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MESSAGE FROM INTERIM CHIEF VAN VALKENBURG

FALL 2023



Effective August 31, 2023, Fire Chief Dave Mataftin retired after 37 years of service. Chief Mataftin was a friend and mentor to many of our employees here at South King Fire. There's no question his contributions to our fire department positively impacted our employees and our community.

Most notably, in 2020, during the height of the pandemic, Chief Mataftin ensured that our firefighters had the appropriate resources to respond to you through partnerships with King County. He also improved our response capability during a natural disaster by overseeing four key fire stations' seismic retrofits and securing State funding to purchase a new fireboat to protect our shorelines for the next 15-20 years. I want to congratulate Chief Mataftin on his well-deserved retirement, and I wish him the best in his next chapter of life.

As a result of Chief Mataftin's retirement and to ensure operational continuity, the Board of Commissioners appointed me as Interim Fire Chief on September 1, 2023. I'm humbled by the trust and opportunity given to me by our elected officials. I consider it a great honor and privilege to lead the remarkable men and women who make up South King Fire. During my time as your Interim Fire Chief, my priority is to establish a foundation to meet the growing needs of the public by collaborating with our community stakeholders and creating innovative strategies to enhance services to all our citizens. I am dedicated to enhanced transparency and engagement by strengthening our communication with you through increased public events and newsletters.

Like many neighboring fire agencies, 2023 has been a busy year for South King Fire. With the growth of the South King County region, our fire department continues to see increases in service calls year after year. As of October 1, we have responded to 18,781 calls, a 17% increase from 2019, right before COVID-19 hit our communities. Despite these increases, your firefighters continue to proudly serve and provide outstanding service to you. These rising call volumes indicate we must determine the need to add response units in areas of planned higher population densities. One step towards ensuring we provide you with the appropriate level of services is to increase the availability of our firefighters.

To achieve this, we must continue to evaluate funding to ensure it is aligned with our community's needs for quality emergency medical services and fire suppression. And with that, thank you for reinstating our lid-lift measure in August 2023, which helps us stabilize our budget and better meet our internal operations' needs. As you'll read in the newsletter, the employees of South King Fire are working on a Strategic Bridge Plan (SBP). The SBP is a near-term roadmap to grow our organization, including improving existing business practices and identifying more equitable funding sources in 2024.

Our fire department's future is bright, and I am proud to serve you. We are aware of the challenges on the horizon, and we are creating pathways to ensure our continued excellence. Our Board of Commissioners, Administration, and Union leadership are united in our efforts to prepare us to continue to improve services to you and the community.

Dave Van Valkenburg
Interim Fire Chief



South King Fire personnel gather to support Breast Cancer Awareness. Staff are encouraged to wear special t-shirts in the month of October to continue the tradition of supporting Breast Cancer Awareness. The goal is to normalize the conversation of screening while celebrating those affected by breast cancer.



A highly skilled team of South King Fire members, part of the Washington Task Force 1 (WA-TF1) Urban Search & Rescue (US&R), was deployed to Maui in August 2023 to support state and local search and recovery efforts in areas affected by unprecedented wildfires.

**Thank You Voters
for Supporting Our
August Lid Lift Measure!**

2	STRATEGIC BRIDGE PLAN/ FIRE DISTRICT FUNDING AND IMPACT TO SERVICE
3	SPOTLIGHT - MEET OUR FIRE MARSHAL'S TEAM/ WINTER PREPARATION
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CHARTING A COURSE FOR THE FUTURE: STRATEGIC BRIDGE PLAN

Like many organizations coming out of the pandemic, South King Fire is taking the opportunity to assess operational effectiveness and how to better meet the needs of its employees and the community it serves.

With the increased demand for emergency services from year to year, it became apparent that SKF needed to address better ways to meet the community's needs with a more sustainable and equitable funding model. Furthermore, SKF needed to increase its focus on how to build capacity to meet the expanding demands of the community and ensure continued excellence by supporting its first responders.

This led to the Board of Commissioners adopting the **Strategic Bridge Plan** in January 2023. The Plan has four pillars: *Funding, Accountability, Leadership, and Communication*. In alignment with these four elements, the Plan aims to:

- identify the best future funding mechanism for our community that will sustain our operation and support the growth of the vital services South King Fire (SKF) provides.
- establish SKF as a regional leader and a great place to work.
- improve accountability, leadership, and internal communications within the fire district.

Implementation is underway with various SKF employees dedicated to lead work within each of the four pillars. The team's work is helping to distribute leadership and build greater cohesion inside and outside the organization. The Plan's progress will be reported quarterly through its completion by Fall 2024.

The Strategic Bridge Plan serves to preface a robust and extensive Strategic Plan, which will be driven by community needs and future funding.

South King Fire's Strategic Bridge Plan Four Pillars

Funding

To support how our future funding mechanism best meets the community needs

Accountability

To demonstrate how we work together as a District to serve the community

Leadership

To demonstrate leadership within their function and role

Communication

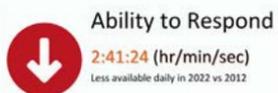
To adopt best practices to communicate within their department and across the District

We'll keep you informed with more updates on the Plan's progress and developments. For more detailed information, **scan the QR code** or visit www.southkingfire.org.



FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES & IMPACT TO SERVICE

How the decisions we make today impact tomorrow.



As the community grows, so does the number of annual service calls requiring response from South King Fire. **In fact, our fire district is on pace to surpass a record 25,000 911 calls by the end of 2023!**

With this unprecedented demand for service, the District Administration and the Board of Fire Commissioners are reviewing how to approach its fiscal responsibilities, now and in the future. Due to population growth, and the increase of non-single-family housing, current property tax levies and lid lifts are insufficient to fund the fire district for 2025 and beyond.

In alignment with South King Fire's Strategic Bridge Plan, the Board of Commissioners are taking the necessary steps of addressing funding as a top concern. Using a "balanced approach" to manage fiscal resources, they're using data and financial forecasts to aid in their decision making.

During a recent Special Commissioners Meeting, District Administration and the Board of Fire Commissioners examined its financial history of the past decade, which provided a unique opportunity to learn from previous challenges, particularly the Great Recession. They discussed safeguarding the fire district and its services against future financial crises, including maintaining adequate financial reserves to prevent firefighter layoffs and emergency service cuts. This is especially important given the current economic uncertainty and the possibility of another recession.

The annual revenue South King Fire collects is meant to be sufficient to retain a high-quality workforce, fund equipment replacement schedules, and contribute to reserves consistent with established best practices for State and Local Governments. If annual revenue is insufficient to accomplish this "balanced approach", then the fire district has a responsibility to inform the community of growing needs and ask for their support.

South King Fire District Administration and the Board of Fire Commissioners will continue its evaluation and review of the budget and anticipated expenditures based on current and projected demand for services, equipment and facility needs, and staffing.

To learn more, the public is encouraged to participate in open public meetings on the budget and future funding. Meeting agendas and links are posted on our website at www.southkingfire.org.

"The Board of Fire Commissioners support the balanced approach to budgeting. We are meeting our contractual obligations, replacing equipment timely, and building our reserves to the levels they should be. It took us more than a decade to recover from the last recession and we still aren't providing all the services we want to. Looking at the call volume, it is clear our community needs our help more than ever. We are doing a great job demonstrating fiscal responsibility, connecting with our community, and planning for the future."

- Chairman Bill Gates

"Our taxpayers want to know their tax dollars are being managed wisely. We are in the business of emergency preparedness; this doesn't just mean having enough firefighters and fire engines. This also means changing our approach to ensure our services are improving the quality of life for our community members. To accomplish our mission, we must be fiscally responsible."

- Vice-Chair Mark Thompson

South King Fire takes a "balanced approach" to manage fiscal resources.

Balanced

Take Care of Our Community and Our People

Be Consistent Do What We Say We'll Do...

Respect Taxpayer Dollars

Approach

Provide a Safe Workplace, Reliable Equipment, & Stable Career

Make Informed Decisions that Impact Financials

Limit Financial Asks - Live within our means...

To watch the full SKF presentation on district finances, scan the QR Code or visit our [website](http://www.southkingfire.org).



MEET OUR FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE TEAM

Our Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) team is dedicated to keeping our community safe. As a division of South King Fire, they are responsible for processing permit applications and conducting annual fire and life safety inspections. Additionally, they oversee all new building construction and uphold current building code standards, to ensure the community's safety is being met.

More recently, the FMO team has significantly improved upon department processes in the following areas: streamlining the permitting application process by transitioning from paper to software and switching to a new program to track greater compliance for fire protection systems. As a result, when conducting fire and life safety inspections, they can now seamlessly add photos of violations and fill out their reports remotely.



Sean Nichols, Fire Marshal

Sean Nichols has over 24 years of fire experience and is responsible for establishing and maintaining cooperative and effective practices at South King Fire in order to protect the community. Nichols prioritizes building relationships with citizens and stakeholders, both internal and external. He coordinates the preparation, training, and implementation of new and revised codes, standards, ordinances, along with other regulations applicable to fire prevention and code enforcement. Also, Nichols represents the district at professional and technical meetings, providing comments and analysis concerning new and revised codes and standards.



Tanya Holland, Assistant Fire Marshal

Tanya Holland brings 22 years of experience to her role as Assistant Fire Marshal. Holland visits premises of construction activity; contacts owners, developers, and contractors; explains any technical violations; and offers alternative solutions to meet the intent of each code. She coordinates with business and property owners regarding fire related codes, and she plans the review and approval processes for occupancy permits and business licenses. In addition, she oversees inspection programs, by assigning and reviewing inspections of Fire and Life Safety Inspection personnel and Deputy Fire Marshals.



Scott Gerard, Plans Examiner

With more than 39 years in the fire service, along with experience doing plan review for the city of Bellevue, Gerard's knowledge and experience has been integral in his role as our Plans Examiner. Gerard identifies inadequacies found on construction plans, reports and calculations, and requests corrections. He documents compliance or non-compliance with citations from applicable codes, negotiates and develops mutually acceptable solutions to code conformance problems and life safety issues with architects, engineers, contractors, and the public, and responds to design professionals and contractors regarding any design or installation issues.

FIRE & LIFE SAFETY INSPECTORS

Our Fire & Life Safety Inspector Team includes **Kortny Fleig (Quiroja)**, **Erik Enghusen**, and **Lauri Baas**. As a team, they enforce fire codes pertaining to life safety and the protection of property. They develop mutually acceptable solutions to code conformance problems, identify inadequacies or non-compliance with citations from applicable codes, and maintain all necessary records and reports of the Fire Prevention Division as directed by the Assistant Fire Marshal.



Kortny Fleig (Quiroja)



Erik Enghusen



Lauri Baas

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TIPS

While we often find comfort in our daily routines, the truth is that unexpected emergencies can strike at any moment.

As we approach the winter months, it's an excellent time to ensure your readiness for potential emergencies such as power outages, flooding, and more.



Wondering what you should have in your emergency kit?

Don't worry; we've got you covered! Check out our list of essential items to help you prepare for the unexpected.

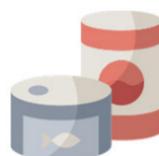
By taking proactive steps to build your emergency kit, you are investing in your safety and peace of mind against unforeseen events. Remember, preparation is the key to stay safe and prepared.



For other valuable tips and resources to help you and your family stay safe and well-prepared during an emergency, scan the QR code to the left or visit our website at www.southkingfire.org.

WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE IN YOUR EMERGENCY KIT

@SouthKingFire



Food



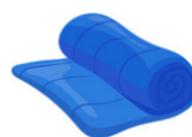
Picnic supplies



Can opener



First aid kit



Blankets and sleeping bags



Wet wipes and hand sanitizer



Cell phones and chargers



Pet food and supplies



Flashlight and extra batteries



Extra clothing



Extra cash

THE SANTA PARADE RETURNS



South King Fire is excited to host its fourth annual Santa Parade as a way to spread cheer and collect canned food for the community.

Since 2020, South King Fire has worked with city personnel to collect canned food and donate it to their respective food banks. More than 1,000 pounds of food has been collected each year.

“It’s incredible to see children’s faces light up when they see Santa on a fire truck.”

It’s one of my favorite parts of the Santa Parade,” says Captain Anthony John.

“The holidays can be one of the most challenging times of the year for some families in our community,” adds Interim Fire Chief Van Valkenburg. “We’re fortunate to have such strong partnerships with our local cities to ensure the Santa Parade is a success year after year.”

We hope you will join us for this year’s Santa Parade.



Community members gather to take a photo with Santa at last year’s Santa Parade.

Mark Your Calendar

The Santa Parade will occur on **December 4, 5, 11, 12, 18 & 19**. The parade starts at 5:30 p.m. and ends at approximately 8:30 p.m. Find the date the Santa Parade will arrive in your area once routes are posted on our website.

How to Donate

If you would like to donate, please have your canned food or non-perishable food items in a bag ready to hand off to Santa’s helpers during our Santa Parade! Make sure to snap a quick picture with Santa too.

Watching for Santa

The Santa Parade routes will be posted in early November on our website at www.southkingfire.org. During the parade, you will be able to follow where Santa is on his route, online on our Santa Parade webpage, and Facebook page.



Scan the QR code to visit our [Santa Parade webpage](http://www.southkingfire.org) to see past videos, view dates and times, and look out for the routes to be posted in November.

MEET SUPER LANCE

Recently, South King Fire partnered with the Federal Way Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden to host a scavenger hunt for our community. Community members took to the garden and posted their photos via social media to win a free ride in the fire truck. The Rhododendron Garden personnel selected a local superhero named Lance as the lucky winner. Lance (aka Super Lance) is a local hero who helps spread awareness about autism.



Lance and his family got to spend a day with PETE, the Fire Engine, and go for a ride. Then, he got to spend time seeing some actual firefighter activities at our training station. Lance even helped lead some workout exercises for our newest recruits. Lance was presented with an official South King Fire coin and patch from the Interim Fire Chief.

See how South King Fire and his family surprised Super Lance. Scan the QR code or visit our [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...).



Interim Fire Chief Dave Van Valkenburg spent time with Super Lance and his family to make sure they knew how much we value Lance as part of our community.

SKF Information:

SKF provides complimentary blood pressure checks, car seat safety check events, and fire station tours upon appointment.

STATION 62 - HEADQUARTERS
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253-839-6234
Business Hours: 8-4:30 M-F



www.southkingfire.org

Administration:

Dave Van Valkenburg, Interim Fire Chief
Kevin Crossen, Deputy Chief - Community Risk
Shane Smith, Deputy Chief - Special Ops

Joe Ganem, Executive Director
Mary Stevens, Human Resources
Mitchell Lee, Enterprise Services
Don Gentry, Business Operations

Board of Commissioners:

Bill Gates, Commissioner - Board Chair
Mark Thompson, Commissioner - Vice Chair

David Berger, Commissioner
Bill Fuller, Commissioner
Caroline Vadino, Commissioner