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MESSAGE FROM CHIEF VAN VALKENBURG

WINTER/SPRING 2024



Each day, I am inspired to witness South King Fire's mission in action to serve and protect our communities. It is a true honor to serve as your Fire Chief, spending time out in the community and working alongside exceptional individuals here at South King Fire.

Recently, I was invited to several schools as part of "Read Across America", an initiative that promotes the love of reading, and I got to spend time in classrooms reading to elementary school students. Additionally, I've enjoyed meeting with various community service clubs where I've had the chance to meet those who are making a difference in our communities.

At South King Fire, community safety is at the forefront of everything we do. Our firefighters are the backbone of this department – their dedication, courage, and professionalism are admirable. Our support divisions, such as our finance, information systems, human resources, fleet, facilities, and logistics teams, provide outstanding levels of service to our response operations.

The demands on our fire department continue to grow, due to increasing call volumes and population growth in our area. We must recognize that with growth comes challenges. The increase in call volume means that our firefighters are being asked to do more, often under demanding circumstances. Their ability to adapt and excel in dynamic situations is what sets our department apart. I am incredibly grateful to each of them and proud to lead such a capable and resilient team.

With this in mind, we are reassessing resources so we can continue to deliver the highest level of services that our communities expect and deserve. Recently, we hired eight new firefighters and plan to add additional response resources in the coming months.

We are committed to meeting the evolving needs of our communities, and providing our firefighters with the support and tools they need to perform their duties safely and effectively. These strategic investments in our members will help benefit the overall safety and well-being of our communities.

Additionally, I am excited to share that SKF has appointed Chief Lisa Defenbaugh as our new Deputy Chief of Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Chief Defenbaugh brings a wealth of experience and a strong work ethic. Her extensive EMS expertise greatly benefits our leadership team, and I am confident that with her passion and dedication, she will make invaluable contributions to our department. Chief Deffenbaugh will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our EMS operations and ensuring that we continue to provide the highest level of care to those in need.

To meet the needs of our growing communities, it is critical for us to ensure our funding model matches the demand. South King Fire has been conducting an in-depth analysis to identify a more sustainable funding model to replace the Maintenance & Operations levy. We will keep you posted as the Board of Commissioners considers the best path forward, and we appreciate your ongoing and unwavering support.

We will continue to adapt, innovate, and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our communities.

Dave Van Valkenburg, Fire Chief

It's Our 75th Anniversary!

We've proudly served our communities since 1949. Please join us in celebrating this momentous occasion at an upcoming open house.

See page 4 for more details.



Heavy Rescue Team members proudly stand before Rescue 306 at its inaugural Push-In Ceremony, marking the tradition of inaugurating new fire apparatus. Within hours, the unit responded to its first rescue incident.



On February 2, 2024, Dave Van Valkenburg was formally sworn in as Fire Chief for South King Fire by Vice-Chair, Commissioner Vadino.

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STRATEGIC BRIDGE PLAN PROPELS SOUTH KING FORWARD

In January of 2023, South King Fire initiated its Strategic Bridge Plan to provide a focus on strategic actions and improvements throughout the organization. The Plan outlined 20 total objectives with a focus on four key areas: Funding, Accountability, Leadership, and Communication. Here's a progress update in each key area:

- **Funding:** With the significant growth of the community, it became clear the current funding model wouldn't be sustainable moving forward into the future. We conducted an in-depth analysis to identify a more fair and sustainable funding model.
- **Accountability:** A new district-wide annual evaluation process has been implemented and new practices are being put in place to improve accountability and employee growth.
- **Leadership:** A committee of firefighters are determining leadership competencies and expectations, and the resources necessary to increase hands-on training.
- **Communication:** Increased transparency and communication channels have been established among battalion chiefs and operations staff, promotional practices, and the budgeting process. Next, we will deploy an Employee Resource Center to provide employees with faster and more thorough access to information and resources.

We commit to keeping our communities informed of the Plan's progress until its completion in Fall 2024. The Strategic Bridge Plan lays the groundwork for a comprehensive Strategic Plan driven by community needs and future funding.

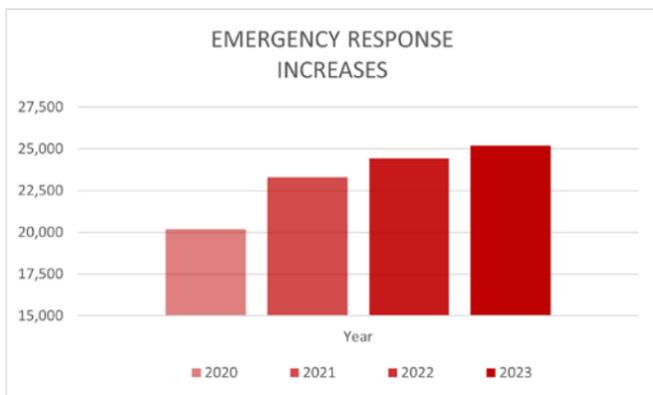
South King Fire's Strategic Bridge Plan Four Pillars

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.



HIGHER DEMAND REQUIRES RESPONSE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUNDING IN THE FUTURE



Emergency response calls have risen significantly.

Each day, our firefighters are on the front lines responding to emergencies and fires in our communities. They handle an increasing number of calls, many of which are significant, ranging from shootings and motor vehicle collisions to multi-family residential fires and beyond.

The demand for services escalates year after year. Our current resources are stretched thin, and with the continued projected growth of our communities, the demand will continue. Due to population growth, and the increase of non-single-family housing, our current funding structure will be insufficient to fund the fire district for 2025 and beyond.

As shared in our last newsletter, the Board of Commissioners has made funding a top priority. Their current focus is to identify a sustainable funding model. We invite the public 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.

NEW COMMISSIONERS ELECTED, GRATITUDE EXTENDED TO FORMER LEADERSHIP



Greg Baruso, Chair

Commissioner Baruso brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the board. He is a retired career firefighter with 36 years of service. He currently works for the Washington State Fire Marshal's Office in Olympia as the Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal in the Education, Enforcement, and Analytics Section. He has experience as a member of the Federal Way City Council, Citizens Committee for Federal Way Public Schools, Washington State Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety, and the City of Federal Way's Diversity Commission and Independent Salary Commission.



Craig Burrus, Commissioner

Commissioner Burrus has 28 years of extensive experience in the fire industry, serving as a Firefighter, Deputy Fire Marshal, and a Technical Rescue Team member. He began his career with the Federal Way Fire Department in April 15, 1991, and retired on February 1, 2019.

Mark Thompson, Former Commissioner, 1999-2023

Thompson was elected to office in 1999 and served as a Fire Commissioner until 2023, having been elected four times. Over 24 years, he dedicated himself to the fire district and representing South King Fire citizens. Commissioner Thompson's leadership, fire service experience, and industry passion led to numerous accomplishments over two decades. This includes achieving the District's Class 2 Washington Surveying & Rating Bureau (WSRB) rating and facilitating the 2006 merger between the Des Moines Fire Department and Federal Way Fire Department. His persistent advocacy for residential sprinkler ordinances and protection against tax exemptions safeguarded critical emergency services for the community.

Dave Berger, Former Commissioner, 2020-2023

Berger was appointed to the Board in March of 2020 and served through 2023. Commissioner Berger's leadership, extensive government experience, and impressive rolodex from years of service and community engagement contributed to unprecedented growth and progress in the last several years. Noteworthy contributions include the recommendation and use of professional services for the organizational health assessment, Strategic Bridge Plan, sale of surplus property, and the hiring process for the District's Fire Chief. Although his term on the Board was short, his service was not. Commissioner Berger raised the bar for all of us.

A YEAR IN REVIEW: FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

Our Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) team is dedicated to keeping our communities 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.

In 2023, the Fire Prevention Division experienced a high demand in services. The Deputy Fire Marshals carried out new construction inspections, addressed complaints, and placed impaired systems on fire watch. They completed over 850 new construction and specialty inspections, and they conducted more than 150 re-inspections during the year.

The workload for the Fire Marshals is expected to remain high in the foreseeable future, especially with new construction projects on the rise and the impending arrival of the light rail expansion.

Thanks to the dedication of our professional Fire and Life Safety Inspector team, our communities benefit from a heightened level of safety in both residential and commercial spaces. In 2023, they conducted an exceptionally high volume of inspections: over 2,100 annual inspections and more than 1,700 re-inspections.

Last year, the three most common fire code violations were:

- Fire extinguishers requiring service/testing
- Fire sprinkler and fire alarm annual testing
- Obstructed or blocked fire exits

This proactive approach to fire prevention ensures that our citizens experience safe environments on a daily basis.

Sound the Alarm, Save a Life

Home fires claim seven lives every day in the US, but having working smoke alarms can cut the risk of death by half. That's why the Red Cross is rallying volunteers to install free smoke alarms in our communities, and South King Fire is joining in on this effort.

Together, we'll meet with local families to install free smoke alarms, help them create a two-minute fire escape plan, and share safety information on home fires and other local disaster risks.

Learn more by visiting www.redcross.org/nwhomefire. Sign up to volunteer, make a donation, or request an installation in your home.

SOUTH KING FIRE IN THE COMMUNITY

Santa Parade Spreads Cheer, Collects 5,000 Pounds of Food

In December 2023, South King Fire hosted its fourth annual Santa Parade to bring joy and collect food donations for our communities. We decorated our fire trucks in twinkling lights and festive reindeer antlers, and invited Santa and his elves on board to help collect canned food for local food banks. Over the course of six nights, alongside thousands of community members, we achieved an incredible outcome – gathering over 5,000 pounds of food! Santa and his elves were pleased with the overwhelming support from the community and pledged to return next holiday season. Thanks to all who contributed to the Santa Parade!

Fire Chief Visits Schools, Reads with Students



Fire Chief Van Valkenburg was invited to local elementary schools to read with students as part of "Read Across America", an annual initiative that promotes literacy.

Community Outreach and Emergency Preparedness Efforts

We believe that an informed community is a safer one. With this in mind, South King Fire's Community Affairs Office participates in many local events year-round.

Recently, we spent time educating local senior residents about fire safety and what to do in the event of an emergency. In the near future, we will join forces with King County agencies to develop a "Shelter in Place" campaign for high-occupancy facilities, resulting in better emergency preparedness for residents.

SKF Participates in STEM Expo



South King Fire was one of 130 partners who participated in Federal Way Public Schools STEM Expo on March 14. This annual career-focused event is for children of all ages to learn about careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

Come See Us! Where You'll Find Us This Spring

As spring approaches, keep an eye out for our firefighters at various community events.

You will also see them at the farmers markets in both Des Moines and Federal Way.

Please stop by to say hello and learn more about how South King Fire is dedicated to serving our communities!

Upcoming events include:

- **May 4:** Hooked on Fishing – Steel Lake Park
- **May 11:** Touch A Truck – Wild Waves Theme & Water Park
- **May 16:** Senior Resource Fair – Performing Arts Center
- **June 15:** Touch A Truck – Steven J Underwood Memorial Park



**For a current list of events,
scan the QR code or visit
www.southkingfire.org.**

SOUTH KING FIRE CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

SERVING THE COMMUNITY



South King Fire’s journey began on April 18, 1949, with one fire engine and a small group of volunteers. Over the years, we expanded through mergers with five neighboring fire districts. Today, South King Fire has seven fire stations and more than 150 firefighters serving a growing population beyond 150,000 citizens.

We were known for many years as District 39 or the Federal Way Fire Department. In 1991, the City of Federal Way annexed District 39, allowing us to maintain our status as an independent fire district. In 2006, we merged with Des Moines Fire District 26, adopting the name “South King Fire & Rescue,” which in 2023 was simplified to South King Fire.



We’re honored to be serving these great communities and invite you to commemorate this significant milestone with us at upcoming open houses later this year. Stay tuned for event details on social media and in our next newsletter as we celebrate 75 years of service!



Save the Date! 75th Anniversary Open Houses

Date: June 8, 2024

Time: 10 am – 2 pm

Location: Station 67
2238 S. 223rd St.

Des Moines, WA 98198

Date: June 15, 2024

Time: 10 am – 2 pm

Location: Station 62
31617 1 Ave S.

Federal Way, WA 98003



For a current list of 75th Anniversary events, scan the QR code or visit www.southkingfire.org.

WELCOME DEPUTY CHIEF OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, LISA DEFENBAUGH



South King Fire proudly welcomes Lisa Defenbaugh as our new Deputy Chief of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and SKF’s first woman Chief Officer. With more than 17 years of fire and EMS experience, she brings a strong work ethic, a wide array of experience, and valuable expertise to our organization and community.

Inspired by her parents’ volunteering as firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs), Defenbaugh began her fire and EMS career in 2001 at Snohomish Regional Fire. There she discovered her true calling for firefighting and emergency medical services, worked her way through the ranks as a Firefighter, Driver, Paramedic (Class 40, Harborview Medical Center), Company Officer, Medical Services Officer, and Administrative Medical Services Officer.

Throughout her tenure, Defenbaugh served Local Union 2781, holding the notable roles of president, vice president, and union treasurer over a nine-year period. Her labor relations experience and knowledge are an asset to South King Fire and Local 2024 as she forges a new path for our EMS programs, bringing a focus on safety as well as health and wellness for our communities and firefighters.

“South King Fire is charting a new course with EMS program development that meets the current needs of our communities and plans for their future needs. Chief Defenbaugh’s character and reputation are first-class, and she has a proven history of being a change-maker,” says Fire Chief Dave Van Valkenburg. *“Her leadership will add tremendous value to our organization, and we are excited to have her join us.”*

In her spare time, Defenbaugh enjoys spending time with her family and in the outdoors. She has participated in multiple marathons, Iron Man competitions, and the LLS Stair Climb thirteen times. Leveraging her medical background, she serves as Medical Director for the Annual Stump Jumpers Desert 100. One of her biggest joys is giving back to the community, sponsoring the Special Olympics in honor of her granddaughter, who was born with Down syndrome.

SOUTH KING FIRE (SKF) Information:

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

STATION 62 - HEADQUARTERS
31617 1st Avenue South
Federal Way, WA 98003
253-839-6234
Business Hours: 8-4:30 M-F



Administration:

Dave Van Valkenburg, Fire Chief
Kevin Crossen, Deputy Chief - Community Risk
Shane Smith, Deputy Chief - Operations
Lisa Defenbaugh, Deputy Chief - EMS
Layne Winter, District Chief

Chris Andersen, District Chief - Special Ops
Joe Ganem, Executive Director
Mary Stevens, Human Resources
Mitchell Lee, Enterprise Services
Don Gentry, Business Operations

Board of Commissioners:

Greg Baruso, Chair
Caroline Vadino, Vice Chair

Bill Gates, Commissioner
Bill Fuller, Commissioner
Craig Burrus, Commissioner