



Volume 19 Issue 2

Feb, 2026



Feature Stories

- Our Community
- BERT
- Probation Complete
- January Calls



2026 STATISTICS

Jan 1 — Jan 31

District Average Response Time:

10 min. 05 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 8

EMS: 387

Other: 148

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

Whatcom County Fire District 21 (NWFR)

"Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community"

Happy Valentines to Our Community

Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate love—and at the fire department, there's no question about who has our hearts: our community.



Every call we respond to, every training hour we log, and every event we attend is driven by our commitment to the people we serve. Our community isn't just where we work—it's where we live, raise our families, and build lasting relationships. You are our neighbors, friends, and partners, and it's an honor to serve you.



Last year we polar plunged with you, had water fights with you, we block partied with you, we carved pumpkins with you, helped raise food for the food bank and toys for underprivileged kids.

We had hundreds of conversations with your kids in classes, safety fairs and career fairs. We even let teachers spray water out of the hoses!

We see the strength of this community every day and we also see it's struggles. Thank you for the waves, horn blast requests, thank-you notes taped to the station door,



treats and for stopping by just to check in, bring coffee, or say "stay safe." These moments remind us why this work matters.

Community support makes a real difference in our ability to serve, and we are also proud to give back beyond emergency response. From fire prevention education and CPR classes to parades, fundraisers, and public safety

events, we value every opportunity to connect. If you have an event, meeting or celebration you would like us



involved in please reach out to our office. Because at the end of the day, this community is why we do what we do—and we wouldn't have it any other way.



Every day, we have the privilege of serving the people who make this place home. Whether it's responding to emergencies, offering help during difficult moments, or *continued on pg. 2*

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

January
Top Responders
CPT Schmidt (65)
CPT Mulrooney (61)
FF Gerow (59)



Valentine's cont.

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sharing a smile during community events, our work is rooted in care, compassion, and connection. That's a kind of love that goes far beyond one day on the calendar.

We feel the love from our community in countless ways. From kind words and thank-you notes to waves as we drive by and support at local events, these gestures mean more to us than you may realize. They remind us that we are not just first responders—



we are neighbors serving neighbors.

Valentine's Day also reminds us that love is action. It's showing up when someone needs help. It's training hard so we're ready at a moment's notice. It's taking time to educate, prevent, and protect. Our commitment to this community is built on those everyday acts of service.

We're grateful for the trust you place in us and the partnership we share. Your support fuels our mission and strengthens everything we do. Together, we make this community safer, stronger, and more resilient.

So this Valentine's Day, know that you are appreciated. Thank you for your kindness, your encouragement, and your unwavering support. Serving you is an honor—and one we don't take lightly.

From all of us at the fire department: Happy Valentine's Day. We love our community.



BERT: Neighbors Supporting Neighbors Until Help Arrives

by David Leu

During everyday emergencies, our fire district's crews respond quickly and professionally — and our community depends on and trusts that expertise. But in a major disaster, such as a severe storm/flooding, earthquake, or tsunami events, emergency resources must focus first on the most urgent, life-threatening needs. This is where the **Blaine Emergency Response Team (BERT)** can play a helpful, community-level role for those neighborhoods impacted but waiting for pro-

fessional help.

BERT is a volunteer-led, neighborhood-based effort designed to help residents stay informed, connected, and safe while waiting for professional responders during large-scale events. The group does **not** replace fire, EMS, or law enforcement. Instead, BERT supports the overall response by gathering basic situational information from neighborhoods — such as blocked roads, vulnerable residents needing medical attention, or areas without communication — and relaying that

information when emergency agencies are able to receive and act on it.

Who Makes Up BERT?

BERT volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds, bringing valuable skills that strengthen community readiness. The team includes:

- Retired and active firefighters and EMS personnel who understand incident priorities and responder safety

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BERT cont.

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- Medical professionals with experience in patient assessment and community health
- Radio specialists and licensed amateur radio operators who can maintain communication when normal systems fail
- Trained, certified, and registered Whatcom County CERT members who follow standardized, FEMA-based practices
- Contractors and tradespeople who assisted during recent flood emergencies and understand local infrastructure challenges

Community volunteers who want to help with logistics, documentation, wellness checks, and who are trained to conduct document neighborhood damage assessments.

This diverse mix ensures that BERT remains grounded in safe practices, respects the role of professional responders, and focuses on tasks appropriate for trained volunteers.

A Supportive Role During Major Incidents

When call volumes surge or access is limited, early neighborhood-level information can help professional first responders build a clearer picture of conditions across Blaine and Birch Bay. BERT volunteers stay within safe, simple tasks: checking on neighbors, sharing accurate information, and documenting what they see — never entering hazardous areas or attempting hazardous rescue operations.

By strengthening neighborhood readiness and improving communication during major incidents, BERT complements the

work of our first responders with a goal of providing them key information on the status of our community while it waits for professional help. It's one more way neighbors can support one another — and support the professionals who serve us every day.

BERT has published a website, which can be viewed at



[https://
blainebert.my.canva.site/](https://blainebert.my.canva.site/)



Events to Celebrate February Birthdays

7 – Tony Melillo
16 – Burr McPhail
19 – Keagan Kinglien
19 – Anthony Marra
22 – Jeff Hofstad
24 – Julie Smits
26 – Danny Jensen

2025 Blaine Food Bank Donation - #410

District 21 (NWFR)
Meetings will be conducted in person
Thur. Feb. 19
9408 Odell St 61
Blaine — 10:30 a.m.

District 4 Meetings
continue to be conducted via Zoom with quarterly and special in person
Thurs. Feb. 12
4142 Britton Loop St 12
Bellingham — 12:00 p.m.



Probationary Year Complete

Chief Van der Veen and Deputy Chief Melillo had the pleasure of handing out “You’re Off Probation” letters this past month.

These firefighters have trained hard and studied harder, and now they’re official. Welcome to the team FF Gerow, FF Viant, FF Smith, and FF Russell.



Congratulations





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

Providing quality service for
a safe community



CPR / AED Classes 2026

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

Check out
<https://www.nwfrs.net/cpr-course/>
for updated information
about our program, 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/First Aid

Feb 9

Bellingham Whatcom..
@BWCFFBF

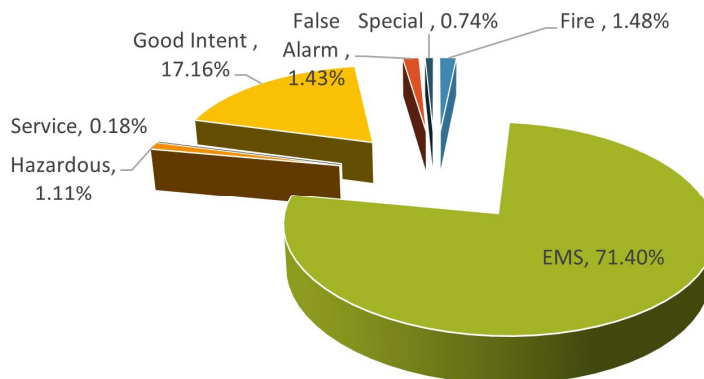


venmo

Benevolent Fund
Donation Link

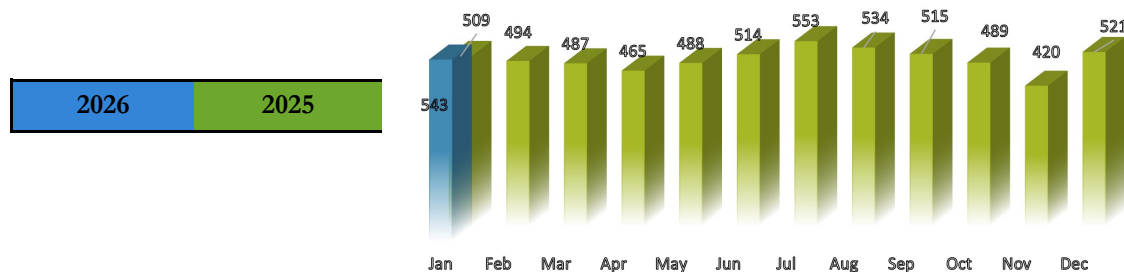
January Calls

Total Calls = 543

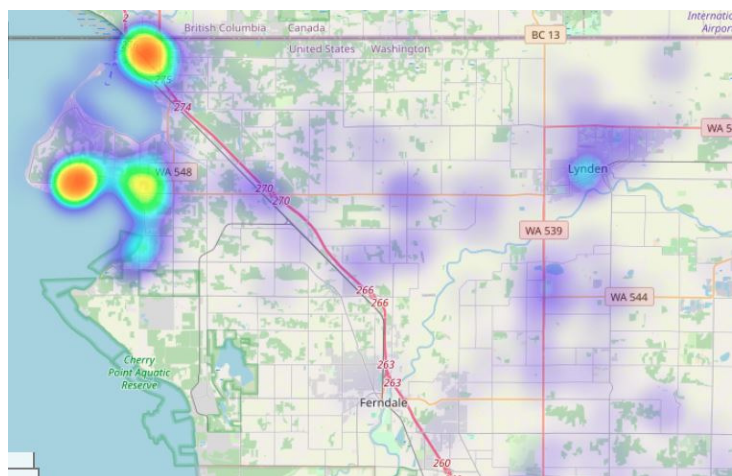


Types of Calls

False Alarms = 24

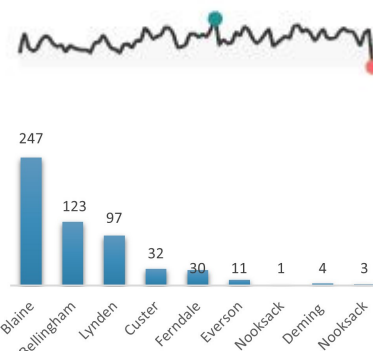


Location of Calls



Average Calls Per Day

18.10



Total Overlapping Calls

215

Apparatus Responses

