

OFFICER'S MEETING
Thursday, March 1, 2018
Station 61 – Blaine

Attendees: Chiefs Pernet, Noonchester and Hollander; Training Captain Jorgensen; Captains Johnson and Ward; Lieutenants Ahrenholz, Biery, Esser, Hofstad, McPhail, Nielsen, Nelson, Paige, Riehl, LSmith and Zylstra; Volunteer Dale Rutgers.

BRIEFING BY DISTRICT FIRE CHIEF PERNETT

Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) Program

Chief Pernet provided information regarding the GEMT Program.

Chief Pernet noted that this is a voluntary Certified Public Expenditure base program that provides supplemental cost based payments to eligible providers that render GEMT services to Medicaid enrollees. For qualifying agencies, the supplemental payments cover the funding gap between provider's actual costs per GEMT transport and the allowable amount received from Medicaid along with any other sources of reimbursement. Chief Pernet noted that the district could possibly recoup up to 66% of the actual Medicare / Medicaid transport costs.

BIAS Software – Image Trend Software

Admin is in the process of replacing the old Sage accounting software to Bias. The new software is more user friendly and will work with Crewsense to generate timesheets, track overtime, sick and vacation time in the near future. Some other districts are already utilizing Bias with favorable results.

As a result of the EMS Levy, all agencies will be switching to Image Trend, a new emergency patient care reporting (EPCR) and records management system (RMS) program. The program will hopefully launch in late March following the arrival of the new EMS Manager Mike Hilley.

1998 Annexation Agreement

An annexation agreement was put in place in 1998 between the City of Bellingham and the surrounding fire districts. The agreement in part, compensates fire agencies including District #4 for future annexations by the City of Bellingham. The City of Bellingham would like to renegotiate the agreement to allow them to form a regional fire authority (RFA) with District #7. The agreement is expected to be mutually beneficial to all agencies involved.

Mandatory Sick Leave

Recently the state passed a mandatory sick leave act. Although the district's sick leave well exceeds the new state rules and regulations, the district needs to ensure they remain compliant and will be moving forward with developing a sick leave policy. The part-time training secretary is the only employee whose sick leave will be effected.

Strategic Planning

The district strategic plan which was approved by the NWFR Board of Fire Commissioners last year, has appeared to have stalled in the past few months. The NWFR Board is expected to

attend a retreat during the first quarter to discuss ways to move the plan forward. The chairs of each initiative should expect emails in the near future requesting updates and providing additional instructions.

Coffee with the Fire Chief

Chief Pernet plans to continue with “Coffee with the Fire Chief” on a monthly basis. The informal meeting is a good opportunity for the chief to express appreciation to the staff, have informal conversations and answer questions.

Firefighter Swobody Update

Chief Pernet announced that FF Swobody has applied for disability retirement effective February 28. He will be recognized at an upcoming NWFR Fire Commissioner Meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 19 at Odell Station 61 at 1:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend to honor John and thank him for his service. Given the significance of the event, it is appropriate for members to wear their class “A” uniforms.

In addition, a picture frame mat is currently circulating between the stations for everyone to sign for FF Swobody. Once complete, a picture and frame will be added and presented to John along with other memorabilia during the April 19 NWFR Fire Commissioner Meeting.

Chief Pernet noted that FF Swobody will continue to be a part of the NWFR family even after he retires.

Streaming NWFR Fire Commissioner Meetings

A web based camera has been installed at Odell Station 61 which will be used to stream all future NWFR Fire Commissioner Meetings. The meetings will be saved on the district website and can be accessed by the public.

SAFETY

Lt Nelson reminded members to stay home when they are ill. There has been over 100 flu related deaths in the state of WA so far this season. Remember to practice good hygiene and protect yourselves during calls and at the hospital. Lt Paige agreed noting the masks can be worn when responding to respiratory and flu symptom related calls.

Lt Esser has noticed that members are making a habit of adhering to the new hearing protection policy.

Cpt Johnson reminded members to be cognizant of narrow roads and soft shoulders. There was discussion regarding the cement truck rollover on Britton Rd and the Mt. Baker Highway.

Lt Biery noted that there were some burnt outlets in the dorm room at Birch Bay Station 63. A request was submitted on the Extranet back in August, but has not yet been completed.

Acting Lt Hofstad inquired about receiving additional training for FF exposures during motor vehicle accidents, specifically on highways. Acting Lt Hofstad agreed to work with the training division to investigate the current state recommendations and curriculum.

Lt Ahrenholz reminded members to be aware when training near the power lines on the training grounds at Britton Loop Station 12.

LOGISTICS

Apparatus Update

A 62 (AP103) has been swapped with A13 (AP112); minor inventory on AP103 has yet to be installed.

E61 (AP513) in the shop; Expected to be back in service as of today; be aware that a small amount of coolant was found in the oil which needs to be monitored.

T68 (AP AP208) remains in the shop.

E63 (AP511) MDC components have arrived; all first out apparatus have new screens.

SMARSH Archiving and Retention Update

The district archiving project of backing up all cell phone, texting, website, and social media information as required by WAC 434-662-030 is complete. The information will be kept off site and will make public records requests easier to fulfill in a timely manner. All officer phone information will also be archived.

Paging Status Information Update

Chief Hollander provided an update on resolving the pager issues. Some anomalies have been noted and once optimum repeaters are chosen for each station, dispatchers will be provided with that vital information. Once complete, all stations should be able to hear dispatchers appropriately.

Chief Hollander further noted that it is expected that the H St repeater will be relocated to a better location (J tower on Valley View Rd and H St Rd.) sometime in the spring.

Station Alarms

All station burglar alarms (Haynie St 65 / Delta St 68) have been disconnected. The key pad at Birch Bay Station 63 still needs to be replaced with a toggle switch to enable personnel to unlock the door from the inside.

Server Update

The six year old computer server was replaced the end of March. As a result of the replacement, some issues were discovered locating documents. Tech Help is currently working on the problem. Please contact Chief Hollander if you detect any issues with your work station.

Chief Hollander will investigate why Laurel Station 69 is not receiving faxes and why any documents printed from computers at Laurel Station 69 are being sent to Birch Bay Station 63.

Laurel Station 69 and Delta Station 68 Generator Update

The new generator has been installed at Laurel Station 69. Chief Hollander has yet to confirm that the generator will also run the bay doors. A hole left by the old siren will be addressed in the near future.

The old Station 69 generator will be installed at Delta Station 68 by the end of next week.

Correct Use of Service Requests

Chief Hollander reiterated the importance of utilizing the request forms on the Extranet.

There was additional discussion regarding confirming that issues have been completed and then removing them from the Extranet. Chief Pernet also suggested investigating additional software programs to see if other platforms are more user friendly.

In addition, Chief Hollander noted that any computers having issues need to be left intact to allow TechHelp to log in remotely and work on the problem.

Moving of Equipment When Out of Service

Chief Noonchester requested that he be notified when front line or Delta Station apparatus are taken out of service.

OPERATIONS

Fire Block Maps

Chief Noonchester handed out updated fire block maps to be hung in each station. It was requested that the old ones be removed.

Delta Station 68 Test Tones

Vol Rutgers noted that the test tones conducted during Monday night tender training are very useful.

Medical Director to Retire

While Medical Director Dr. Marvin Wayne is expected to retire, the transition to the new medical director is expected to take a year. Current protocols are expected to remain the same at least for the foreseeable future.

Cpt Jorgensen discussed a recent incident involving a NWR crew and hospital staff. It is crucial that crews notify the hospital when they are transporting a very “sick” person and should “paint a picture” if necessary. Cpt Jorgensen stressed that any issues/concerns with the hospital staff should be documented, reported (*be specific*) following the chain of command as well as documented on EMS online. Cpt Jorgensen, who is also the Whatcom County EMS Quality Care Coordinator, assured the group that all submitted concerns are investigated and miscommunications resolved.

Image Trend Software – Electronic Patient Care Reporting (EPCR) Program

The entire county will be replacing their data collection software and utilizing Image Trend for EPCR and pre fire planning. It is expected that Image Trend will streamline inventory, scheduling and payroll in the near future. Once Image Trend is functioning, FireHouse will be archived and available for public records requests and district use when needed.

Suppression Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy:

The PPE policy was recently approved by the NWFR Fire Commissioners. An accompanying PPE directive was recently emailed to all members along with the approved policy.

Information was requested regarding the definition of “suited up”.

4.2.10 “*At no time shall an apparatus begin response to an emergency unless all members are seated, belted and “suited up”*”. It was explained that “suited up” meant having PPE gear donned prior to responding to a call.

Group Picture

Chief Noonchester announced that once the class “A” hats and gloves arrive, he would like to schedule an officer group picture during a future officer’s meeting. Members will be given plenty of advance warning. It is hoped that a department wide picture can also be taken in the future.

BREAKOUT SESSION – Innovative and Compassionate Care” Algorithm

Chief Noonchester led the group in an exercise to understand how officers make the decision regarding which apparatus to take to certain calls. Considerations included staffing, apparatus, type of call, trainings and proximity to the hospital. Each group presented their findings. It was noted that the district hopes to streamline how the district responds with specific apparatus in the future.

There was a brief discussion regarding when call back systems and mutual aid responses are utilized. Either responses can be utilized in varying situations dependent on what other calls are happening and if sections of the district are exposed. If two stations are committed to a response for an extended amount of time, call backs may be utilized.

Officers continue to be aware of what is happening throughout the district and are opting to “move-up” on a more regular basis.

NEW TOOLS IN TOOL BOX

Gross-Decontamination Tools and Processes

Cpt Jorgensen recently sent out gross-decontamination training via email. Once complete, the training should be logged in FireHouse. At this time the decontamination equipment has only arrived for Britton Loop Station 61 and Britton Loop Station 12. A group decision will need to be made regarding where to place the equipment on first out engines.

The PPE policy covers gross decontamination on the outside of the gear however, the district will look into documenting further instructions for neck, face and clothing. Currently the rehab unit carries extra wipes, shirts and other clothes if needed for gross decontamination.

TRAINING

Officer Development

Lt Esser presented on the topic of negligence.

Negligence exists only if the following three elements are present:

- An act or omission
- Damages to the plaintiff
- Breach of the standard of care

Emergency medical care negligence includes:

- Consent to treat
- Patient abandonment

The group discussed the following:

- Definition of negligence – an aggravated form of negligence that involves an extreme departure from the ordinary standard of care.
- Defenses to negligence include assumption of risk, contributory and comparative negligence, rescue doctrine, last clear chance and the Fireman's rule
- Fireman's rule is a defense to lawsuits filed by firefighters who are injured in the line of duty. Exceptions to the rule include those who negligently caused the incident or negligently caused a dangerous condition that caused the firefighter's injuries.

Lt Esser provided a scenario for discussion.

Chief Pernet noted that the district has liability insurance however, if negligence is proven, insurance will not pay ultimately affecting the district's budget.

It was suggested that officers work through various scenarios with their crew.

IGEL Update

IGELs will be purchased soon and training is expected to occur during the end of March. The training division will keep officers updated of any changes via email. A policy is also on the horizon. Cpt Jorgensen noted that IGELs are easier to use however, since they are larger than King Tubes, storage may be an issue.

Rope Rescue Program

Second quarter training includes adverse terrain level rope rescue (low-medium levels).

True Colors Training

Cpt Jorgensen thanked members for completing the true colors training. The station rotations and coverage went smoothly. An informational email regarding the "true colors" training is expected to be sent out in the near future.

House Scenario Training

The station rotation and coverage for the house scenario training is also going smoothly. Lt Paige noted that the scenario training was great and suggested the chiefs participate when they have time.

Firefighter II Academy

The upcoming FFII academy will take place May 8-14. A flyer will be circulated.

Driver Simulation Training

The driver simulation training will take place March 12-15.

ROUND THE TABLE

Vol Rutgers reiterated that the tender group is always available to assist with any incident. Chief Pernet commented that there has not been many call outs so far this year and Chief Noonchester agreed noting that the tender group's response has always been stellar and the district does rely on their assistance in non-hydranted areas.

A Shift – Cpt Johnson announced that after 19 years in the fire service, he will be retiring effective May 31 although his last shift will be May 2. His retirement plans include traveling, gardening and teaching classes. The chiefs wished him the best in his future endeavors and thanked him for his service.

B Shift – Lt Biery inquired about having a conversation regarding changing the rear bed in E12 (AP517). Currently the engine layout does not mirror the other first out engines. Lt Biery proposed adding 150 ft. hose with a 2 ½ inch pre connect. Lt. Biery was asked to submit the request to the training division via email including suggestions and/or opinions. Once an agreement has been made, a plan will be set in place to make any necessary changes.

D Shift – Acting Lt Hofstad inquired about changing passwords on CAD. The group supplied a few suggestions such as changing the password on a station computer.

Lt LSmith noted that any ECIP inquiries regarding inaccurate inspections by outside vendors should be forwarded to Chief Hollander. ECIP scheduling will continue as is.

Lt LSmith requested the district to schedule and develop all critical ems and fire incident reviews in the future. The reviews are an important follow up for crews and a good learning tool for all involved. She feels a few recent opportunities have been overlooked. Chief Pernet stated that he will make it a priority to schedule analysis (PIA) as needed in the future. Despite best intentions, some recent incidents were not formally reviewed. A suggestion was made for those crews involved to come in off duty so they will not be called away during the review.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 5