

DEB | Decatur Emergency Brigade

Community Communication | May 2025



GOLF CART FIRE - MAY 10, 2025

Dear Decatur Community Members,

As many of you are aware, there was a battery-powered golf cart fire this past weekend. The incident occurred spontaneously and, unfortunately, took place immediately adjacent to the OPALCO substation—a critical facility serving approximately 18,000 residents on Decatur and other electrified islands downstream. Compounding concerns, the fire happened just hours before, and in close proximity to, a community meeting hosted by OPALCO to discuss potential commercial power generation expansion near the substation.

Given the timing and location, speculation has naturally arisen. However, we want to be unequivocal: allegations that the fire was staged are false and damaging.

San Juan County Sheriff Rory Smith oversaw the investigation, in consultation with an arson investigator. The event was also witnessed by SJC Council Member Paulsen. For those seeking additional details, the incident is recorded under case number 25-002717.

Thankfully, the situation was quickly managed and concluded without further damage or injury. The outcome could have been much worse under slightly different weather conditions, increased fuel sources nearby, or reduced supervision and response. Deep thanks to the Islanders who responded to this situation - many kudos to you.

Just as we did after the St. Patrick's Day grass fire of 2024, we will use this incident as a learning opportunity to enhance our community's safety and preparedness.



IMPORTANT : DIRECT DEB ACTIVATION REQUIRED

It is critical to understand that DEB is **no longer dispatched** through 911 due to a policy change by the elected SJC Sheriff in 2024.

We're grateful that Council Member Paulsen understands the significance of this issue. We continue working with him and others to advocate for dedicated emergency resources and a regional fire association to serve the outer islands. Infrastructure such as the OPALCO substation requires coordinated protection and planning at the state, county, and community levels.

To activate DEB, call 360-218-3081 immediately in the event of an emergency.

Please save this number in your phone and post it clearly in your Island residence and vehicles.

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

[click here to print the above as a PDF](#)

BASIC WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING - JUNE 21

Please join us on Saturday, June 21, for Basic Wildland Fire Training.

This year's session with our professional trainers will also include a refresher on lessons learned from past incidents, along with new topics such as managing vehicle fires — including those involving battery electric vehicles

Space is limited. To reserve your spot, reply to this email now.

A Mailchimp sign-up form will be sent soon as an additional way to confirm your attendance. If space permits, we'll also welcome previously trained responders for a refresher. Additional working sessions are planned for later this summer.

Wishing you a safe and enjoyable spring!

[CLICK HERE NOW TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT!](#)
