



Volume 19 Issue 3

March, 2026



Feature Stories

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- Emergency Preparedness
- February Calls

2026 STATISTICS

Feb 1 — Feb 28

District Average Response Time:

9 min. 56 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 12

EMS: 258

Other: 119



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”

Concurrency: Understanding the Challenges



by Chief Van der Veen

When Every Second Counts: Understanding the Challenge of Multiple Emergency Calls

When you call 911, you expect help to arrive quickly, and your fire district's Firefighters/EMTs are committed to making that happen. However, a growing challenge is consistently affecting our ability to respond in a timely manner. Multiple emergencies occurring at the same time are causing delays in our ability to reach your emergency. We want to take a moment to be transparent with our community about this issue and what it means for the people we serve.

A System That Has Not Grown with the Community

Our fire district has been unable to add additional response units since 2007. In the years since, our community has grown, call volumes have increased, and the complexity of the emergencies we respond to has evolved. Yet the number of Firefighter/EMTs available to respond has remained unchanged. This is not a reflection of a lack of dedication among our personnel or leadership; it is a direct result of funding limitations that have prevented the district from expanding our resources to meet growing demand for services.

To ensure our response units remain staffed at the minimum safe levels required by national, industry-recognized standards, the district has also made the difficult decision to reduce administrative staff. Every available dollar has been directed toward keeping Firefighter/EMTs on the apparatus and ready to respond. While this reflects our commitment to maintaining safe and effective response teams, it also leaves little budgetary flexibility to address the broader resource

gap.

What This Means for Response Times

The impact of multiple calls is measurable and real. Currently, 30% of the time district-wide, and up to 40% in our more heavily populated areas, the closest available unit to an emergency is already committed to another call. That means that in nearly one out of every three emergencies, the unit responding to your neighborhood is not the one stationed nearest to you. Instead, a unit from farther within our district, or even from a neighboring district outside our immediate service area, must cover the call. While our mutual aid partners are invaluable and respond professionally, greater distances mean longer travel times. In emergencies involving cardiac arrest, structure fires, or serious trauma, every minute matters.

What We Are Doing About It

Our district leadership is actively working to identify funding solutions to close this gap. We have pursued grants, formed regional

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

February Top Responders

Cpt. Brown (55)
FF Geleyne (45)



Concurrency cont.

continued from pg. 1

partnerships, and worked with local and state governments to make the case for increased investment in emergency services. We are committed to being responsible stewards of public funds and to being honest with our community about the consequences of an under-resourced system.

How You Can Help

Staying informed is the first step, and we appreciate you taking the time to read this. We encourage community members to attend local government meetings and to ask questions about public safety funding. Your voice matters in these conversations.

We are proud to serve this community and remain committed to

doing so with professionalism, skill, and integrity. On every call, every day. We also believe you deserve to know the challenges we face so we can work together toward solutions.

**2025 Total
Overlapping
Calls
2,547**

Fire District 21 Remembers Commissioner Fischer



Illinois, Washington State, Italy, Las Vegas, Germany and back to Las Vegas. He was discharged in 1981.

Harbor Boat Center.

[More Information](#)

Scott settled in Bellingham, and for the next four years worked in the fishing industry.

Scott was hired by the Port of Bellingham as an airport firefighter and retired after thirty-two years of service.

A memorial service will be held March 21 at noon at the Blaine

Please join Fire District 21 in remembering former Fire Commissioner Scott Fischer, who served the district from January, 2020 — August, 2024. He resigned due to an illness.

Scott Fischer was born in Bellingham. He has two sisters, and one brother. Scott's family moved to Birch Bay in 1960. He graduated from Blaine High School in 1970.

Following graduation, Scott served our country, joining the United States Air Force (USAF). He was stationed in various places such as Texas,



Emergency Preparedness

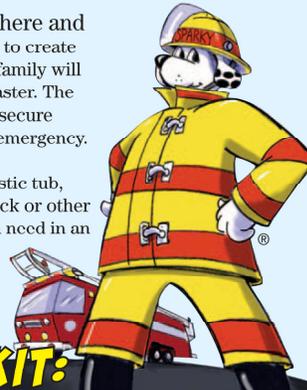
In a disaster, local officials and first responders cannot reach everyone immediately. Help may not arrive for hours or days. You and members of your community need to be prepared ahead of time.



GET READY!

Disasters can happen anywhere and at any time. By taking the time to create an emergency supplies kit, your family will be prepared in the event of a disaster. The kit also helps children feel more secure knowing it is there in case of an emergency.

The supplies can be kept in a plastic tub, small suitcase, trash can, backpack or other container. To learn what else you need in an emergency supplies kit, go to www.ready.gov.



Sparky® is a registered trademark of the NFPA.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES KIT:

- Water – one gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation — store 3-day supply
- Ready-to-eat food, canned juices, comfort/stress foods — at least a 3-day supply
- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio and a NOAA weather radio, and extra batteries for both
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Non prescription drugs such as pain reliever, anti diarrhea medication, antacid, laxative
- Prescription medications, contact lenses and supplies, denture needs
- Whistle to signal for help
- Infant formula and diapers, if you have an infant
- Water and pet food if you have pets
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Dust mask or cotton t-shirt to filter the air
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food
- Aluminum foil
- A jacket or coat, hat and gloves
- A complete change of clothing including long pants, long sleeve shirt, and sturdy shoes stored in a waterproof container.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Rain gear
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Paper towels
- Tent
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Personal hygiene items
- Soap
- Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. Remember to include emergency contact numbers.
- Passport, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers and companies
- Books, games puzzles, portable music device

NOTE: Replace food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs once a year. Replace batteries and update clothes, etc.

My Personal Pack Checklist

Have children create their personal pack. Have them include things like their favorite book or stuffed animal. These familiar things will help keep them comfortable during an emergency.

- ✓ Change of clothes
- ✓ Blanket
- ✓ Books
- ✓ Favorite toy
- ✓ Paper, pencils and crayons



For more information, visit the National Fire Protection Association at www.nfpa.org/disaster.
Developed by NFPA. Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Domestic Preparedness.

Events to Celebrate March Birthdays

- 12 – Trent Viant
- 13 – Tim Johnson
- 19 – Haley Urling-Ehinger
- 25 – John Cranford
- 28 – Sabrina Renskers
- 26 – Danny Jensen

District 21 (NWFR)
Meetings will be conducted in person
Thur. Mar. 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
Mon. Mar. 16
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 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
March 20

Bellingham Whatcom..
@BWCFFBF

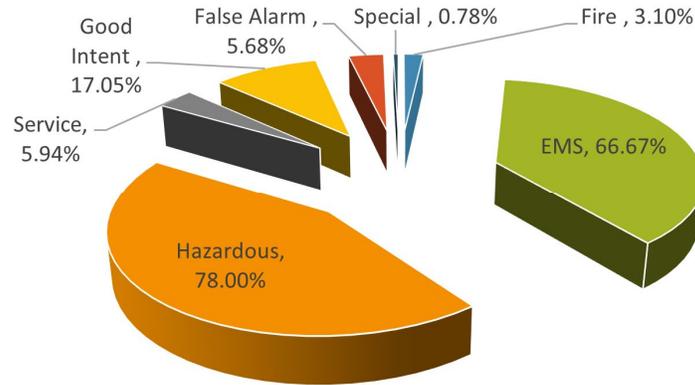


venmo

Benevolent Fund
Donation Link

February Calls

Total Calls = 389

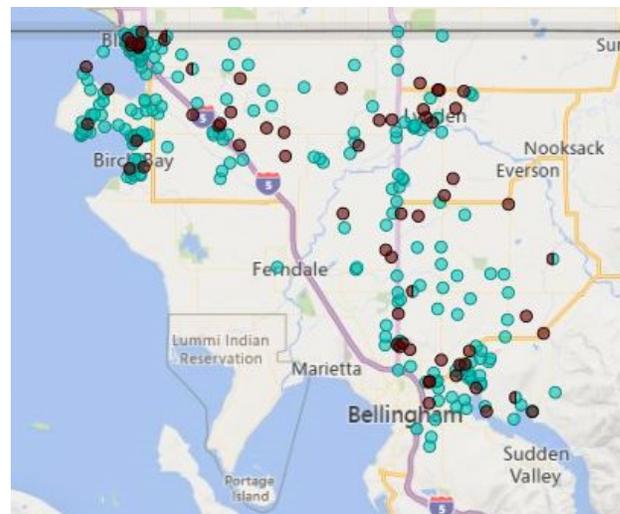


Types of Calls

False Alarms = 22

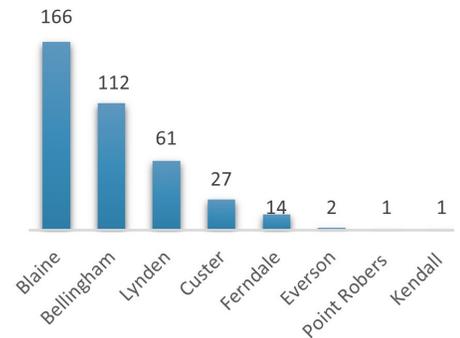


Location of Calls

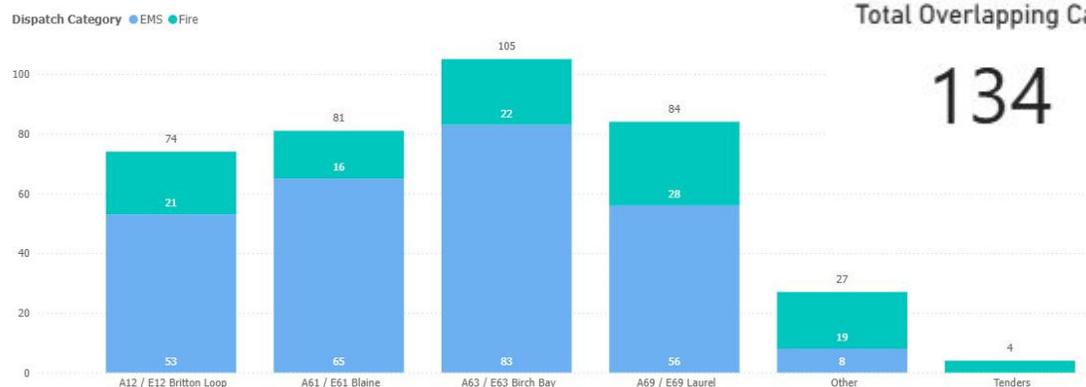


Average Calls Per Day

14.41



Apparatus Responses



Total Overlapping Calls

134