FIRE NORTH WHATCOM RESCUE

The Responder

Volume 11, Issue 5

May, 2018

"Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community"

Feature Stories

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2018 STATISTICS

April 1 — April 30

District Average Response Time:
9 min. 53 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 10
EMS: 210
Other: 87

Total: 307

Overlapping**: 98**

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Proudly serving the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, Custer, Laurel and the unincorporated areas of Lynden & Bellingham

NWFR Honor Members

On Thursday, April 19 at 1:00 p.m. at Odell Station 61, NWFR past and current members, dressed in their class A uniforms, joined together to acknowledge two members retiring due to medical issues.

John Swobody has been with the department for 34 years as a volunteer, career firefighter, and chief officer.

Gina Ball was hired in 2009, coming from Vashon and Point Roberts Fire Districts. Her career spans a total of 16 years.

Earlier this month Battalion Chief Larry Johnston celebrated his 23 years with NWFR and District 4. He retired in January. Larry's family surprised him with a retirement dinner held at a local restaurant.

NWFR will miss Gina, John and Larry as each brought something unique to the department.

Please remember to keep the district up to date with any changes including your contact information.

All changes should be directed to Jennie. These changes may include:

Phone

Address

Email

Banking

Family Additions

Name changes

Gold Stars

by Mark vonAppen

Come with me to the land of make-believe. Once upon a time, I thought I was a pretty good firefighter. I could pull pre-connected hose line, tie a few knots, and strap my SCBA to my body in well under one minute. I felt confident in my ability to perform any one of the myriad of tricks I had learned in the academy and during my 16-month probationary period. Success was all but assured, or so it seemed.

Throw my pack? Gold star.
Stretch a line to the tower? Gold star.

Tie a bowline? Gold star.

All of the boxes were checked. Employee meets the minimum standard. Check. You really tried, and you're a super-nice guy; you get another gold star. And on, and on. If I was a child, mommy and daddy's refrigerator would be festooned with all of the gold starred-smiley faced-rubber stamped reports of august progress I had received. The 10-page performance evaluation that my company officer spent 5 minutes preparing cemented my mediocrity. Meets, meets, meets, meets, meets.

My boots shined, my uniform pressed, I knew exactly how little was expected of me and nothing more. I was glad handed into thinking I was great, and I excelled (if that is possible) at the minimum standard, all I had ever been expected to achieve. I had become the one-trick-pony poster child. I knew one way to do things, and one way only. I had unknowingly accepted the notion that meeting the minimum standard was acceptable. I was wooed into the divine trance that the department would teach me everything I needed to know in order to succeed, a fallacy that we wrap ourselves in prior to being born-again-hard into the fire service.
My excuse for not knowing how to do something was the popular, "Well, nobody showed

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NWFR Recognizes Area Dispatchers

April 8-14 is designated to recognize those Public Safety Telecommunicators who serve the public in countless ways without due recognition by the beneficiaries of their services.

Telecommunicators are all those people who utilize telephones, radios, computers and technical skills to provide support to Law Enforcement, Fire Services, Emergency Medical Services and other governmental field personnel. As the first person contacted by citizens on nearly every crime, fire and medical emergency, the 911 dispatcher continues to be an invaluable resource for agencies of all sizes.

Dispatchers do so much more than just answer your 911 call; they offer support and compassion for those in distress.

Bellingham and Whatcom County operate the 11 emergency telephone system, called What-Comm. The initial call receiving site is located in Bellingham, and is responsible for dispatching almost all municipal law enforcement agencies in Whatcom County. All fire and medical related calls are forwarded to the Fire Dispatch Center located at Bellingham Fire Department's Broadway Street Station. The Fire Dispatch Center is responsible for dispatching all municipal fire departments and fire districts in Whatcom County. The Bellingham Police Department operates the What-Comm center and the Bellingham Fire Department operates the Prospect Fire Dispatch Center.

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue would like to take this opportunity to recognize those who serve our communities in a vital capacity.

NWFR Donates Surplus Bunker Gear

On Friday, April 13, NWFR loaded 16 boxes filled with surplus bunker gear on a truck eventually bound for Mexico and Ecuador.

Firefighters Crossing Borders (FFCB) is a US based non-profit organization founded by Firefighters for Firefighters. Their members are active and retired Firefighters from the USA, Canada, and Mexico working to assist their brother and sister Firefighters in Mexico.

Their goal is to bring advanced training, equipment, and vehicles to departments desiring assistance throughout Mexico.

For more information about the program visit http://www.firefighterscrossingborders.org/index.php

FIREFIGHTERS CROSSING BORDERS

Gold Stars cont.

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me how to do it so it must not be that important." Like many in society, I shrugged off the magnitude of my responsibility and placed the blame squarely on the world for not preparing me to be great. It is an ideal that I truly detest these days, the notion that success can be achieved by simply showing up. I'm a firefighter, therefore I deserve greatness. It should come to me whether I earn it or not.

Was I ready? I thought so. Was I really ready? I would find out sooner or later.

My second coming in the fire service occurred as I began to venture outside the cozy confines of the city in which I work. I learned that there was a fire argot that I did not understand, how difficult (*sometimes impossible*) it can be to rescue our own, that air consumption rates are not what they teach in the academy, and most humbling of all, that I was ill-prepared to function in a real-deal-no-gold-star-for-showing-up-unforgiving-real-life-you-die-if-you-lose-scenario.

As I started the journey - when my eyes, mind, and heart opened - I felt that I had a lot to learn and that the job is more difficult physically and mentally than anything I had ever experienced. I learned that what we are expected to do never fits in a box that can be checked, and that we do not always succeed. It was a slap to the face of my complacency, all of it scared me.

We are doing our brothers and sisters, and ourselves, a disservice if we do not plan for contingency upon contingency. Our job is a constant game of speed chess where we must continually ask, "What is the next move?" In order to grow, you must push yourself and others beyond their established safety zones. Commitment is rare these days. It cannot be forced upon people, it can only be suggested. They have to truly want, and commit to change for it to happen.

Don't wait for change to come to you, be the change.

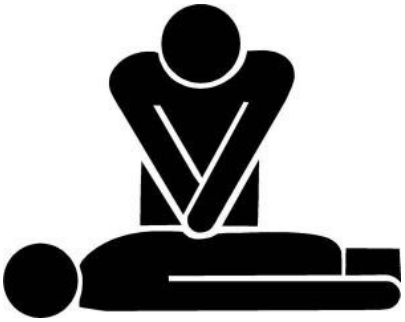
Start with you.

Free CPR Classes Offered

Did you know that North Whatcom Fire & Rescue teaches CPR and First Classes to the public once a month. We teach you how to perform life saving techniques, CPR for an adult, child & infant along with basic emergency procedures and how to operate an AED (Automated External AED).

Classes fill up quickly so register at www.nwfrs.com.

For more information, email Kjorgensen@nwfrs.com



Events to Celebrate May Birthdays

29 —Commissioner Neal

Mother's Day—13

Memorial Day—28

Fire Commissioner Meetings
NWFR
Thurs. May 17
9408 Odell St 61
Blaine —1:00 p.m.

District 4
Tues. May 16
4142 Britton Loop St 12
Bellingham —12:00 p.m.

4142 Britton Loop Rd.
Bellingham, WA 98226

Providing quality service for a safe community

Free Friends and Family CPR Classes

Class will be held from 6:30 p.m.—9:30 p.m. at various fire stations around the district. Check out www.nwfrs.com for more information and to reserve your spot.

January 31
February 17
March 28
April 25
May 30
June 27
July 25
August 22
September 26
October 24
November 28
December 19

Donations of nonperishable food items are encouraged but not mandatory. All food donations will be forwarded to local area food banks.

NWFR Finds Good Home for Donated Bike

In late March, a generous community member donated an almost new bike to the district. North Whatcom Fire and Rescue contacted the Benevolent Association for their assistance in finding a deserving recipient. A Blaine Elementary School fifth grader who resides in Birch Bay, joyfully accepted the acquisition.

NWFR Participates in Meridian Mock DUI

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue along with Washington State Patrol, Airlift Northwest and the Sheriff's office participated in a mock DUI accident assembly held on Monday, April 16 at Meridian High School. The event was part of a national distracted driving campaign.

Laurel Station 69's A shift (Lt. Keith Zylstra, FF John Geleynse, FF Darren Bruya) participated in the event.