

The Pulse

Summer 2024

EMS: A Team Effort

This summer, voters will be asked if Poulsbo Fire Department and North Kitsap Fire & Rescue can continue collecting the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) property tax levy.

The two fire districts are partners in providing the north end of Kitsap County with emergency response and related services, improving efficiency by sharing resources whenever possible. This newsletter is just one example of the many cooperative efforts between the agencies.

Most importantly, the two departments provide seamless response to fire, medical and other emergencies.

Poulsbo Fire Department serves 54 square miles and 28,126* people in the northwest portion of the county. North Kitsap Fire & Rescue serves 46 square miles and 20,728* people in the northeast part. Both emergency

**2023 population estimated by Washington State's Office of Financial Management*

The Pulse, published jointly at least once every year, is one of many cooperative efforts between your two local fire departments.

**NORTH KITSAP
FIRE & RESCUE**

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Successful patient outcomes are more likely in emergency medical services systems such as Kitsap County's that rely upon strong and well-coordinated components. These elements include citizens trained in CPR/AED and first aid, 911 call-receivers and dispatch, firefighter/emergency medical technicians, firefighter/paramedics, and ground or air ambulance transport to hospitals with the right resources to treat the illness or injury.

and non-emergency services (such as blood pressure checks) are provided from seven staffed and two volunteer stations.

Medical responses comprise the majority of calls at the two departments, totaling about two-thirds of all incidents. Of a combined 8,093 calls in 2023, 5,462 were medical.

Fire districts receive no ongoing county, state or federal funding. Nearly 90% of the departments' budgets come from local property taxes. The EMS levy provides about 20% of that; renewal

of the levy will help fund continued emergency medical services.

This is not a new tax; it is a continuation of a tax that voters have renewed on a regular basis for nearly forty years. However, as the community's assessed valuations have risen, the EMS levy rate has dropped to about \$0.37 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Reauthorizing the EMS levy will return the rate to the previously-approved \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation and cost an additional \$65 for the owner of a \$500,000 home.

Senior citizens and disabled persons who meet income requirements may be eligible for exemptions from some property taxes. Contact the Kitsap County Assessor at (360)337-7160 for details.

Ballots will be mailed out to voters in mid-July, and must be postmarked or deposited in a ballot drop box no later than August 6. To learn more about the measures, see the districts' websites or the local voters' pamphlet.

Kitsap County's EMS System is Strong

Patients needing emergency medical services (EMS) fare best when all components of the EMS system are strong and well-coordinated. The American Heart Association calls this "The Chain of Survival." In Kitsap County, the following links form a very strong chain.

911: Passersby(s) recognize the emergency and report it to Kitsap 911. Kitsap 911 personnel, in turn, dispatch the closest appropriate units to the incident while providing the caller with pre-arrival instructions.

Bystander First Aid and/or CPR:

Civilians first on scene help prevent further injury to the patient(s) and provide first aid or CPR.

Fast First Response: Seconds count in medical emergencies. Well-trained and equipped personnel, properly positioned so they're able to reach the majority of incidents as quickly as possible, respond. They begin

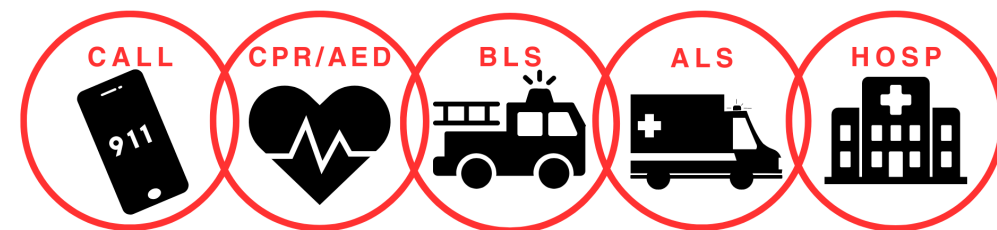
providing life-saving care immediately. Often, the first response is basic life support (BLS) provided by EMTs. Paramedics follow with advanced life support (ALS).

Automatic Aid: A crew of two can make a significant difference in patient outcomes by starting care, but serious incidents require more than two sets of hands. There are no borders between local fire districts during emergencies and, often, crews from neighboring agencies are automatically dispatched to help when additional resources are needed.

Transport: Most incidents can be resolved with ground ambulance

transport to a local hospital. In certain cases, crews call for an air ambulance to transport patients to specialized facilities.

Definitive Care: While field personnel deliver life-saving care, they lack the necessary equipment for definitive diagnosis and treatment. These services are delivered at local hospitals or, when necessary, at other facilities such as the region's only level one trauma center at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. There, surgeons and other medical professionals stand ready to handle the most critical and complicated cases. Patient destinations are determined by established medical protocols and/or a supervising physician.



NKF&R Fire Chief Rick LaGrandeur presented certificates of appreciation to two employees of the Suquamish Tribe who performed CPR after hearing the wife of the patient calling out for help after he collapsed. The man survived.

As links in the chain of survival get stronger, more and more lives are saved. Across North Kitsap during 2023, 41.2% of victims of cardiac arrests were resuscitated. The rates for the nation are 27.1%. Locally, bystanders performed CPR in most of the successful resuscitations.

One morning last fall, Poulsbo Fire units were dispatched to an unresponsive male on the sidewalk on Finn Hill Rd. Medic 71 was the first to arrive and found a man in cardiac arrest with effective bystander CPR in progress. M71, E71 and M77 crews took over CPR and moved the patient to M71 for continued care.

After about 20 minutes of CPR and ALS procedures, the patient regained

Success Stories

a self-sustaining pulse and M71 transported him to St. Michael Medical Center (SMMC).

Inarguably, the initial steps of an early call to 911 and effective bystander CPR played a critical role in the patient's survival; the civilian rescuers later received a lifesaving award for their vital efforts.

In March, crews responded to Clearwater Casino for an unresponsive male. Security personnel were first on scene and began CPR while applying one of the facility's several automated external defibrillators (AED). Two shocks were delivered and CPR continued. Units from NKF&R's Suquamish station, Bainbridge Island and Poulsbo arrived to take over care. En route to the hospital, the patient's pulse returned. After receiving care at hospitals, he was discharged to home – an outcome that would have been unlikely without the decisive and effective actions of casino security personnel. Four of the officers later received lifesaving awards from NKF&R



After recovering from his cardiac arrest, a patient personally thanks one of his three rescuers at an awards ceremony as Poulsbo Fire Chief Jim Gillard looks on.

for their critical role in the patient's survival.

EMS FAQ



We'd like to take this opportunity to share with you the answers to questions most frequently asked about emergency medical services (EMS).

What's the difference between an EMT and a paramedic? Both are emergency medical technicians, but those who are called "EMT" have undergone about 120 hours of initial training to earn the EMT-B (Basic) certification. Paramedics hold the EMT-P (Paramedic) certification after completing at least 1,200 hours of initial training. All of our career firefighters are trained to at least the EMT-B level, and can operate automated external defibrillators as well as administer a limited number of medications. Paramedics are trained to use sophisticated heart monitors and manual defibrillators. Paramedics can also apply advanced measures to secure a patient's airway, start intravenous lines and administer a wide range of life-saving medications. About 35% of all ambulance transports require the advanced skills of a paramedic while the remainder can safely go to the hospital with an EMT-B.

What's the fastest way to get help? Although we welcome visitors, we discourage coming to the fire station to report emergencies. Citizens may experience unnecessary delays if crews are out of the station or otherwise unavailable. The 911 system provides the fastest response by automatically dispatching the closest appropriate unit. It is also risky to the patient and others to drive when seriously injured or ill. Better to call 911, and leave the driving to us.

Why do fire engines respond to medical calls? It's important to note that all of our firefighters are medically-trained EMTs or paramedics and all of our fire engines carry essential equipment such as defibrillators and oxygen. We send fire engines to aid calls for several reasons: It is vital to get the closest available unit to the incident as quickly as possible. Often times, that unit may be a fire engine. Occasionally, fire engines may respond to provide additional hands to help. Many incidents require additional personnel to provide advanced care and/or to move a patient to the ambulance.

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Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attack and Stroke

According to the American Heart Association, heart and blood vessel disease are our nation's number one killer. Know the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke to get care before the damage is irreversible or worse.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, while some start slowly. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is underway:

- Chest discomfort** – Pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or comes and goes.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body** – Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, the neck, the jaw or the stomach.
- Shortness of breath**

Other signs – Cold sweats, nausea or lightheadedness.

Learn the signs and symptoms of stroke, and get help even if the symptoms go away:

- Face drooping** – One side of the face droops or is numb. The person's smile is uneven.
- Arm weakness** – One arm is weak or numb. When the person raises both arms, one drifts downward.
- Speech difficulty** – Speech may be slurred. The person may be unable to speak or hard to understand. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, and see if it's repeated correctly.
- Other signs** – Sudden numbness or weakness of the leg; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of

balance or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Untreated heart attack or stroke can lead to cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrest signs and symptoms are:

- Unresponsiveness**
- No normal breathing**



Call 911 immediately if you suspect heart attack, stroke or cardiac arrest.

EMS FAQ Continued

What does the EMS levy pay for?

Revenue from the EMS levy helps pay for the costs of first response to medical incidents. There is never a bill for a 911 response. However, the levy doesn't provide enough to fund the additional costs associated with ambulance transports. To provide transport services, we must purchase and maintain ambulances as well as stock and staff them. Although billing revenue doesn't cover all of these additional expenses, we can

recover some of the costs by billing patients' health insurers. Many fire departments don't provide any ambulance transport at all and avoid the cost of operating ambulances by providing first response to medical incidents from fire engines. In those areas, for-profit ambulance companies provide transport services. We will always work with patients to ensure

that our efforts at cost-recovery don't cause financial hardship.

More questions? Just let us know. We're always happy to talk about how we do what we do!

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Be in the Know

Download the free PulsePoint app on your smart phone to receive alerts when CPR is needed in a public place near you. PulsePoint also lists car crashes, fires, rescues and other emergencies.



Get Connected

Visit the fire departments' websites or scan the code below to sign-up for Community Connect.

Community Connect is a secure platform where users can write their own burn permits and enter important information about their property and its occupants to help

our crews be better informed in the event of a response to a participating home or business. Get connected!



FIRE COMMISSIONERS

North Kitsap Fire & Rescue	Poulsbo Fire Department
Gillian Gregory, Chair (gregory@nkfr.org)	Darryl Milton, Chair (dmilton@poulsbofire.org)
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**North Kitsap Burn Ban
Information Line
(360)297-4888**

**Printed locally at Poulsbo's
Blue Sky Printers
(360)779-2681**

CPR & AED >>> CERTIFICATION

Sign up through Poulsbo Parks & Recreation for one of the following Saturday classes to become CPR/AED certified. Cost is \$15.

- **SEPT 14, 9AM-12PM**
- **OCTOBER 12, 9AM-12PM**
- **NOVEMBER 9, 9AM-12PM**
- **DECEMBER 14, 9AM-12PM**



Station 71, 911 NE Liberty Road, Poulsbo

