

**OFFICER'S MEETING**  
**Thursday, March 2, 2017**  
**Station 61 – Blaine**

Attendees: Chief Pernet, Chief Hollander, Chief Noonchester, Training Captain Jorgensen, Captains Davidson, Schmidt and Ward, Lieutenants Ahrenholz, Esser, McPhail, Nelson, Nielsen, Page, Riehl, ASmith, LSmith, and Zylstra.

**DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION / POLITICAL UPDATE**

**Rumors**

Chief Pernet invited officers to bring forth any rumors they may have heard for clarification.

There has been no discussions with the City of Lynden regarding combining fire districts or training. Chief Pernet is not opposed to having those discussions if the opportunity arises.

Although there is a potential to add a new advanced life support (ALS) medic unit sometime in the future, there has been no decision as to which district will host the unit. The district has expressed an interest in hosting an ALS medic unit. The new EMS Manager position has been posted and additional discussions with the City of Bellingham are expected in the future.

Lynden Fire Department Chief Baar is definitely retiring at the end of April, 2017. Chief Spinner will become the interim fire chief and possibly the permanent fire chief. It was verified from Chief Spinner that the assistant chief position will not be filled.

**Political Update**

Chief Pernet noted that three NWFR and one D#4 fire commissioner positions are up for re-election. Three of the fire commissioners recently attended a Snure seminar on consolidations and mergers. A joint Board meeting has been scheduled in April where consolidations, mergers and fire authorities may be discussed. There was discussion whether the three NWFR open positions can be staggered in the future. Chief Pernet will research the suggestion.

**District 4 / Whatcom County Inter-Local Update**

The Whatcom County EMS levy went into effect January 1, 2017. Since Whatcom County is a senior taxing district it takes precedence over any junior taxing district who also have EMS levies. An inter-local agreement has been drafted that will reimburse any lost revenue to District #4 along with other districts who also have an EMS levy. It is anticipated that the agreement will be signed sometime in the near future.

**Washington Survey and Rating (WSRB)**

A WSRB auditor visited the district on Monday, February 6, 2017, to review several areas including staffing, training, maintenance and hose records, prior to awarding the district a fire protection class rating, utilized by insurance companies for insurance rates. The auditor also toured the district and visited various fire stations. The district is hoping to keep the same fire protection rating and also receive feedback to improve ratings in the future. The audit will take approximately one month to complete.

The district is working on adding the necessary equipment to E62.

### **Emergency Station Phones**

One of the suggestions from the WSRB that NWFR is currently working on is installing public emergency phones outside all fire stations. The phones will automatically connect the caller to 911. The District #4 Board may also make decide to install phones outside their stations.

### **Contract Negotiations**

Contract negotiations are ongoing.

### **Personnel Injury / Illness**

As a result of recent members out due to injury / illness, the district will be focusing on overtime needs and possible changes to the schedule.

### **Fitness for Duty Policy Group**

The district will be forming a fitness for duty policy group, including members of the labor group, who will work on language to set clear guidelines and remove confusion or subjectivity regarding returning to work procedures.

### **Technical Rescue Discussions**

Chief Pernet plans to involve the strategic planning committee to assist with developing a regional technical rescue team in the future. The hope is that multiple agencies will support and share in the cost of maintaining a technical rescue group.

### **Washer Extractors / Drying Cabinets**

Chief Pernet presented a proposal to purchase washer extractors and drying cabinets to the NWFR Fire Commissioners during a recent Board meeting. The district has been unsuccessful in obtaining grant monies for this project thus far. The district will utilize funds from the facilities reserve fund. It is anticipated that the project will cost between \$55,000 and \$60,000. Chief Hollander will be following the bid process and will be approved by the NWFR Fire Commissioners.

- Odell Station 61 – washer extractor and drying cabinet
- Birch Bay Station 63 – drying cabinet
- Laurel Station 69 – washer extractor and drying cabinet

It is expected that a personal protective equipment (PPE) process will be developed and presented through training.

### **SAFETY**

The group discussed a recent incident where B69 became stuck due to ground instability. Chief Noonchester cautioned crews to be extra careful.

There was discussion regarding other potential environmental issues during this time of year. The group discussed the potential for ice related emergencies and where resources could be

located. South Whatcom Fire Authority has ten members trained to deal with ice related emergencies, while the next closest resource is Snohomish Fire District 1.

The group discussed the unique hilly areas around Britton Loop Station 12 and their potential hazards during snow and icy conditions.

An issue with the failure of the drop chains on E63 was discussed. Due to road grime, the chains can become sticky preventing them from dropping down into position properly. The shop recommended that the drop chains be exercised regularly to prevent them from sticking. This recommendation will be added to the current rig check.

Chief Noonchester questioned how the exhaust systems at each station were operating. It appears that on a windy day the exhaust system at Laurel Station 69 is activated all day long. Officers at Odell Station 61 noted that they are having issues with the exhaust system's pressure not working properly. Chief Hollander will investigate both concerns.

Chief Noonchester emphasized the importance of wearing the proper hearing protection to reduce the risk of hearing loss during training and daily operations. Captain Noonchester cautioned the group about having the volume too loud on fire headset intercoms. It was noted that the air compressor at Odell Station 61 is very loud and at one time there had been discussions about providing some sort of barrier to reduce the noise. Chief Hollander will investigate the possibility of relocating the air compressor.

## **FACILITIES / MAINTANENCE / LOGISTICS**

### **Versaterm Update**

Although the Versaterm system has a go live date of April 4, Chief Hollander remains doubtful that the system will be ready. A station computer has been installed at both Birch Bay Station 63 and Odell Station 61 for training purposes. Versaterm training has been scheduled for March through the training division.

### **MDT Hardware**

The new antennas installed at Laurel Station 69 and Chief Pernet's command vehicle are working well. Chief Pernet noted that the computer screen installed in his command vehicle is smaller and remains connected when removed from the holder if used within fifty feet of the vehicle. Another computer will be installed in the new Tahoe and it is hoped that all the bugs will be worked out prior to installation of additional modules. It is expected that all first out engines and aid units will be provided with the new monitors as the old ones fail. Chief Noonchester recognized Lieutenant Riehl for his research behind this technology during his light duty assignment. It is possible that an AFG grant may assist with the funding. A policy will be drafted regarding their proper use in the near future.

### **New Pagers**

The new pagers are currently experiencing small glitches.

### **Laurel Station Gutters**

Laurel Station 69 does not have gutters over the man doors, which caused water run off that turned to ice. There are plans to replace the gutters on Friday, March 3. The eaves will be repaired and painted in spring.

### **New Marijuana Business**

A new marijuana business has opened up beside the Shell station on Peace Portal in Blaine. For security purposes, the lock box is located on the corner of the gas station adjacent to the marijuana business. The placement will be inputted into CAD.

### **Birch Bay Hydrant Update**

The new waterline on Birch Bay Lynden and Blaine Road remains offline until the water quality issue is rectified.

### **Snow Plow Drivers**

At certain times the shop is unavailable to utilize the plow to remove the snow in station parking lots. It was agreed that one person per shift at Birch Bay Station 63 will be trained on how to properly use the snow plow. There was a suggestion to purchase a drop spreader to distribute ice melt in larger areas. No decision was made.

### **Emergency Fuel Collection**

It was announced that the shop has the ability to pump fuel into empty barrels during an emergency which requires the removal of large amounts of fuel from vehicles. Berks Towing is another usable resource. Chief Pernet noted that crews are not responsible to clean up hazardous materials releases, but only responsible for mitigating or preventing a release from harming the public or environment.

### **Wiser Lake Station 70 Water Tank**

The supply line in the water tank at Wiser Lake Station 70 froze and has seeped approximately one and one half million gallons of water. There was discussion about shutting the water off from the beginning of winter until spring. The crews will be responsible to check the water level weekly, which may involve climbing a ladder to verify the water level. A policy and/or directive is expected to be developed in the future.

### **Request for Service Forms**

During the last meeting Chief Hollander reported that the request for service forms (*with the exception of apparatus requests*) located on the Extranet had not been working. The issue has been fixed however, it created another minor glitch that has also been rectified.

Chief Hollander noted that the Extranet request forms can now be updated or deleted in batches, making requests easier to manage.

### **Britton Loop Station 12 Parking Lights**

Chief Hollander was contacted with a complaint regarding the repaired lights from the surrounding neighborhood at Britton Loop Station 12. The decision was made to paint the sides

on the lights that face the neighborhood once the weather permits. In the interim, the lights have been disconnected.

### **Birch Bay Station 63 Lighting**

A request was made for additional lights to be installed around the front parking lot and sidewalk for public safety. Currently only flood lights are available and not always utilized due to their illumination. Suggestions were discussed including adding solar lighting, installing additional lighting under the station reader board and/or painting a reflective strip on the sidewalk curb. Chief Hollander will research the options.

In addition, there was a brief discussion regarding the lack of lighting at Laurel Station 69.

## **OPERATIONS**

### **Communication**

Chief Noonchester questioned if officers had seen any improvement in communications between stations. Although improved communications between stations was not confirmed, it was agreed that opening up the monthly officer meetings to include lieutenants has been beneficial. The officers were encouraged to keep in touch with other stations to discuss near misses. Other suggestions were made including resurrecting morning videos and continuing with “Coffee with the Fire Chief”. Both Chief Pernet and Chief Noonchester stated that they have open door policies and want to keep the channels of communication open. In addition, Chief Noonchester is trying to travel between the stations on a more frequent basis.

There was discussion regarding including a near miss blog or forum on the Extranet. Chief Pernet will research any legal ramifications and agreed to consider the suggestion.

There was discussion regarding sharing or taking part in post incident analysis’s (PIA) for both significant fire and EMS incidents. Lessons learned could be shared between all crews. Increased PIAs are expected to be offered in the future. Lieutenant Paige offered to draft a sample document highlighting important information that can be sent out districtwide following PIAs. Chief Pernet agreed that “*knowledge is power*”.

There was discussion regarding adding information about calls on the NWFR Facebook page. At this time, policy 0800.0001.00 Information Management prohibits the addition of incident information on Facebook. Chief Hollander routinely includes weather related and safety messages on Facebook. The Chiefs will investigate what other nearby districts include on their Facebook accounts. In addition, it was noted that the news media contacts the district on significant incidents and they in turn report the information to the public.

### **Pre-Fire Planning**

Chief Noonchester noted that the district is moving forward with pre-fire planning. John Geleynse was recognized for formatting the pre-fire planning document that will be utilized by crews. The document was shared during the meeting and feedback was requested. The document will be available on the new MDCs and finished reports can be embedded into Firehouse. The pre-fire plans will include imperative information on specific addresses that will be available for

use during structure fires and other emergencies. A procedure will accompany the document when complete.

It was also noted that the addition of pre-fire planning is expected to positively affect the districts ISO rating.

### **Best Practices**

Chief Noonchester announced that a committee, including station representatives, will be formed to review the draft best practices document. The document will streamline how the district operates on the fire ground and at vehicle accidents and create consistency. Chief Noonchester shared the draft document. Additional discussion is anticipated.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy**

A committee consisting of Chief Noonchester, Captain Davidson, Lieutenant Nelson, firefighters Cunningham and Ross met to develop a PPE policy. The policy will include PPE capabilities, district guidelines, as well as care and maintenance. Lieutenant Nelson and firefighter Cunningham will include the manufacture's recommendations regarding inspections and documentation. Captain Davidson will work with the training division to incorporate video training. The policy is expected to be complete prior to the installation of the new washer extractors.

### **BLS Patient Forms**

Chief Noonchester reiterated the importance of filling out all BLS patient forms correctly. Incomplete or incorrect forms have a bearing on how and if the district receives payment for transports.

### **Chain of Command – Injury Reporting**

It is imperative that all injuries and illnesses be reported via the chain of command along with contacting the Health and Wellness Coordinator.

There was discussion about how the current injury forms do not take into account for fire department related illnesses. There was a suggestion to redo the forms.

### **Email Communication**

Chief Pernet emphasized that emails can be perceived differently by each reader. There was discussion regarding the importance of not sending emails when the author is angry or upset but instead waiting one day and reviewing their correspondence prior to sending. It was noted that sometimes a phone call may be the better choice. Chief Pernet reminded the group that all emails sent via district email accounts are considered public record and should be utilized for district related business.

### **New Tools in the Tool Box**

- Plug-n Dike – Used to patch tanks containing acids. To be utilized to contain not clean up acids during minor incidents.

- Hose loads – All need to be the same and most efficient for the district. Any adjustments need to be discussed with operations and approved prior to moving forward with any modifications. A procedure needs to be formalized for suggesting and experimenting with modifications.
- Struts – Captain Ward will check with the shop regarding relocating the E69 struts to become more congruent with other district engines.
- Step Chocks – All engines have one pair of identical step chocks.

Chief Pernet noted that he appreciates and encourages all members' innovative ideas.

## TRAINING

### **Support**

Captain Jorgensen expressed his appreciation for the support and honest feedback he has been receiving. He plans to work closely with operations and changes to the training division are expected in the near future.

### **Officer Development**

Captain Jorgensen is posting training opportunities on the district's Extranet under training. It is anticipated that officer development opportunities will be broached during these monthly meetings.

### **Continuance Quality Improvement (CQI) Reports**

Captain Jorgensen pointed out the medical reports are not being faxed to the hospital within the two hour time frame, if at all. Captain Jorgensen stressed that reports are expected to be faxed to the hospital within the appropriate time frame as requested by Dr. Wayne. The hospital attaches the reports to the patient's chart and are utilized by the physicians as needed.

### **Logging Training Hours**

Captain Jorgensen noted that it is crucial that all probationary firefighter's drive time is logged in Firehouse. There was discussion regarding how drive time will be documented and how it could be inputted in to Firehouse (training and reports). Chief Hollander will check with Firehouse to see how best to log the drive time. The district will need to research the NFPA's specific requirements regarding drive time and the best way to document the training for all members.

### **Training Schedule / Upcoming Schedule**

Captain Jorgensen passed out the February through April training schedule for review. A copy has also been placed on the Extranet. The training included:

- Versa Term training (3/13-3/16)
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly training
- Driver / Pump Ops training for Probationary firefighters (4/10-4/12)
- NWFR / D#7 Multi Company Officer training (4/14-4/13)
- ALS/BLS Interface (4/4-4/11)
- SALT training (4/24-4/27)
- Britton Loop Station 12 & Laurel Station 69 Training

It was suggested that training be added to the station Google calendars.

**Other**

**B-Shift** – A request was made to order custom hearing protection (\$100 per employee). The operations division will investigate.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Chief Pernet shared a thank you for service letter. Lieutenant Zylstra, and firefighters Hofstad and Lyshol responded to the call.

Lieutenant L Smith provided information regarding a firefighter currently out on sick leave.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 13