

WHATCOM COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT NO. 11

Lummi Island Fire Department

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2019 ANNUAL REPORT

2019 saw a lot of changes to the district. One thing that hasn't changed is the decline in membership with Bob Auld retiring and no new volunteers applying. This has been, and continues to be, a growing concern as we experience more incidents with less responders. This dilemma is perpetuated with our younger families leaving the island. In the last decade our community has lost more of the younger (under 50) residents. There is little the district can do to change that fact. We must look at other ways to recruit personnel in order to provide for an adequate response.

In an attempt to increase attendance for training and calls, we reduced monthly trainings to twice a month and asked members to sign up for a 12 hour on-call shift each month that included 4 hours at the Station. Small stipends were also provided for the shifts, trainings, and calls. This change reflected a slight improvement and we will continue to find ways to maximize the limited personnel resources available to us.

The February 9th wind storm was memorable. Despite having just a few responders, we were able to deal with all the power line and tree incidents to some degree or another without pulling the plug to the island. A generator caused a small structure fire late in the day. With low manpower, winds gusting to 70 mph and extremely dry conditions, we called for mutual aid as soon as we arrived. An engine with a crew of three from Gooseberry point arrived in 20 minutes and helped us overhaul and get back in service. There were no injuries, but we did lose one hose from a large ember that burned through it and one of the mutual aid firefighters had their breathing apparatus frozen to their back!

The new Disaster Preparedness Division saw an influx of membership throughout the year and has a good foundation for the future. The February storm taught us how much of the community is prepared for windstorms. While we were concerned with the wind chill, power outages and roads being blocked, afterwards some said it was just another Nor'easter with power outages, no big deal. Instinctively we know most of the community is prepared to some degree or another but it is nice to have it confirmed after an event.

When anticipated plumbing issues arrived sooner than expected on our 1996 engine, we initiated the replacement process. The specifications were finalized, sent out for bids and a contract was awarded to Rosenbauer South Dakota LLC. This is the manufacturer who built the current engine and tender. Michael and I visited the South Dakota factory in May going through the specification in detail so there is little confusion on what the District was specifying. This also gave us a chance to see different components and the various stages of construction. During dry dock we borrowed a spare (1986) engine in case the current engine issues got worse. While we had it, we rented an industrial endoscope to assess the interior of the 1996 engine plumbing to know what we could expect in the future. The results were not terminal and the Board decided to keep the current engine as a reserve.

On June 18, 2007, nine firefighters died fighting a furniture warehouse fire in Charleston, South Carolina. Several of us attended a presentation in Ferndale by one of the first on scene pump operators. The presentation included radio traffic and video footage never released to the public. At the end of the day we knew nine more comrades, their families and a department that suffered a tragic loss. The cause of the tragedy was due to a multitude of circumstances identified in the presentation. This powerful presentation will hopefully make us a little smarter and wiser so their loss was not in vain.

This community has been very fortunate to have an Advanced Life Support (ALS) Program for many years. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever, and I had to end the program in 2019. The skill level of Basic Life Support (BLS) Emergency Medical Technicians today far exceeds what it was twenty years ago. Despite the level of skills, a sick person requires rapid transport to a hospital and BLS providers are more than capable to stabilize immediate issues and treat with Gas, Diesel or Jet fuel.

2019 marked the halfway point for the 6-year Countywide EMS Levy. The education committee developed a new 3-year education plan for all pre-hospital agencies. The fact that we put it together in three months, had it approved by all agencies, the Medical Program Director and the State Department of Health in one month is a testament of how things can be accomplished when we work together. The very first combined Bellingham and Ferndale Paramedic class finished up with a graduation ceremony in November. It was impressive to see the students from both agencies in one celebration and interacting like they were from one system.

Your department took a step forward in technology as we started using an Electronic Patient Care and Incident Reporting system. Being one of the few paper agencies that switched at the start of the year, we ended up helping train other agencies. It has been a challenging switch, but successful. Consistent data collection was a top priority for the 6-year plan and is already starting to help identify efficiencies and deficiencies in the system so we can make changes. Three years ago, we could only guess at future projections, now we can look at the real data to learn what is happening throughout the system.

Our limited number of responders is also being compounded by paging issues. The cost of upgrading the county wide system is astronomical and is being worked on but we found a less expensive technology that, with collaboration among the other fire agencies to provide funding, has provided a reliable back up paging system that uses our "Smart" phones.

They say competition can be a good thing but change can have some drawbacks. During 2019, another air ambulance company set up shop in Port Angeles and Coupeville. ALNW took the high road and committed to dispatching the closest helicopter when requested regardless of the company. At the start, each company honored the other's membership but that was short lived and now a patient must have the respective company's membership to receive any benefits. Transport decisions are made on medical need and not their ability to pay or who is providing the transport.

There were 277 individual hours spent on incidents, 170 hours inspecting the vehicles and equipment, and 579 hours of Fire and EMS training. Below are the dedicated professional men and women who respond to any type of incident at a moment's notice and spend hours training and work to ensure vehicles and equipment are in a state of readiness.

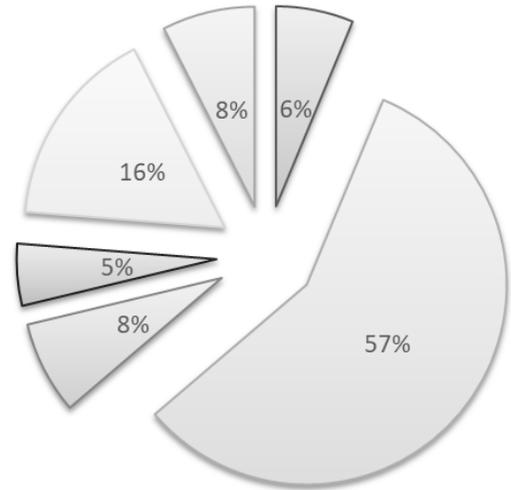
Years	Member	Training	Rank	Occupation / Company
42	John Granger	Firefighter EMT	EMS Chief	Retired Flight Nurse - Airlift Northwest
30	Duncan McLane	Firefighter EMT	Chief	Fire Chief - Whatcom County Fire District 11
26	John Mulhern	Firefighter EMT	Captain	Purser / Operator - Whatcom Chief
15	Gary Poole	Firefighter IFA	Captain	Operator - Whatcom Chief
15	Michael Lish	Firefighter EMT	Asst Chief	Training/Operations Officer - WCFD #11
11	Chris Immer	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Pastor - Village Missions
11	Jette Baker	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Co-Owner, Sail the San Juans Charter Company
11	Lisa Lish	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Secretary - Whatcom County Fire District 11
10	Robert Auld	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Retired Stockbroker - Merrill Lynch
10	Sam Bowman	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Self Employed
6	Dan Ohms	FireFighter EMT	Firefighter	Retired Paramedic / Firefighter - Bellingham Fire
6	Doug Cash	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Purser / Operator - Whatcom Chief
5	Brittany Swaen	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Registered Nurse - Northwest Endoscopy
4	Alissa Daschbach	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Research Scientist - WWU
4	Cara Blake	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Student - Saint John's University NY
3	Brian Thompson	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Attorney - United States Air Force
2	Gabel Bredy	Firefighter EMT	Firefighter	Deckhand / Purser - Whatcom Chief

Commissioners: Wendell Terry (2007 – 2023) Ed Scott (2010 – 2021*) Bill Lee (2014 – 2025)

(Start - end of current term) *Commissioner Scott resigned in April 2020

2019 Response Data

Incident Type	Count	Percent
Fires	5	6%
Rescue/EMS	46	57%
Hazard (No Fire)	6	8%
Service Call	4	5%
Good Intent	13	16%
False Alarms/Calls	6	8%
TOTAL	80	



Average Response Time from Dispatch to On Scene: 12.26 Minutes

Average Number of Responders: 5

“There’s nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.” Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle

“The heart of a volunteer is never measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.” DeAnn Hollis

THANK YOU to the community at large; your generous donations, baked goods and cards of appreciation help all of us continue doing what we do as we strive to improve the service we are providing you.

Special mention to the families of our volunteers, without your support and commitment also, our volunteer would not be able to give this community such service.

Respectfully Submitted: Duncan McLane, Chief

WHATCOM COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
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POSTAL CUSTOMER
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