



Volume 14 Issue 6

June, 2021



Feature Stories

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2021 STATISTICS

May 1 — May 31

District Average Response Time:

9 min. 36 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 9

EMS: 337

Other: 115

Total: 461



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

“Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community”

Proposition 2021-3: Levy Lid Lift Coming to Your Election Ballot August 3



Special Message by Chief Van der Veen

Emergency services delivery takes incredible people, high-performing equipment, financial planning and support from our public. On August 3rd, primary election day, Fire Protection District 21/North Whatcom Fire and Rescue will ask our voters to consider a renewed fire levy rate, something the Fire District has not done since 2008.

We want to ensure you have facts about this important ballot measure, why it is being proposed, and how it will affect you. Basic information is below and more details can be found on our website at www.nwfrs.net/levy-lid-lift/. Email info@nwfrs.com or call: 360.318.9933 with questions.

Proudly Serving our Growing Community

Nearly 33,800 residents, businesses and properties rely on North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) for high-quality fire and emergency medical services. As our community grows, demand for services increases—over 52% since 2011.

NWFR is at a Financial Crossroad

The main funding source for fire districts in our state is voter-approved property taxes. NWFR voters have not been asked to vote on a tax levy increase in 12 years. Population growth, increased service demands and rising costs are making it difficult for NWFR to provide the level of services our communities have come to expect. State law caps total property tax receipts collected by local governments, including Fire Districts, to one percent each year, plus the value of new construction. Even with careful resource management and firefighters and the union agreeing to forego and return salary increases, increased demand is straining NWFR’s ability to maintain existing service levels.

Levy Lid Lift: Stabilizing Funding for Fire and Emergency Medical Services

A property tax levy lid lift ballot measure is on the Aug. 3 ballot. NWFR Commissioners took this action so voters could decide whether to increase funding to enhance service levels and response times to meet increased service demand. If approved, NWFR intends to use such funding to enhance service levels and response times and to improve response reliability by taking the following steps:

- ⇒ **Add four battalion chiefs:** This position is fire industry standard that manages crew responses, especially critical in complex incidents.
- ⇒ **Add four firefighters to staff a peak-hour transport unit:** Responding to the significant increase in service calls, these new personnel will provide increased ability to transport residents during peak times when NWFR is receiving multiple calls in both populated and rural areas.
- ⇒ **Replace aging fire engines, a ladder truck, water tenders (to bring water to areas not served by municipal water systems) and firefighter equipment:** Most of NWFR’s vehicles which are critical for 911 response have exceeded their planned useful lives. Levy funds would be used to replace needed vehicles and other equipment.

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Proposition 2021-3: Levy Lid Lift cont.

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

All changes should be directed to Kelly.

These changes may include:

Phone

Address

Email

Family Additions

Name changes

How Much will the Levy Lid Lift cost me?

If Proposition 2021-3 is approved, NWFR's fire levy will be raised from \$1.15 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2021, to \$1.45 beginning in 2022. Costs to property owners will depend on the assessed value (set by the Whatcom County Assessor) of their property. The following table provides two examples of costs—currently, and under the proposed levy lid lift. A \$400,000 homeowner would pay approximately \$10.13/month more under the levy lid lift.

Assessed property value	Annual cost at current levy rate of \$1.15/\$1,000	Annual cost at proposed levy rate of \$1.45/\$1,000	Increased cost if lid lift were in place in 2021
\$400,000	\$458.40	\$580.00	\$121.60/year or \$10.13/month
\$600,000	\$687.60	\$870.00	\$182.40/year or \$15.20/month

The assessed value of properties changes each year. The levy rate will decline over time as assessed values in the District rise.

The proposed levy lid lift measure will not impact the Countywide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy which funds advance life support (medics) across Whatcom County.

You Decide

Voters will be asked whether to approve Proposition 2021-3, the levy lid lift, on the August 2021 ballot.

If approved, the new levy rate of \$1.45 per \$1,000 of assessed value will begin in 2022.

If rejected, NWFR will assess why voters rejected the measure, respond, and likely go back to voters on a future ballot. As our population and demand for service and operation costs rise, NWFR will have to address budget gaps by seeking additional property taxes and/or changing how services are delivered. In the interim, we will explore other options, including foregoing cost of living increases for staff, which could risk them leaving the department.

Partnering to Serve Fire District 4

NWFR has been providing fire and emergency medical services to Fire District 4 for nearly 10 years under a joint operating agreement. To address similar financial challenges, District 4 is separately seeking voter approval of a levy lid lift (also \$1.45 per 1,000 assessed value) on the August election.

NWFR and District 4 are also exploring the possibility of a Regional Fire Authority (RFA)—a special purpose district established by voters in a service area. Due to District 4 leadership changes RFA discussions were paused but are expected to resume in 2022.

What's Next

We know the community will have more questions about the levy lid lift and we will continue to share factual information. Please visit www.nwfrs.net/levy-lid-lift/, email: info@nwfrs.com or call: 360.318.9933.

Member of a community, civic or agricultural organization? We are happy to make a presentation to your group and/or provide additional information for newsletters and/or websites.



New Member Biography



By *Evan Maack*

I was born and raised in the Inland Northwest, Spokane, WA to be exact. The oldest sibling of two children. My younger sister attended Western WA and played on the WWU Women's Soccer team that won the National Championship in 2016. Now she lives in Seattle doing marketing for a tech company. My parents have been small business owners in Spokane for over 30 years. They have always been very involved and supportive in all the things my sister and I do.

Growing up I was all about sports! Involved in just about every athletic activity you could put a kid in. With my dad always finding a way to be one of the coaches. As I got older, I became passionate about track and football. In the end, track is where I excelled the most, so I stuck with it and ran for a couple of years at Spokane Falls Community College where I received my AA.

Through high school and community college my career path was never clear to me. Yet, one thing was, my desire to travel! I spent a few years going in and out of school, working odd jobs, and saving money so I could buy a one-way plane ticket. Once I saved up enough money, I grabbed a backpack and bought a ticket to Costa Rica. The next six months I spent hiking, laying on the beach, and having the adventure of a lifetime. Traveling from the beaches of Costa Rica to the beaches of Mexico. On my journey, I met people from all over the world who were able to have a career abroad. This sparked my interest and opened my eyes to all that was possible.



When I returned home, I planned out a path that would align with finding a career overseas. Attending Western WA and receiving a BA in Environmental Studies was my idea. Over the next three years I became committed to the goal of joining the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps would allow me to serve others, as well as, live the life abroad I had always dreamed of. In 2018, I finished my degree and was accepted to serve in Peace Corps Philip-

ines doing Coastal Resource Management.



Serving in the Peace Corps has been one of the most monumental experiences of my life. I lived in the small town of Calatrava, on the island of Tablas. It became my home by the sea. It was a year full of unknowns, exploration, and constant learning. There were plenty of ups and downs, but each day I grew a little more understanding of how I fit into this weird experience. One of the toughest parts for any volunteer is knowing your time is coming to an end and figuring out what you are going to do after. This is where the idea of becoming a firefighter first entered my mind.

In the Philippines I was only able to call home every couple of weeks, which meant my phone calls were precious and were reserved to the closets of family and friends. One of these phone calls was to my best friend, who finally landed the career fire job he always wanted. Once a month and every month after that when I called, we talked about his career. He shared with me all the

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Events to Celebrate June Birthdays

- 2 — *Mike Nelson*
- 8 — *John Geleynse*
- 8 — *Delanie Warne*
- 11 — *David Varivoda*
- 15 — *Jason Donnelly*
- 17 — *D.J. Riehl*
- 21 — *Blake Scott*
- 28 — *Kelly Freeman*



NWFR Board Meetings may be conducted via Zoom Meeting/Webinar

Thurs. June 17
9408 Odell St 61
Blaine — 1:00 p.m.





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PO Box 286
Lynden, WA 98264

Providing quality service for
a safe community



CPR / AED Classes 2021

Class will be held at various
fire stations around the district. Check out

<https://www.nwfrs.net/resources/classes/> for more
information and to reserve
your spot.

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



FOR THE SAFETY OF
EVERYONE IN OUR
COMMUNITY, ALL CPR
CLASSES HAVE BEEN
CANCELLED UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE.

WE APOLOGIZE FOR
ANY INCONVENIENCE

Lieutenant Adam Smith Promoted to Captain

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue completed an assessment center for anticipated captain's openings on Wednesday, April 21, 2021.

The assessment center consisted of evaluators from both inside and outside the district. Stations included oral resume, strategies and tactics, conflict resolution and problem solving. The district received many compliments and comments from the assessors regarding the caliber and professionalism of each of our candidates.

Chief's interviews were then conducted with the three top scoring candidates by Chief Van der Veen and Chief Bill

Hewett of the Bellingham Fire Department.

Lieutenant Adam Smith was promoted to Captain effective Monday, May 17, 2021. He will assume the role of the D Shift Captain at Birch Bay Station 63.

His wife, Jamie and family were invited to participate in a pinning ceremony at Laurel Station 69 on Friday, May 14, 2021. His wife pinned on his new badge and bugles.

Adam has been with the district since 2006.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Member Bio cont.

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crazy calls, everything he was learning, the mistakes he made, and the joy he got out of serving others. After many of these calls I would sit in an empty rice field, drinking Tuba (coconut wine) with stray dogs and chickens, daydreaming about what it would be like to be a firefighter. It was then when I decided to chase down this new dream.

When I returned home, I immediately went to my local fire station and asked what I needed to do to become a volunteer. I spent the next few months attending volunteer academy for Spokane County District 9, while working a 9-5 at Costco. Once I had gotten my first taste of live fire I was hooked. Knowing that landing my dream fire job could be tomorrow or seven years from now, I was committed to the process. When I received the

call from Chief Van der Veen, I was beyond ecstatic! Landing my dream job in a familiar place and city that I love was the light at the end of 2020. Oh, also not having to bag groceries again. Thank you for this opportunity! I am excited to be at North Whatcom and can't wait to see what the years bring with this new adventure.

