



Volume 18 Issue

Aug, 2025



Feature Stories

- New Member
- Tender Volunteer
- Fire History
- July Calls

2025 STATISTICS

July 1 — July 31

District Average Response Time:

9 min. 56 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 24

EMS: 352

Other: 177

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

"Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community"

New Member Profile



by Chief Melillo

Hi, I'm Tony! I was born in Placerville, California, and moved to Bellingham when I was about 10. The trip was one of those classic Hallmark movie scenes — my brother and I in the back of the Suburban towing a U-Haul as we headed north after my dad took a job based in Bellingham. I remember pulling into the Fairhaven area of Bellingham, looking at the rain, and the people walking their dogs, jogging, etc. I thought, it's way too cold and rainy to be outside. It took some time to get used to it, but

I've called the Pacific Northwest home ever since.

Growing up less than a tenth of a mile from Lake Padden Golf Course, my brother and I spent a lot of time down there. Exploring the lake, playing golf, fishing, I find it funny these days of how good I had it back then.

I got my start in the fire service in 1999 as a volunteer with Whatcom Fire District 10, then spent time with District 9 as a resident firefighter. Around that time, I was hired by the Department of Natural Resources doing wildland firefighting. I spent five seasons with the DNR, getting to fight fire all over the state. In 2008, I was hired full time with South Whatcom Fire Authority and stayed there for another 16

years before moving over to North Whatcom Fire & Rescue this past April. 26 years in the fire service so far and counting. I've always loved the problem-solving side of this work. That's what it really comes down to for me.

My wife is also a firefighter, though she does the real hero work as a Paramedic in North Snohomish County. Since I was promoted to Chief and don't go on many calls, there's no longer a debate in our house of who does the hero work. We've got four great kids: Griffin (20), Payton (19), Wyatt (14), and Luca (12), plus two golden retrievers named June and Maggie (they're sisters), and two cats, one of whom—Leo—is an unapologetic criminal.

continued on pg. 2



*North Whatcom
Fire and Rescue
welcomes suggestions
for upcoming
newsletters. Please
submit your ideas or
suggestions to
info@nwfrs.com*

July Top Responders

FF May (67)
CPT Thompson (67)
FF Russell (65)
CPT Bowen (65)
FF Gerow (65)



New Member cont.

continued from pg. 1

When I'm not working, I'm usually either out exploring remote areas with the family in our overland rigs or in the garage prepping for the next trip. Overlanding has become my main hobby, and it's one of the ways we all get to spend time together outdoors.



NWFR Recognizes Tender Support Group Volunteer

Tender Support Volunteer Branden Millsap turned in his resignation last month to pursue a new adventure in another state.

Branden has had a long fire service career not with just NWFR (13 years) but also with Marietta (3 years), South Lake Whatcom, District #18 (4 years).

Chief Van der Veen and Tender Support Volunteer Scott Wood presented Branden with a years of service plaque and metal artwork created by fellow Volunteer Tommy Erickson.

While the district is sad to see Branden leave, we are excited to

see what the future has in store for him.



L to R: Scott Wood, Branden Millsap, Chief Van der Veen

This Month in Fire History: August

FIREHOUSE



August 2, 1978, Brooklyn, NY – Waldbaum's Supermarket Fire

On August 2, 1978, a fire broke out at the 15,000 square foot supermarket, resulting in the deaths of six FDNY firefighters. The supermarket was undergoing renovations but remained open for business. No visible signs of fire only light smoke on arrival.

Inside, there were also two ceilings – a drop ceiling and an older tin ceiling. The drop ceiling was 18 inches below the ornamental tin ceiling. The original tin ceiling was 16-feet above the floor.

Conditions on the inside were improving with light smoke. Crews were hitting fire in the ceiling of the mezzanine. Conditions outside on the roof were different. At first, there was very little smoke coming out of the cuts in the roof. The member operating on the roof did not know that there was double roof installed. Conditions on the roof were indicative of a more severe fire condition than was being observed inside the store.

A catastrophic event had occurred and a 4,000 square foot area opened and erupted into intense fire. The collapse plunged 12 firefighters into the flames below. While six were

rescued, tragically, six others lost their lives.

August 5, 1949, Gates of the Mountain, MT – Mann Gulch Forest Fire

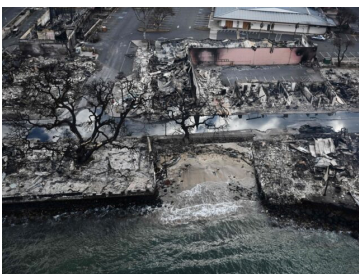
On August 4, 1949, a lightning storm ignited dry grass and shrubs in Mann Gulch, Helena National Forest. The combination of drought conditions, high temperatures, low humidity and strong winds created an environment highly susceptible to rapid fire spread. The Forest Service dispatched 15 smokejumpers from Missoula to battle the blaze.



The fire reportedly covered 3,000 acres in 10 minutes. Two smokejumpers found shelter in a crevice in the canyon's rock wall. The other 13 firefighters were overtaken by the fire and lost their lives.

August 8, 2023, Maui, HI – Maui Wildfires

On August 8, 2023, wind driven wildfires destroyed more than 2,200 structures and caused approximately \$5.5 Billion in damages. The most significantly impacted area was the historic district of Lahaina, where 102 lives were lost.



These wildfires were fueled by a combination of dry conditions and strong winds (80 mph). The high winds fueled the brush fires that destroyed thousands of acres and caused extensive property damage. Rescue efforts were hampered by the high winds, road closures, power outages and 9-1-1 system failures. Helicopter rescues were impossible in the 80 mph winds.

August 16, 2020, Northern California – The August Complex Fire

The August Complex was a massive wildfire that burned the Coast Range of Northern California. The complex originated as 38 separate fires started by lightning strikes on August 16-17, 2020. By September 10, 2020, the August Complex had become the largest blaze in California history. It burned a total of 1,032,648 acres across six counties in Northern California, making it the first "gigafire" (more than a million acres) in California history.



Source URL: <https://www.firehouse.com/operations-training/article/55041408/this-month-in-fire-history-may-2024>

30 Fires You Must Know, Billy Goldfedder and Frank Leeb, Fire Engineering Books, Copyright 2024



Events to Celebrate August Birthdays

2 – Troy Freeman
6 – Mike Lysbol
19 – Tony Esser
20 – Matt Rigberg
25 – Cody Bowen
31 – Kris Jorgensen
(June 2 – Mike Nelson)

Area Food Bank Donations – 90 pounds

NWFR Meetings will be conducted in person

Thur. Aug. 21

9408 Odell St 61

Blaine — 10:30 a.m.

District 4 Meetings continue to be conducted via Zoom with some in person

Mon. Aug. 18

4142 Britton Loop St 12

Bellingham — 12:00 p.m.





1507 E. Badger Rd
PO Box 286
Lynden, WA 98264

Providing quality service for
a safe community



CPR / AED Classes 2025

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

<https://www.nwfrs.net/cpr-course/>

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.



CPR Dates

Aug 16

Aug 28

Bellingham Whatcom..
@BWCFFBF



venmo

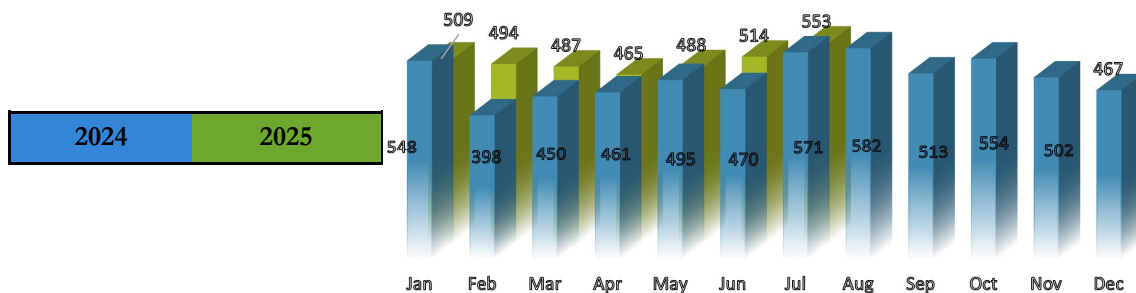
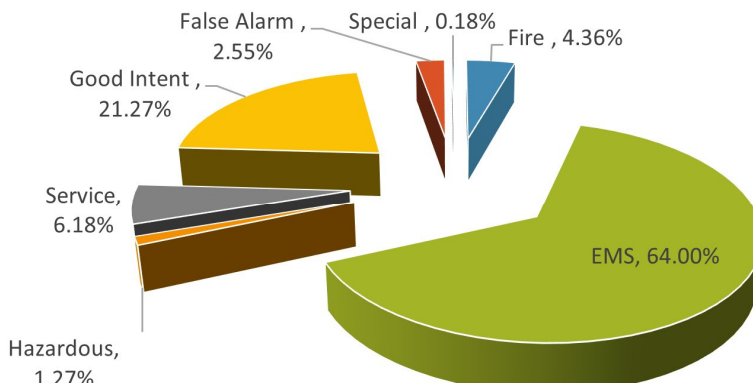
Benevolent Fund
Donation Link

July Calls

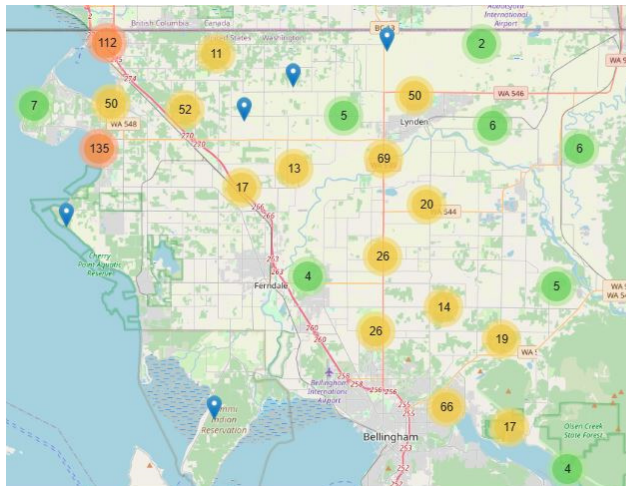
Total Calls = 553

Types of Calls

False Alarms = 14



Location of Calls



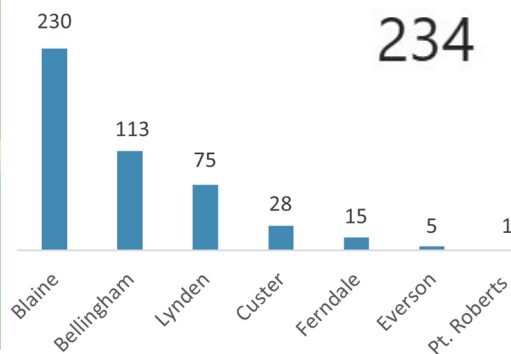
Average Calls Per Day

18.43



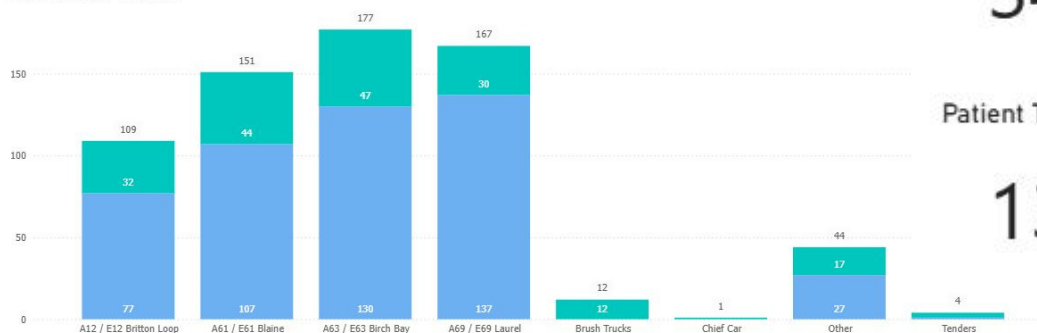
Total Overlapping Calls

234



Apparatus Responses

Dispatch Category ● EMS ● Fire



Patient Care Reports

348

Patient Transports

130