



Changing of the Guard at East Pierce Fire



FROM THE CHIEF Jon Parkinson

June 18th, 2021, was the official last day for now-retired Fire Chief Bud Backer. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to work for an outstanding leader, mentor, and friend since I arrived at East Pierce Fire & Rescue in February of 2019. Under the leadership of Chief Backer, we have made tremendous strides in achieving safe staffing levels, replacing aging fire engines, and building new fire stations. As Chief Backer moves on, we wish him and his family the best in a well-deserved retirement.

On May 18th, 2021, I was sworn in as Fire Chief and worked alongside Chief Backer through the transition period. To say these are large shoes to fill is an understatement, but thankfully, I have had an excellent teacher to help me along the way. By the time this newsletter hits your mailbox, I will have been in the Fire Chief position for two months, and there is already a lot happening.

Sharing a bit about myself, I was born in Oregon, where I began my fire service career and met my wife, Summer, of 26 years. Summer and I have been together since high school and are the proud parents of three children. Two of our kids have graduated and begun their own lives, and our youngest begins her senior year of high school

this fall.

We relocated from Oregon to Lacey in 1995, where I served as a Volunteer Firefighter. I later joined Eastside Fire & Rescue in Issaquah in 1998, where I worked for 21 years and last held the position of Deputy Chief. In 2019, I arrived at East Pierce as Deputy Chief, and the rest is history.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to participate in various teams and committees, including the wildland firefighting team, the hazardous materials team, a vehicle design committee, and the training division. In addition, I have attended the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD twice, and completed my associates, bachelors, and master's degrees along the way.

I have enjoyed all aspects of the fire service and learned the impacts and importance of service to the community. Being a member of both the Sumner-Rotary and the Fife-Milton-Edgewood Chamber has been incredibly inspiring. It is humbling to see the number of community volunteers committed to serving and making the area better for all of us. My family truly loves life in the Bonney Lake area, and I am grateful to serve in our home community.

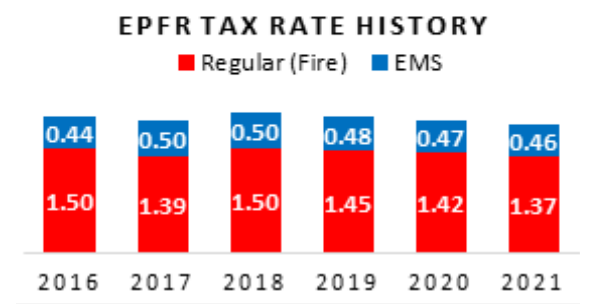
Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Fire Chief and entrusting East Pierce Fire & Rescue with your safety. I look forward to serving you for many years to come. If I can ever be of assistance, please reach out to me at Chief@eastpiercefir.org or call me at 253-863-1800. ■

August Levy Lid Lifts

In April, the East Pierce Fire & Rescue Board of Fire Commissioners passed two resolutions to place two items on the ballot this August.

Proposition 1 will ask voters to renew the EMS Levy at the statutory limit of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. In the final year of a ten-year EMS Levy, the District is seeking to renew the levy for another ten years. The voters must renew this levy for the District to continue collecting this revenue, accounting for 25% of the District's tax revenue. The EMS Levy provides for Advanced Life Support, or paramedic level service, and includes emergency transport of our citizens to local hospitals with no out-of-pocket expense. These vital services cannot be provided without the approval of the EMS Levy this fall.

See LEVIES, page 2



For more information about EPFRs August levy lid lifts, point your cell phone camera at the QR code.

Bond Update

In November 2018, voters approved a bond to fund the replacement of all six front-line East Pierce Fire & Rescue fire engines, a new ladder truck, replace four fire stations, and build a new fire station in Tehaleh. Many projects slowed due to COVID-19 impacts but are once again moving along. Below is a brief snapshot of the status of these projects. We thank you for providing us the equipment and facilities so that we may better serve you.



Edgewood's new Station 118 expected to start construction August 2021.

Vehicles	Status
First two fire engines	Complete and in-service
Ladder Truck	Complete and expected in-service by 8/1/21
Next two fire engines	Complete and expected in-service by 8/1/21
Last two fire engines	Ordered and expected in-service by fall of 2021
Fire Stations	Anticipated Construction Start Date
Station 118 - Edgewood	August 2021
Station 111 - Bonney Lake	October 2021
Station 114 - Lake Tapps	Spring 2022
Station 112 - Prairie Ridge	Summer 2022
Station 117 - Tehaleh	Spring 2023

Got Life Jackets? We can help!



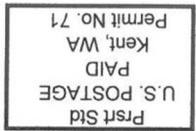
Borrow a free life jacket for the day or purchase a custom fit life jacket for \$14 at our Headquarters Station (18421 Veterans Memorial Dr E, Bonney Lake). Wearer must be present for custom fit. Life jackets available in sizes Infant through Adult/Universal. Credit/debit accepted.

New Fire Commissioner Joins EPFR

Fire Commissioner Cynthia Wernet was sworn in as EPFRs newest Fire Commissioner during the May 18th Board of Fire Commissioners meeting. Welcome to the East Pierce family, Commissioner Wernet! We look forward to your guidance and contributions in the coming years.



Newly sworn-in Fire Commissioner Cynthia Wernet



Postal Customer

ECRWSS

HEALTH WATCH

Myths & Misinformation About COVID-19 and Vaccinations

Don't be fooled by misinformation. Get the facts. If you have questions, contact your physician. Here are the most common myths about COVID-19.

MYTH: The COVID-19 Vaccinations were not adequately tested. They aren't safe.

FACT: The vaccinations approved for use in the United States are very safe.

Many people are concerned that shortcuts were taken to get the COVID-19 vaccines quickly approved and distributed. Not true. The development of the vaccines was fast-tracked with the use of new technology and massive federal funding, which allowed the companies to run multiple steps simultaneously, shaving years off their development and production.

These vaccines have gone through the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Almost 120,000 people participated in the trials of the three vaccines currently being used here.

MYTH: Vaccinations are causing severe side effects in most patients.

FACT: As expected, patients often get mild side effects from the vaccine, which typically last only a day or two.

These side-effects may include soreness and redness in the arm at the vaccination site, fatigue, headaches, fever, and nausea. The good news is that the side effects result from the body's immune system reacting to the vaccine and developing antibodies that will protect the individual from an actual COVID-19 infection in the future.

MYTH: No one knows what the long-term complications may be from the vaccine.

FACT: Serious side effects after any vaccination, including COVID-19, are extremely rare. Vaccine monitoring, going back to the polio vaccine in the 1950s, has shown that if complications happen, they occur within six weeks

of receiving a vaccine dose. Side effects do not suddenly occur many months or years later.

The FDA required study participants in the COVID-19 vaccine trials to be monitored for at least eight weeks after receiving a vaccination. The safety profile of each vaccine was then carefully studied by multiple panels before the companies were allowed to submit it to the FDA for emergency use authorization. Further, a study was conducted in Washington state before the vaccines were accepted here.

The COVID-19 vaccinations may be among the safest ever created.

MYTH: Kids and young adults are developing severe heart muscle inflammation from some of the vaccines.

FACT: Getting the vaccine actually reduces the chance of a young person getting myocarditis.

There have been recent reports of people, typically young men, from teens to late 20s, developing myocarditis (an inflammation of heart muscle) within a week of receiving a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. These cases are rare after vaccination. Patients with myocarditis typically complain of chest pain, difficulty breathing, rapid heart rate, and fatigue. These patients are treated and usually sent home to recover with medications such as steroids.

In contrast, studies have shown that myocarditis is very common in young people after infection with COVID-19.

MYTH: I don't need to get vaccinated if I've already had the COVID-19 virus.

FACT: The vaccines create a more robust, potentially longer-lasting immune response than the "natural" immunity people develop after getting ill from COVID-19.

It's unclear how long "natural" immunity from an initial COVID-19 infection will last. This immunity may vary from person to person, depend-

What are the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Keeps your family healthy
- Reduces COVID-19 outbreaks and protects our community
- Allows everyone to enjoy events safely
- It's a first step to returning to normal

ing on the individual's immune system and the severity of the initial illness. Most physicians and experts recommend that even people who had a COVID-19 illness should still get vaccinated. Additionally, the vaccines do a much better job of keeping people from getting a second COVID-19 infection, and a potentially more severe illness, from COVID-19 variants.

MYTH: Does the vaccine cause infertility?

FACT: There are no studies that show the COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility.

This myth is circulated online by non-scientific sources. There is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including the COVID-19 vaccines. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, anyone who may want to get pregnant in the future can get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Please talk to your family physician if you have questions about COVID-19 and the vaccines. Use reputable websites to look for information about vaccines and COVID-19. Most of all...be safe. ■

connect with us!



Facebook: @eastpiercefirerescue

Twitter: @EastPierceFire

LEVIES, cont. from page 1

Proposition 2 will ask voters to reauthorize the Regular (Fire) Levy collection to the statutory rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, often referred to as a "lid lift." Currently, the 2021 levy rate is \$1.36 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Proposition 2 will ask to reset the levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value and for the ability to collect up to a six percent (6%) increase for the three subsequent years afterward. The tax rate can never exceed the collection rate of \$1.50. The growth in revenue provided by the lid lift will

provide additional response crews to staff a new station in Tehaleh and provide staffing at the Milton fire station. An improvement in these two areas will result in an overall service level increase throughout the entire District. It will keep our current fire units in their home service area on a more reliable basis.

THESE ARE NOT NEW TAXES. Both the EMS and Regular Fire levies are current taxes that have funded daily operations for decades. East Pierce Fire & Rescue remains the most cost-effective career department in Pierce County compared to other fire districts' tax collection rates. We continue to operate and make system improvements by just collecting the Regular and EMS levies. Most other career fire districts have additional revenues provided by benefit charges or maintenance and operations levies.

The bond issue passed in 2018 does not fund operational costs.

The bond is limited to capital projects and is committed to building five fire stations and

upgrading our emergency vehicles. By state law, the bond funding cannot be used for operational costs such as hiring firefighters.

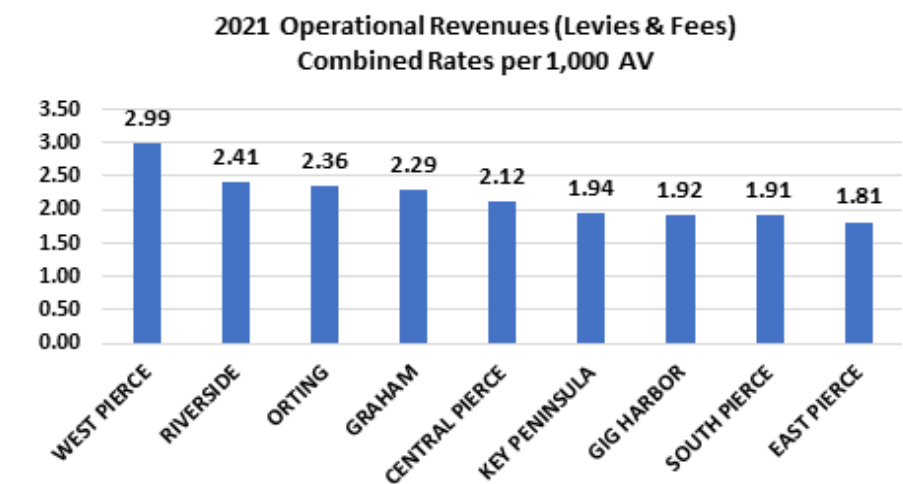
For more information, please visit www.eastpiercefirerescue.org, or to schedule a meeting or discussion with your group, please email chief@eastpiercefirerescue.org. ■

EPFR Receives Community Leadership Award

In May, the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District presented East Pierce Fire & Rescue with the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) "Community Leadership Award".

The award is presented to non-WASA community members or groups for their outstanding contributions toward education.

We value our community partnerships!



Fire-Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes

Selecting plants that may reduce your risk from wildfire

A well-designed landscape around a home is key to reducing the risk of loss from a wildland fire. Maintaining landscape is essential to providing defensible space for the home and for the safety of firefighters when a wildland fire occurs.

All vegetation is potential fuel for a fire. There is no completely fire-proof vegetation. All plants will burn if the conditions are right. There are, however, plants that are FIRE-PRONE, and

those that are FIRE-RESISTANT. The use of fire-resistant vegetation and proper maintenance are paramount in reducing the risk of home losses in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Fire-resistant landscaping doesn't have to be ugly. Here are a few plant suggestions that will beautify your space while promoting a more fire-resistant landscape. Visit eastpiercefire.org for a comprehensive list of firewise plants.

GROUNDCOVERS



Antennaria Rosea
(Pink Pussytoes)

Thymus Praecox
(Creeping Thyme)



PERENNIALS



Monarda
(Bee Balm)

Helianthemum
(Sun Rose)


VINES



Lonicera
(Honeysuckle)

Akebia Quinata
(Chocolate Vine)

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS



Akebia Quinata
(Chocolate Vine)

Holodiscus Discolor
(Oceanspray)



Did You Know?

Burning trash and building materials, including scrap lumber, is illegal in WA State.


GRASSES



Nassella Tenuissima
(Mexian Feather Grass)

Poa Secunda
(Sandberg Bluegrass)

TREES



Betula Nigra
(Heritage River Birch)

Quercus Rubra
(Red Oak)

COVID Cases Drop Dramatically - But Pandemic Isn't Over

More than 16 months into the COVID-19 pandemic, life in the U. S. is slowly returning to a “new normal.” In Washington, 60% of those 16+ are fully vaccinated. As a result, new infections, hospitalizations, and deaths have fallen dramatically. Society has primarily reopened, and most of us should have a great summer.

This is good news, but we can't let down our guard yet. Deaths from the virus in Washington have dropped from a weekly high of 241 deaths to an average of 48. In Pierce County, an average of six people per week are dying from COVID-19. Here's what you need to know to protect yourself, your loved ones, and our community.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to get vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccines help protect people in these ways:

- They can significantly reduce your chance of getting seriously ill, even if you get COVID-19.
- Completing the vaccine series reduces your chances of hospitalization and lowers your risk of dying from COVID-19.
- They are highly effective at preventing COVID-19, even deadly mutations of the virus.
- They add to the number of people in the community who are protected from getting COVID-19 — making it harder for the disease to spread.

Some people are concerned that shortcuts occurred to get the COVID-19 vaccines quickly approved and distributed. Not true. The development of the vaccines was fast-tracked with the use of new technology and massive federal funding, which allowed the companies to run multiple steps simultaneously, shaving years off their development.

These vaccines have gone through the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Nearly 120,000 people participated in the trials of the three vaccines currently approved for use in the United States.

As expected, individuals may get side effects from the vaccine, which typically last a day or two. These side effects include soreness and redness in the arm at the vaccination site, fatigue, headaches, fever, and nausea. That means the body's immune system reacts to the vaccine and develops antibodies for potential exposure to COVID-19.



EPFR firefighters help provide COVID-19 vaccinations at pop-up events in Pierce County.

The articles about COVID-19 published in this newsletter provide information compiled by EPFR Infection Control Officers. We understand that many people may have questions about the vaccines, including their effectiveness and safety.

For further information, we recommend consulting with your physician or going to trusted health websites, including world-renowned health centers such as the Mayo Clinic, Stanford Health, and Cleveland Clinic, or accessing reputable sites such as WebMD. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation on COVID-19 spread on the internet and social media.

In the end, each individual needs to make their own decision about taking a COVID-19 vaccine.

Serious side-effects after any vaccination, including COVID-19, are extremely rare. Vaccine monitoring, going back to the polio vaccine in the 1950s, has shown that if complications happen, they occur within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. Side-effects do not suddenly occur many months or years later.

The COVID-19 vaccine can keep you and your family and friends healthy. As more people get vaccinated, it will help keep hospitals from being overloaded and help keep schools and the economy open. ■

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

You're vaccinated...now what?

First, congratulations! By getting vaccinated for COVID-19, you've taken a big step to help ensure your safety and to protect your family, friends, and our community. Vaccinations are a crucial component in reducing the number of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths allowing us to ditch the masks (in most cases), end social distancing, and more safely reopen society. Even though you're vaccinated, you may have a few questions. Here are answers to some of our most asked questions.

Should I be worried about "breakthrough" infections?

The vaccines are very effective against the coronavirus. Clinical studies have shown dramatic reductions (up to 95% for some vaccines) in COVID-19 infections, severe illness, and death. However, no vaccine is perfect. As expected, there are rare "breakthrough" COVID-19 infections in people who are fully vaccinated. Reports indicate that even if fully vaccinated, about one person in 50,000 may still require hospitalization if infected with COVID-19. Not perfect protection, but a lot better than the one person in 16 rate for unvaccinated individuals infected with COVID-19 in Washington state.

Can I still infect someone else with COVID-19 once I'm fully vaccinated?

Yes. However, it appears that vaccinated people are less likely to infect others with COVID-19. Research on this issue is ongoing. Early

reports suggest a 50% reduction in your ability to infect someone else if you are vaccinated.

Should I still wear a mask and practice social distancing?

In some situations, like hospitals, buses, and planes, masks are still required since even vaccinated people may still transmit COVID-19. Some vaccinated individuals still choose to wear masks in crowded and indoor locations to help protect themselves and others. Suppose vaccinated individuals have compromised immune systems, such as patients receiving chemotherapy for cancer or persons with certain auto-immune diseases. In that case, they may not receive the same level of protection from the vaccine as others. If you have one of these conditions or are in close contact with a friend or family member who may be more vulnerable, you should still consider wearing a well-fitted mask, particularly in crowded or indoor locations, to help protect them.

Are the vaccines still effective against the newer Delta and Gamma COVID-19 variants?

The Delta variant (or mutation of the virus), which originated in India, and the Gamma variant, from Brazil, are up to 50% more infectious than the original COVID-19 strain. The Delta variant may also cause more severe illness. It will likely become the prevalent variant in our state.

Fortunately, our current vaccines still appear highly effective against these variants in preventing severe

illness and death.

It's been more than a month since I got my first vaccine dose. Can I still get my second vaccine dose?

Experts say that you should still get your second vaccine dose. You won't need to restart the vaccine process. It should not impact the effectiveness of the vaccination, although experts are still studying this issue. Just make sure it's from the same company—no "mixing and matching."

People taking the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines need to ensure that they get both vaccine doses for complete protection, especially against the new Delta variant. A single dose of these vaccines provides only very limited protection.

How long will the COVID-19 vaccine provide immunity? Will I need an annual booster shot?

It's unclear how long the immunity from vaccines will last. Many experts believe that it will last at least one year and perhaps much longer. However, the length of immunity may vary between the different vaccines. In addition, new variants of the coronavirus may be able to overcome the protection of current vaccines. In either case, a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot may be necessary. Therefore, we might need to get annual COVID-19 vaccines, just like the flu. In fact, the flu vaccine might include a yearly COVID-19 booster. ■

Preventing Compost Fires

There are many benefits to composting. The environmentally-friendly practice diverts waste materials from landfills and can produce fertilizer to improve soil conditions.

However, as we enter into wildfire season, it is important to consider the fire risk sometimes posed by compost piles. While spontaneous combustion of compost piles is rare, if conditions are right, the possibility does exist.

Mismanaged compost piles could spontaneously combust if they are too tall, have reduced moisture content, limited airflow, or include a non-uniform mix of materials. Smoke, venting, or burning smells are noticeable signs of heat retention and hotspots.

To help reduce compost fire risk, please keep these safety tips in mind:

- Keep compost piles small. The ideal pile is 3' wide by 3' tall. Smaller piles allow for airflow, which cools the contents.
- Monitor moisture content and internal temperature. Add water if needed.
- Turn the compost pile often with a shovel.

In the event of a compost fire, call 911 to get help coming fast. Fire can quickly spread to nearby vegetation and structures. ■



This compost bin overheated and combusted, destroying a nearby home.



2021
Commissioner
Meeting Schedule

Visit eastpiercefirerescue.org for meeting details.

July 20
August 17
September 21
October 19
November 16
December 21