. ■



### EMPLOYEE *Spotlight*

**JEFF BERRY** // LIEUTENANT/  
EMS SPECIALIST

Jeff joined EPFR as a firefighter/paramedic in April 2004 and was promoted to Lieutenant/EMS Specialist in July 2019.

Jeff is responsible for developing all EMS training, including OTEP (Ongoing Training and Education) and PAM (Paramedic Airway Management), and maintaining personnel EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) and paramedic certifications. He also manages EMS supplies and oversees the Controlled Substance Program.

In addition to his day-to-day duties, Jeff serves as our COVID Manager and advises the Fire Chief on CDC and health department roles and guidelines related to COVID. He also facilitates personnel contact tracing and workplace exposure investigations.

## WHO IS EAST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE?

East Pierce Fire & Rescue was founded on a strong commitment to customer service. The department's *Mission, Vision and Values* guide the actions of the department and its employees. Exceptional customer service and concern for employees and their families have become hallmarks of our culture.

EPFR was created when the City of Bonney Lake Fire Department, Pierce County Fire District 22/Lake Tapps Fire and Pierce County Fire District 24 merged in 2000 with the goal of providing a seamless response to emergency situations.

Since then, the following mergers or annexations into EPFR have occurred:

- 2006: Pierce County Fire District 12 and South Prairie/Fire District 20
- 2008: Sumner/Fire District 1
- 2010: Edgewood/Fire District 8
- 2013: Milton Fire Department

Today, East Pierce serves a population of approximately 97,500 residents living in and around Bonney Lake, Sumner, Lake Tapps, the Ridge Communities, South Prairie, Tehaleh, Edgewood and Milton. The district covers approximately 153 square miles and protects residents from 8 stations - six staffed and one volunteer, and one facility on Lake Tapps for the marine rescue unit.

All full-time firefighters are cross-trained as either emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or paramedics and can respond to both medical emergencies and fires.

An independently-elected Board of Commissioners govern the agency.

## COMMISSIONERS

- Jon Napier, Chair
- Edward Egan, Vice Chair
- Mike Cathey
- Kevin Garling
- Randy Kroum
- Pat McElligott
- Cynthia Wernet

## STAFFED STATIONS

- Station 111 - Bonney Lake**  
Headquarters Station  
18421 Veterans Memorial Dr. E.  
(253) 863-1800
- Station 112 - Prairie Ridge**  
12006 214th Ave E.
- Station 113 - Sumner**  
800 Harrison St.
- Station 114 - Lake Tapps**  
3206 W. Tapps Dr. E.
- Station 116 - Foothills**  
10515 234th Ave. E.
- Station 124 - Milton**  
1000 Laurel St.

## VOLUNTEER STATION

- Station 119 - South Prairie**  
350 State Route 162

## New Direction for EPFR Fire Marshal Office

The Fire Prevention Division proposed a new direction for the fire marshal's office since construction plan reviews and inspections moved back to the cities. The new approach encompasses a proactive fire prevention and life safety inspection program of the businesses within the cities of East Pierce Fire & Rescue. The new program is supported by EPFR's Board of Fire Commissioners and approved by the cities through interlocal agreements.

No matter how safe the design of a building or how fire-resistive the materials are, unsafe acts by occupants still result in fires. Often, business owners and employees become accustomed to their environment and overlook hazards and potential fire risks. Fire prevention and life safety inspections are proven to identify unsafe acts and protect lives and property.

This program intends to provide routine inspections that are low impact and educational to help protect commercial properties by reducing risks and increasing the safety of citizens, workers, and first responders. Most issues found during an inspection are easy to correct. Our goal is to work with business owners and employees to create and maintain a fire-safe environment that builds cooperation and a willing attitude.

The goal of the Fire Prevention Division is for businesses, operations, occupancies, and events to be safe and successful by following the International Fire Code and

applicable municipal codes. Fire prevention and life safety inspections will play a crucial part in meeting this goal. The program will focus on identifying potential fire hazards and life safety violations, then pointing them out to and educating business owners, managers, and employees to help meet fire safety rules and requirements.

The scope of these inspections is to identify, assess, and mitigate potential life safety and fire hazards (electrical cords, combustible storage, blocked exits, hazardous conditions, lack of fire protection system confidence tests, etc.). Noted violations of code requirements are documented by the deputy fire marshal and explained to the business's representative. A re-inspection to ensure compliance may be necessary. Levels of non-compliance or violations may be handled differently due to severity (self-clear, reinspect, enforce).

The program's key objectives are:

- ✓ Assess life safety and fire risks in comparison to the delivery of fire protection and its effects.
- ✓ Locate, record, and affect corrections to common problems concerning life safety and fire prevention.
- ✓ Increase fire prevention and life safety educational opportunities to help positively influence behaviors and reduce unsafe conditions.

- ✓ Create and maintain thorough records and a database to measure and analyze the effectiveness of the fire prevention life safety program.

Non-compliance of significant requirements will be subject to notification of the applicable city enforcement division.

Over time, annual building inspections will also positively impact our Washington State Rating Bureau (WSRB) rating resulting in lower fire insurance costs. These inspections are a vital component in the Fire Protection Class Rating issued by the Washington Survey and Rating Bureau. Currently, the cities protected by EPFR have a WSRB rating of 4.

East Pierce Fire & Rescue is committed to improving public safety through education and services like this new fire prevention and life safety inspection program, which will reduce the potential for injury and property loss due to fires. ■



### connect with us!



Facebook: @eastpiercefirerescue  
Twitter: @EastPierceFire  
Web: www.eastpiercefirerescue.org  
Headquarters: 253.863.1800

### - VIRTUAL - Fire Commissioner Meetings

Board of Fire Commissioner meetings continue to be held virtually via a webinar format. The meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Agendas and links to the webinars are posted on our website by the end of the week prior to the meeting.

October 19  
November 16  
December 21

## AMBULANCE, cont. from page 3

service as if an East Pierce medic unit took you to the hospital. We extend reciprocal courtesy to their citizens when we respond to medical calls in their districts.

The "no out-of-pocket ambulance expense" program does not cover you when you are outside the East Pierce fire district and become ill or injured. For instance, you are at a store in Edgewood, or Bonney Lake, jogging in Sumner, or get injured while on Lake Tapps, or anywhere inside the district, you are covered by the EMS levy "write-off" provision. But if you are in Puyallup and trip and hurt yourself at the South Hill Mall, you are responsible for paying any part of the ambulance bill not paid by insurance.

In addition to mutual aid respons-

es from other fire departments, private ambulance companies are sometimes used to transport district residents to the hospital. If patients receive transport by a private ambulance, they are responsible for any ambulance transport fees.

For any questions regarding notices or ambulance bills received by our EMS billing service, please reach out to Systems Design EMS at (800) 394-7020 or www.systemsdesignems.com. Systems Design works diligently to provide excellent customer service to all our residents and visitors. They are the subject matter experts on ambulance billing issues. However, you can also call East Pierce Fire & Rescue's EMS Division at (253) 447-3524 if you have questions or concerns regarding ambulance transport. ■



## November 7th: Set your clock back 1 hour ...AND check your smoke alarms!

Remember, many smoke alarms are now equipped with long-life lithium batteries intended to last the alarm's lifespan - about ten years. No matter what kind of battery you have, they need to be tested every month. Know your alarm! Know your battery!