

# PLEASE SKFR

**"No More Scare Tactics"  
When Promoting Bond & Levy Measures**



**SKFR "Please Demonstrate" Fiscal Responsibility!**

**A quick review of 10- years of news stories, letters and other sources reveals that SKFR has been employing scare tactics in efforts to scare us into passing their bonds and levies. Using scare tactics to manipulate the voters into voting yes for your bonds and levies is not ethical. Please be more open, transparent, and honest with us. Let the community know, ask them permission before you spend millions of our tax dollars on buying any more property purchases.**

**I know you think you are "giving us a break by paying in cash" since you tell us you won't need to ask for larger bonds and levies. I recall reading that in a news story in fact, after the fact. That is at best, a disingenuous strategy. This will not garner voter confidence or trust.**

**I count at least seven examples of seven properties SKFR has purchased over the course of a few years. I don't recall hearing or reading anything where SKFR notified the public in advance of these property purchases. To say we would hear this at SKFR Commissioner meetings "if" we attended is not the response of an honest broker. We only learn about these 'good deal' property purchases when we see signs stating something similar to "New Home for Fire Station x x x x. This certainly would not be an adequate response, and certainly not good notice to the SK community.**

**What follows is a compilation of stories and letters from 2008 to present that demonstrate how fear and voter avoidance on giving us all the facts are just two strategies that continue to be employed by SKFR.**

**LETTERS | Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## Why does South Kitsap Fire keep buying property?

**Dave Kimble, Port Orchard**

Published 9:30 a.m. PT April 4, 2023



*We're always working to improve your experience. [Let us know what you think.](#)*

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue should be in the real-estate business. They paid \$525,000 in cash, for a single family home on 2.5 acres. County records reflect the tax value is \$432,570. That's \$92,043 over fair market value paid. The property is less than a few blocks from the "hoped for" future site of the 2nd SKSD high school.

The contract is conditioned on the current renter-tenants being evicted. A "time is of the essence" clause was also added by the fire district. I wonder what the hurry is about. On the seller disclosures they stated the well and septic have no problems, but they don't make any other representations regarding the condition of the property. It's a "sold as is" proposition.

What is the possibility of future surprises for the fire district? No mention of site inspections or evaluations done for hazardous waste on this property in the contract signed on February 15, 2023. And why wasn't the public informed of this purchase? All of the properties have been cash sales using our tax dollars.

How many properties does SKFR intend on buying? How many are actually needed? The last levy failed yet they continue buying up more properties. 17,000 or so voters said no last time. Do those voters still believe we don't need more fire stations? Expect another SKFR levy request in August.

Visit: <http://southkitsapcitizensdemandingresponsibletaxation.one/> for more information as it becomes available.

*Dave Kimble, Port Orchard*

PORT ORCHARD  
**INDEPENDENT**

Covering the news of Port Orchard and South Kitsap since 1890.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**April 6, 2023**

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## SKF&R 'bloat'

To the editor:

South Kitsap Fire & Rescue has purchased another 2.5 acres, this property for \$525,000. They paid more than fair market value. SKFR buys up land, then uses it as leverage to push their bonds. The property acquired, less than a block from SKSD's property, was reserved for an ill-advised second high school.

This is the seventh property they've paid cash for. They claim we are "getting a deal" because it's \$525,000 less they will ask for in a future bond. I'm tiring of this guess which cup the magic

pea is under.

To date, SKFR has removed seven properties from Kitsap County tax rolls, bulldozed seven homes, and denied seven families their opportunities to buy those affordable single-family homes. It's SKFR's primary mission to fight fires and some emergency response services, yet they report emergency medical services make up 68% of their response calls.

That's a lot of free ambulance rides. So why do they need larger and more-expensive fire engines? Why more firefighters if their primary mission is providing emergency response

services?

Just stop replacing fire engines with larger and more expensive ones, focus on acquiring additional smaller paramedic-type vehicles. Bring on additional paramedics, not more firefighters. And reduce excessive "fire chief bloat."

Professional demographers predict fewer children coming to SK, thus fewer families and fewer fire stations are needed. It's past time for SKFR to heed those predictions. They need to pick a mission and stick with it. Watch for a levy this August.

**Dave Kimble  
Manchester**

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# K I T S A P Daily News

## NEWS

### Chief says levy failure would be devastating to SKFR

**South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Chief said the last thing his department wants to do in a few months is ask residents for more money. But if he doesn't, the fire district will have to close four fire stations and lay off 30 staff members.**

December 16, 2008 12:04 am

Tags: [South Kitsap](#)



South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Chief said the last thing his department wants to do in a few months is ask residents for more money. But if he doesn't, the fire district will have to close four fire stations and lay off 30 staff members. "This is absolutely the worst time to do this," Senter told the SKFR board of commissioners at their last meeting Thursday night. "But if the (Emergency Medical Services) levy is not renewed, it will devastate our department.

The current EMS levy, which Senter said now collects 30 cents per thousand dollars of assessed property value, will expire at the end of 2009. If it is not renewed, he said, pink slips will soon follow.

"We will have to lay off 30 people and close four career stations," he said, explaining that the three stations in the urban core— Station 8 on Fircrest, Station 31 on Tremont and Station 11 on Bethel Road — will remain staffed, while Station 10 on Banner Road, Station 14 on Burley-Olalla Road, Station 16 in Gorst and Station 17 on Glenwood Road will all close.

"We have 75 career staff, so 30 people is a fairly big chunk of that," said Deputy Chief Steve Wright. "We would have to hunker down in our headquarters, and stations 31 and 11."

Along with closing four stations, Wright said if the EMS levy is not renewed, the district would cease paramedic services. “Our paramedics would be gone, and we would not provide (Advanced Life Support) transports,” he said. “We would basically be the only district in the county that does not provide that service.”

If SKFR loses its paramedics and becomes at its core a fire service, Senter said people calling 911 after a heart attack will have to depend on private ambulances, which he said are “slower and come from much farther away.” Currently, Senter said the closest private ambulance would be responding from Bremerton.

“Building a new station was dependent on our receiving a grant, but we would have expected to hear by now if that were the case,” he said. Wright said the EMS levy runs on a six-year cycle, and the end of 2009 is when it is scheduled to run out. If the levy renewal is not passed, he said, it would set the department back “30 years, to before the district had paramedics on staff.”

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K I T S A P

# Daily News

## NEWS

### **Emergency Medical Services in the Fire Service | SKFR Guest Column**

**More than 70 percent of our calls for help are medical in nature. Seconds do count when your heart stops, you have uncontrollable bleeding or you're having difficulty breathing. SKFR has 84 career line fire fighters, 19 of them are dual trained as paramedics and the other 65 are Emergency Medical Technicians. These fire fighters work on a 24 hour shift rotation.**

*March 22, 2012 5:41 pm*



During recent weeks there have been articles in the Port Orchard Independent regarding our Standard of Cover and Accreditation. As they explained, we use those documents to analyze our department so that we can provide the best possible response and service to our community. As the Medical Officer for South Kitsap Fire and Rescue I would like to take this opportunity to explain a few things about how the EMS side of our department operates. More than 70 percent of our calls for help are medical in nature. Seconds do count when your heart stops, you have uncontrollable bleeding or you're having difficulty breathing. SKFR has 84 career line firefighters, 19 of them are dual trained as paramedics and the other 65 are Emergency Medical Technicians.

These firefighters work on a 24 hour shift rotation. In our 118 square mile response area, we have 7 staffed stations with 2 firefighters and one is staffed with 4 firefighters. The small crew size allows for a quicker initial response time and allows for us to stabilize a patient quicker. Each station has an ambulance and a fire engine to respond to emergencies. Depending on the nature of the call, the firefighters respond in the appropriate vehicle. We call this cross-staffing.

Accreditation dictates that we use a system called critical tasking to determine the effective response force needed to provide the proper staffing, equipment and treatment to have a successful outcome for each type of emergency. This is why you may see a single fire engine, single ambulance or a combination of vehicles at any given emergency scene. Anytime someone calls 911 the closest available station responds first with two fire fighters, but some EMS calls require up to six fighters which we deploy through a layered response system.

For example, a fall that may not require a trip to the hospital is coded as a basic life support medical call. This requires 2 regular fire fighter EMTs, so the closest available BLS qualified unit would respond. Ambulances and re engines are qualified BLS units. If the call required treatment and transport, in addition to the closest unit we would also send an ambulance with transport capabilities. When the call is dispatched as an advanced life support call, such as heart problems or respiratory distress, 4 regular fire fighters are needed and one must be a certified paramedic.

These same numbers would apply to calls with multiple patients; this is why you may see one, two or even three ambulances at the scene of a car accident. If that same accident has a re or extrication rescue potential then there may also be one or two fire engines at this call. It is interesting to note that SKFR serves a population of over 72,000 people who call South Kitsap their home.

Our EMS calls are divided into two basic categories, Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support. Per our Standard of Cover 55 percent of medical calls are dispatched ALS and 45 percent are BLS. Our top four requests for medical assistance for the last six years have been traumatic injuries, cardiac issues, respiratory emergencies, and abdominal problems.

SKFR is internationally accredited because it meets or exceeds these best management practices. This ensures that SKFR provides the best emergency services with the funding our citizens entrust us with. In the past six years we've hired fire fighters and staffed stations in the Bethel and Manchester communities, which have reduced our response time district wide by more than three minutes. We have also used good spending practices by remounting and refurbishing our ambulance boxes on new chassis rather than buying new vehicles. We have ten ambulances in our fleet and this saves us over \$50,000 each year.



# K I T S A P Daily News



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## OPINION

### SKFR levy vote a must for growing community

#### In Our Opinion

By [Bob Smith](#) • July 18, 2017 1:30 am



If there ever was a taxpayer-supported service in which residents get more than their money's worth, it has to be the service provided by South Kitsap Fire and Rescue. The agency's fire-engine red vehicles are ubiquitous, as are its 72 career firefighters/EMTs, and approximately 50 volunteers and support staff. They're just about everywhere: parades, civic events, the schools and conducting routine commercial business building inspections.

And, thankfully, they are nearby when you need them in an emergency. Often just a few minutes away, these well-trained public servants perform life-saving measures when a heart attack or other serious medical emergency strikes. Statistics from last year bear out their value; Firefighter/EMTs responded to 9,580 calls in South Kitsap, most involving medical emergencies. When 2017 ends, the number is expected to have surpassed 10,000 calls. Despite our changing landscape, which has become more suburban, and an influx of new residents, SKFR has done an admirable job protecting homes and commercial structures from fire. But, alas, it hasn't been easy. A deep recession several years ago forced South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Fire Chief Steve Wright to make a number of difficult choices.

Reduced funding forced reductions in staffing and fewer fire stations. Since then, the region has slowly climbed out of its difficult economic quagmire; now the challenge is in providing service for a district that's in a steady growth mode. More residents and structures are straining SKFR's capabilities. With a reduced budget that strained resources at current levels, growth has forced Wright to ask residents to decide just how important it is to have adequate fire fighting and the demand by residents for a restoration of fire fighter/EMT staffing levels and stations will require more funding. It's that simple.

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That's why Proposition No. 1 is on your mail-in election ballot. It asks voters to renew the Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy and lift the taxation lid to its former allowable cap of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation. This slight upward adjustment will restore revenue levels that ensure SKFR can rehire firefighters and re-staff two fire stations impacted by cutbacks in 2014. For such a minimal account — on average, \$5 more a month per median-priced home — South Kitsap home and business owners can be secure knowing fire and medical emergency services will keep up with growth in the southern end of our county. Please vote to approve Proposition No. 1 on your election ballot. It will be money well spent.

LOCAL

# South Kitsap Fire sued for sexual harassment

## An internal investigation was launched by the district after a sexual harassment complaint

Author: Andrew Binion (Kitsap Sun)

Published: 3/12/2018 5:31:41 AM

Updated: 8:30 AM PDT March 13, 2018

**PORT ORCHARD** — Two women firefighters are suing South Kitsap Fire and Rescue, alleging sexual harassment by a battalion chief who retired in January 2017 after the district notified him the fire chief was proposing he be fired.

An internal investigation found former Battalion Chief Michael Wernet made inappropriate and degrading remarks and actions toward the women – at times repeating them to others – and once made sexually-charged comments in front of one of the women’s children.

An internal investigation launched by the district after it received complaints about Wernet found he also made racially-tinged comments toward one of the women. The latest suit naming the fire district was filed in September in Kitsap County Superior Court. No trial date has been scheduled and attorneys are currently exchanging documents, said the lawyer for the two women.

The suit alleges the fire district, through Wernet, engaged in a hostile work environment. The women firefighters are asking for damages and attorney fees. In responding to the suit, attorneys for the fire district wrote that it “took prompt corrective action reasonably designed to end any alleged harassment.”

Terry Venneburg, the attorney for the two women, said Tuesday that more issues may come out as the case proceeds.

“It’s likely that his unsuitability for being a supervisor will be a significant issue in the case,” Venneburg said.

In preparing to fire Wernet, Chief Steven Wright wrote in January 2017 that some of Wernet’s denials were not credible and that during the internal investigation he denied and minimized his conduct. Wright noted that subordinates tried to speak with him about changing his behavior.

“There is no way, in this day and age, that anyone could honestly defend your statements and actions,” Wright wrote in the letter advising Wernet of the reasons that justified his termination. “There are almost daily news reports regarding this type of behavior. In fact, in many instances, agencies are being held responsible for conduct that is less insensitive than yours.” It’s not the first time Wernet’s alleged behavior toward a woman got the fire district sued.

He was named in two U.S. District Court lawsuits filed in 2003. In those suits, a woman paramedic learned she had been reassigned away from a fire station because a lieutenant there requested he not have to work with a woman. Wernet allegedly obliged him.

Another lieutenant, a man, argued that Wernet’s decision was discriminatory. Both the woman employee and the lieutenant who stood up for her claimed in lawsuits they were subjected to harassment after they complained. The cases were joined and settled in mediation, according to court documents.

Wernet was given a verbal warning in 2002. Following that, Wernet was suspended in 2003 for 40 hours and referred to counseling when he was found to have made “harassing and retaliatory comments” about the matter.

“Your conduct was unacceptable and unbecoming a chief officer,” former Chief Mike Brown wrote in an official letter to Wernet dated May 2, 2003.

Wright said he could not discuss details of a pending lawsuit, but said documents show he intended to fire Wernet and was following procedures to do so. Those included giving Wernet notice Jan. 11, 2017 that he planned to terminate him but also giving him an opportunity to meet with officials on Jan. 18 and give his side of the story. Instead, Wright said Wernet gave notice of his retirement.

“I had to assume he had no defense to offer,” said Wright, who added that those who reported inappropriate conduct were not at fault and for him to deal with such conduct he relies on employees to tell him. “It wasn’t anyone’s fault who reported it, it was Mike’s actions,” Wright said.

During a phone interview Wednesday with the Kitsap Sun, Wernet said he retired Jan. 20, 2017, after a 35-year career in the fire service and was unaware of a lawsuit. “I just decided it was time for me to retire,” he said, insisting he did not resign and was not terminated. He added: “I just moved forward.” Among the conduct attributed to Wernet were comments about a member of the public had referred to by skin color and “girl.” Wernet allegedly repeated these comments to others.

In his defense, Wernet acknowledged some of the comments attributed to him were out of line with anti-harassment policies but told Dean that it was his job to fit in with the crew and that such jokes were common, according to Dean’s Dec. 26, 2016, report.

“The evidence supports Wernet’s assertions, but only to a limited degree,” Dean wrote, writing that firefighters would talk about sex or attempt jokes. Two other battalion chiefs, however, said firefighters working for them knew they would not tolerate such comments and Dean wrote they were “almost never” directed toward an individual. Wright said firefighters form strong bonds through their work but that was not an excuse for demeaning conduct.

“It’s not a family, it’s a workplace,” Wright said.

K I T S A P

# Daily News

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### **SKFR: Quit using scare tactics**

*October 29, 2020 1:30 am*



South Kitsap Fire and Rescue is again asking for more money. This time for more money to demolish five fire stations and build three new ones. They claim that the new buildings will decrease response time.

I want the fire districts to quit using this so-called “response time” thing as a scare tactic aimed specifically at the older generation.

But the truth is, my friends, SKFR response time will change very little if any. The reason is that with all the so-called roundabouts and the huge increase in traffic locally, travel time from point A to point B is taking a lot longer than it took a few years ago.

I’m old, but I don’t fall for scare tactics.

**Rob Daugherty**

**Olalla**



K I T S A P

# Daily News

## NEWS

**EMS accounts for 71% of SKFR's calls so far this year That's a 4.2% increase compared to the same period last year**

By *Bob Smith* • June 14, 2021 1:30 am



**PORT ORCHARD** — With an EMS levy vote looming in the primary election in August, South Kitsap Fire and Rescue's chief is reminding residents living in the fire district that emergency medical service is the primary reason why department personnel and equipment head out day and night responding to Kitsap-911 calls.

Chief Jeff Faucett said that 71% of all calls from Jan. 1 through May 31 this year that the department responded to were for EMS-related calls. That's a 4.2% increase in EMS calls compared to the same period in 2020, he said. Overall, Faucett said, call volumes have increased 5.4% as of the end of May. SKFR is the largest emergency services provider in Kitsap County. In 2020, the fire agency responded to 10,845 emergency calls for help.

He said the fire district funds daily operations through two separate levies: a fire levy and one for EMS. The fire levy is capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, he said. The EMS levy, which collects funds for six years, is capped at 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The fire chief said capital items, such as engines and fire stations, are funded through voter-approved bonds. He said the fire district currently has no bond indebtedness.

- We want our community to understand how emergency services are funded," Faucett said. "The EMS levy is an integral part of the funding for the emergency service our residents rely on most."

## Current EMS levy expires this year

South Kitsap voters last approved the EMS levy in 2015, which will expire at the end of the year. The fire district is asking voters on the Aug. 3 ballot to renew it for another six years at the previously approved rate of 50 cents per \$1,000.

SKFR officials said the fire district's EMS program provides both Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) care. BLS uses trained emergency medical technicians to respond to medical calls involving minor injuries. ALS is the highest level of care available using highly skilled paramedics who perform life-saving procedures that may be required in cases such as heart attacks, seizures or strokes.

According to Faucett, the EMS levy costs the owner of a \$400,000 home approximately \$200 per year, or \$16.67 per month, for a 24-hour paramedic response. EMS funding is used for emergency personnel, training and certifications, ambulances, maintenance, fuel, medical equipment and supplies.



**LETTERS** | **Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## EMS saves lives, and SKFR's levy should be approved

**Stephanie Browning, Port Orchard**

Published 10:41 a.m. PT June 24, 2021

I'm writing in response to a letter from a reader complaining about an increase in South Kitsap Fire & Rescue's EMS levy. I hope people keep this in perspective.

We get asked to renew the EMS levy at 50-cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value every six years. This is an important funding source for our fire district. It gets no money from the county or any city.

The increase for the average homeowner is \$5 a month. EMS call volumes have increased by almost 22% since we approved the last EMS levy six years ago. (This information is on SKFR's website, at [www.skfr.org](http://www.skfr.org).) It's completely logical that more calls mean more costs to provide service.

This levy is no different than past elections. EMS saves lives, and I for one am glad for the service.

*Stephanie Browning, Port Orchard*

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K I T S A P

# Daily News

## NEWS

### Failed levy causing issues for fire department

Port Orchard Independent • December 22, 2022 1:30 am



Just a few weeks after failing to pass a levy, South Kitsap Fire and Rescue chief Jeff Faucett said the negative impacts are already being felt by his department.

SKFR looked to lift the levy lid from \$1.21 per \$1,000 valuation to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed home value, which would help address major anticipated growth in the district and need for accompanying staff and renovations to fire stations. Faucett said as the largest fire agency on the peninsula, the number of staff especially needs the increase.

“SKFR responders respond to more 911 calls than any other agency with far less personnel,” he said. “This will continue to increase response times as call volumes increase.”

In last month’s general election, SKFR fell short of passing the levy with the “No” vote prevailing by 2 1/2 points, or almost 1,000 votes. Only the SK fire proposition faced serious opposition going into the midterms and was the only proposition to have an official statement published against it. Residents complained the rate did not correspond to actual home values. Others accused SKFR of using the death of PJ’s Market owner Al Kono to campaign for the proposition, as Faucett had announced back in September the historic market would be memorialized in the building of a new station.

Faucett said the results have already put holds on a number of necessities. Had the levy passed, SKFR would have looked to increase minimum staffing from 19 to 21.

“We will have to maintain at 19,” he said, “which is below staffing standards for the number of 911 calls we receive. For example, it can take upwards of 20 minutes to respond to the south side of our district. This is unacceptable.”

Faucett said the district also will need to eliminate major capital purchases, namely funds to replace a fire engine or command vehicle in the next year. Cuts are also being made in the firefighter training program in order to operate under a balanced budget. While it’s beyond frustrating, Faucett said there is no respect lost within the South Kitsap community and will not change the department’s dedication to protecting and serving. “We respect the community and the decision to not restore the fire levy to the amount previously approved six years ago,” he said. “We look forward to meeting with them and discussing this more so that we can provide the level of emergency service they require.”

On the opposing side, some South Kitsap residents say this is not the same economic situation as six years ago, as inflated costs of everyday necessities and bills have risen dramatically. Particularly, rising house costs and coinciding increases in assessed home value are already hiking the amount property owners have to pay.

While a few speculated that they would have considered a smaller lid lift in comparison to the maximum, citizens such as Jason Stiffey said the cost is just too much for property owners at this time. “It’s a tough time to ask people to shell out more money, especially in taxes,” he said.



**BURN STATUS: BURNING IS ALLOWED**



## **Call Volumes Continue to Rise for South Kitsap Fire and Rescue**

Mar 21, 2022



Port Orchard, Wash. – South Kitsap Fire and Rescue reports call volumes increased 10.7% in 2021 compared to the year before. For the **first** time in its history, the agency broke 12,000 calls in one year, making it the busiest **fire** district in Kitsap County.

Calls for 2022 also are off to a heavy start. Emergency calls in the **first** month of the year were 20% higher than January of 2021. Even with higher call volumes, Fire Chief Jeff Faucett says that the agency can respond, but still needs more emergency personnel.

## SKFR also is celebrating its 75th year of service to the South Kitsap Community

Celebrations are planned for later this summer when the weather is better.

“We are extremely grateful for our community. We can’t say it enough – thank you,” said Chief Faucett. “The South Kitsap community has invested in and built a high-quality emergency service response. Their personal and financial support means that we can save lives and property.”

In 2021, the agency responded to 12,005 emergency calls, or approximately 33 calls a day. Emergency medical service accounted for 68% of all emergency responses for SKFR. Fires accounted for 208 calls, or 1.73% of emergencies in 2021.

“Fires are devastating, and the most-costly emergency service we provide,” said Chief Faucett. “Fighting a fire takes more personnel, apparatus, and equipment than anything else we do. While fires are small percentage of our calls, we must be prepared for when they happen to prevent loss of life and property.”

SKFR responds to all emergencies and hazards. Most of the agency’s resources go to fire and EMS responses. The agency provides the highest level of EMS care called “Advanced Life Support.” It also responds to explosions, hazardous material spills, technical rescues, motor vehicle accidents, and natural disasters.

“Special calls” also are on the list, which means someone believes there is an emergency, so the fire district is dispatched.

“We’ve had pets stuck in trees, water leaks, people unable to get off the floor, residents locked out of their house or car, kids stuck in playground equipment, house water pipe breaks, you name it,” said Chief Faucett.

# K I T S A P Daily News

## NEWS

### SKFR's call volume breaks record in 2021 — and continues to increase

#### Calls increased 10.7% last year

By *Bob Smith* • March 21, 2022 1:30 am



**PORT ORCHARD** — The number of calls incoming to South Kitsap Fire and Rescue increased 10.7% in 2021, reaching more than 12,000 calls in one year and making it the busiest fire district in Kitsap County.

The call volume continues to rise this year, according to SKFR Fire Chief Jeff Faucett. Emergency calls in January were 20% higher than in the same month last year, he said, necessitating a need for the fire district to hire **more** personnel.

In 2021, SKFR responded to 12,005 emergency calls, or about 33 calls a day. But what might be surprising to many people is that emergency medical services accounted for 68% of all emergency responses by SKFR. Fires accounted for 208 calls — or 1.73% of emergency calls in 2021.

“Fires are devastating, and the most costly emergency service we provide,” Faucett said. “Fighting a fire takes more personnel, apparatus and equipment than anything else we do. While fires are a small percentage of our calls, we must be prepared for when they happen to prevent loss of life and property.”

While SKFR provides the highest level of emergency medical service, called Advanced Life Support, the agency also responds to explosions, hazardous material spills, technical rescues, motor vehicle accidents and natural disasters.

And then there are the proverbial “cats in trees” calls the fire district occasionally receives. “We’ve had pets stuck in trees, water leaks, people unable to get off the floor, residents locked out of their house or car, kids stuck in playground equipment, house water pipe breaks — you name it,” Faucett said.

Also on SKFR’s call list are “special calls,” classified as someone believing there is an emergency when there might not be one. The fire chief says that, regardless, a fire unit is dispatched to check it out. SKFR’s emergency crews have been responding to calls for many decades — in fact, it is celebrating its 75th year of service this year. Celebrations are planned later this summer when the weather brightens.

## Ambulances, patients waiting too long

| Published August 29, 2022 | Kitsap County |  
FOX 13 Seattle | By Steve Kiggins

**First responders in Kitsap County are sounding the alarm about hospital wait times, hoping the public and elected leaders take note.**

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**SILVERDALE, Wash.** - First responders in Kitsap County are sounding the alarm, hoping the public and elected leaders take note after firefighters noticed patients having to wait inside ambulances for too long— sometimes for several hours— before they are admitted to the emergency room.

Fire department chiefs say that while their EMT's are waiting in Silverdale for patients to be admitted to St. Michael Medical Center, they cannot respond to other calls in their jurisdiction

There are interagency agreements for all six fire fighting agencies that have been picking up the slack when backups at St. Michael Medical Center are bad, but fire department chiefs want this problem fixed.

"One of our units was there for 3 hours and 54 minutes," said Chief Hank Teran from Bainbridge Island Fire Department.

Teran said the delays impact his community in ways that neglect firefighter and community training, and more.

"I've never seen a situation I've seen right now, where our units are waiting this long in the emergency room," Teran said.

It's not only [Bainbridge Island](#)— the five other fire departments in Kitsap County shared similar concerns about ambulance wait times at the hospital.

"This is uncharted," said Chief Jeff Faucett of [South Kitsap Fire and Rescue](#). Faucett is also the chair of [Kitsap County EMS](#) and says his and other departments have been meeting with St. Michael Medical Center officials to iron out a fix.

St. Michael Medical Center officials say an [extremely high capacity and staffing shortages](#) are partially to blame for the backups. When patients at the hospital are ready to be discharged, there isn't space at post-care facilities either, officials said. Hospital president Chad Melton shared a statement with FOX 13 News that reads, in part:

"We are utilizing our mission control command center and working to ease strain through various strategies to ensure we can care for all our patients." Both first responders and St. Michael Medical Center officials vow to continue working to find solutions, but firefighters don't want the public to see [ambulances backed up and choose instead to avoid calling for help](#).

"We don't want people to second guess when they call 911," said Faucett. "If they need to go to ED (emergency department), they need to do that." To avoid further backups, the Kitsap County Fire Chief's association says emergency responders now have new operating procedures.

The directive says when there are more than 2 ambulances waiting at St. Michael Medical Center longer than 45 minutes, new patients with non-life-threatening issues could be diverted to another facility for care if they agree to a transfer.

**LETTERS** | **Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## There aren't enough emergencies to justify SKFR's levy increase

Jeff Daily, South Kitsap

Published 8:55 a.m. PT Sept. 9, 2022

Election Season is upon us! The papers are full of routine matters now reported as crucial to the success of people and organizations. Such is the case with several stories promoting the SKFR levy lift. Fires in SK are few, far between, yet proponents suggest we are in crisis mode, that it's imperative we pass SKFR's levy lift. If we don't, our very personal safety can no longer be guaranteed with claims of being unable to be in two places at once. It's just more scare tactics.

They ask for more funding for more fire engines, fire stations, fire fighters. That's their solution, it's more wants vs actual needs. And now strident claims of slower response times! A lack of usable stations. That it's not possible to respond to multiple or simultaneous fires or emergencies. We continue to read the only solution in keeping us safe is more money, yet we also read that other jurisdictions respond to SKFR emergencies, that SKFR responds to theirs. That's what mutual jurisdictional agreements are for. Just stop with the scare tactics! There are no stories of people perishing due to claims of slower response times. Tell us what you need, not what you want!

Did you know that SKFR purchased new properties in East PO and Manchester for new fire stations? Why is this when SK is reportedly growing out by McCormick Woods?

**No justifications? Vote no on SKFR's levy lift!**

***Jeff Daily, South Kitsap***



# K I T S A P Daily News



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## NEWS

### **SKFR Station 10 to only have volunteers**

*By Staff report • February 8, 2023 1:30 am*



Fire Station 10 Banner will be staffed only with volunteers starting March 1 as its full-time firefighters will be moved to Station 11 Bethel due to increased calls there.

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue will now have four staffers at Bethel. SKFR still will have 24-hour staffing at Stations 8 (Orchard Heights), 9 (Manchester), 16 (Gorst), 17

(Glenwood) and 31 (Port Orchard). Two years ago, SKFR began a thorough analysis to determine where service could be improved, and develop a long-term plan based on growth and need, a news release says. “This decision was not made lightly; we experienced another significant call volume increase of over 5% last year which does not show any signs of slowing down.

By positioning our 19 daily firefighters in the areas they are needed most, we increase the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome,” fire chief Jeff Faucett said. SKFR will be hosting sessions with residents in March to discuss increased call volume and staffing challenges. For details go to [www.skfr.org](http://www.skfr.org). SKFR is the largest emergency services provider in Kitsap County. Serving the community for over 75 years, the agency provides fire and EMS to more than 79,000 people over 117 square miles. Full-time and volunteer emergency personnel responded to over 12,708 calls in 2022, a 5% increase.



## **We want our community to understand how emergency services are funded.**

Daily emergency operations are funded by two voter-approved property tax levies with a combined total of \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed property value (\$1.50 for fire suppression; \$0.50 for EMS). Over time, the levy rates fall as property values rise to limit the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year plus a one percent increase. Last year, voters approved renewing the EMS levy at \$0.50/\$1,000. This funding is critical to maintain service levels due to higher call volumes and increasing costs. We look forward to reporting back to you on the improvements we are making with your tax dollars.

## **Our community requires more firefighters, but there's no place to put them.**

Call volumes continue to increase, including multiple emergency calls that come in at the same time. We recently completed a study, which identifies the need for additional personnel to meet the National Fire Protection Association standards. This is important for public safety and the safety of our firefighters who respond. We are planning for these positions to meet national safety standards, but our facilities are inadequate to hold them. Some stations do not meet current seismic codes, and are at risk of collapsing in an earthquake. Stations also lack effective diesel exhaust removal systems and decontamination areas to reduce regular exposure to cancer-causing carcinogens and infectious diseases.

## Adequate facilities are important to the health and safety of our community and its firefighters.

The Fire District pays for its capital needs, such as fire stations, emergency apparatus and equipment, through voter-approved bonds. These items are too expensive to fund through our operating levies without cutting emergency service levels. Two years ago, voters almost approved a bond for to renovate or replace three stations. These projects are necessary to add space for personnel, improve public safety, and provide a healthier working environment for firefighters..

