

DEB | Decatur Emergency Brigade

Community Communication | October 2024



THIS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE DECATUR EMERGENCY BRIGADE TO DATE.

Dear Decatur Island Neighbors,

For years, SJC 911 Dispatch, managed by the San Juan County Sheriff, has alerted local responders on outlying islands-including Decatur-through various communication channels. For the Decatur Emergency Brigade, this was done via the I Am Responding (IaR) app. However, San Juan County Sheriff Eric Peters has decided to discontinue this practice. Moving forward, the 911 dispatch office will no longer alert local brigades on the outer islands, including Decatur, for fire or medical emergencies, nor will they use call trees and community lists, which have been a reliable method for decades to engage local first responders.

Though there are changes in practice, DEB is committed to it's Mission:
Enhancing Wildland Fire readiness for Decatur Island and associated public safety.

What This Means for You

When you call 911 from any of the outer islands in San Juan County, including Decatur, to report an emergency, response times will be significantly longer, as no on-island volunteers will be included in the response by default. Alerting local responders now requires an additional step.

Effective Immediately

The Decatur Emergency Brigade has taken proactive steps in response to this change. To ensure continued support for our community, DEB has contracted with a private call center that will maintain an emergency phone number to notify our volunteer responders through multiple channels, including the IaR app. Members of the medical coordination group are actively involved with DEB, and we are working together to mobilize all available local resources in a coordinated and orderly manner in the event of an emergency on Decatur Island.

Please take note of this change in what to expect for a 911 response and ensure you understand how to alert local first responders in an emergency if needed.

IN AN EMERGENCY

1. CALL 911

911 Dispatchers may activate an aeromedical response if deemed necessary. 911 Dispatch may activate Airlift NW or LifeFlight as private responders. Since availability may vary, it's beneficial to have membership plans with both providers:

- * [Airlift NW Membership](#)
- * [LifeFlight Membership](#)

2. CALL 360-218-3081

To alert volunteer FIRE responders from the Decatur Emergency Brigade. When you call, you will be asked:

- * If you've already called 911
- * Type of Incident
- * Incident Details
- * Location (KNOW YOUR COUNTY ASSIGNED ADDRESS)
- * Your name and contact details

-WHAT YOU NEED TO DO-

1. ADD EMERGENCY CONTACT TO YOUR PHONE

[CLICK HERE](#)

to add contact to your mobile device

OR

manually save **360-218-3081** in your contacts under
"Decatur Emergency Brigade"

2. DOWNLOAD AND PRINT "IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY" GUIDE PICTURED BELOW

post it prominently in your home

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

1. CALL 911

INSTRUCT DISPATCH THAT YOU ARE ON DECATUR ISLAND, SAN JUAN COUNTY

2. CALL 360-218-3081

TO ALERT VOLUNTEER FIRE RESPONDERS FROM DECATUR EMERGENCY BRIGADE

(NOTE YOUR STREET ADDRESS ABOVE)



WWW.DEB.TEAM

SUPPORT DEB

The effort required to develop, maintain, and coordinate the participation of nearly 120 of our neighbors involves thousands of volunteer hours each year. Our annual expenses-covering insurance, the call center subscription, and communication tools like the laR app-exceed \$7,000. When you factor in professional training, equipment maintenance, and maintaining modest reserves, these expenses nearly double.

If you value DEB's work for our community, please consider making a tax-deductible donation. Your support helps ensure we can continue providing essential emergency services to Decatur Island.

How to Donate:

* Online: Visit our website [here](#) to make a secure donation online through PayPal or Credit Card.

* Mail: Checks can be made payable to Decatur Emergency Brigade and mailed to DEB's Treasurer: Dave Craggs | 48 Sylvan Cove Rd. | Anacortes, WA | 98221

* In Person: Donations can also be dropped off at the Mail Shed by dropping them into the DNW Mail bin. Ensure envelope contains : Attn: Dave Craggs

Thank you for your involvement and commitment to the safety and well-being of the Decatur community.

Best regards,
DEB Board of Directors
www.deb.team

DONATE NOW

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

For additional insight and transparency.

The Sheriff is an elected position in San Juan County, and the 911 dispatch center falls under the Sheriff's department. There is a trend, as seen in King County in 2020, towards making the Sheriff's role an appointed position and organizing 911 dispatch under a department separate from law enforcement (as done in Seattle in 2021) that reports directly to an elected council.

DEB is a fully registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, with nearly 120 community members trained by professionals in basic wildfire response using four island fire trucks maintained and fully insured by the same underwriters as our neighboring fire departments. The 2012 San Juan County Council Adopted Community Wildfire Protection Plan endorses brigades such as those on Waldron and Obstruction Islands, as well the DEB which is unique in receiving support from the Department of Natural Resources through grants, gear, and endorsements as a model for remote wilderness areas.

For years, the 911 dispatch center in San Juan County has provided exceptional support, coordinating pragmatic fire and EMS responses for the remote outer islands. This has included using organized "call trees" and community responder lists to ensure timely local island assistance, as well as partnering with established brigades-such as DEB-on Decatur Island for alerts via the IamResponding (IaR) app. Unlike many municipalities, San Juan County does not participate with the life saving PulsePoint<<https://www.pulsepoint.org/>> app, maintain a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), or operate a Search and Rescue program, which are services that most neighboring counties provide. The Sheriff's department oversees the maritime boating resources primarily used for emergency responses in San Juan County.

Over a year ago, elected Sheriff Eric Peter (term '22-'26) informed DEB that 911 dispatch would no longer be contacting volunteer responders on the outer islands via a call tree or issuing IaR alerts to DEB as previously done. DEB protested this decision and communicated the risks associated with changing these proven life-saving practices without notifying those impacted, including DEB and the Decatur community. Written notice was promised but never delivered, despite DEB expanding its protest to the full county council. Over the past year, numerous IaR activations were still made for EMS and a wildfire incident to which DEB responded.

Recently, during routine maintenance of our IaR platform, we discovered that San Juan County had decoupled DEB from its SJC IaR link. Inquiries through the SJC County Council about policy changes have gone unanswered. The lead 911 dispatcher deferred the issue to Chief Civil Deputy Kim Ott, who, in turn, deferred to Sheriff Eric Peter. The Sheriff replied through Kim Ott, stating: "The options for service were discussed last year, and our position has not changed. Please forward this back to them."

If this response concerns you, know that the entire County Council has been alerted of this critical life and safety issue for over a year. The Sheriff previously stated that 120+ outer islands, which do not have junior taxing districts that pay into the Sheriff's department's 911 communications budget, should not expect to have the same access to 911 as the major islands. However, 911 is a national emergency service funded by telecommunications taxes paid by all users and implemented at the state level in Washington as prescribed by RCW.

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