



Chelan County Fire District #6

Winter 2025 NEWSLETTER



A Message From Your Fire Chief

To Our Community

As your Fire Chief, I want to take a moment to share some important updates and to express my sincere gratitude—both to our dedicated fire personnel and to you, the public we proudly serve.



Welcome Deputy Chief Steven Spies



I'm honored to announce the appointment of our new Deputy Chief, Steven Spies. Deputy Chief Spies brings a wealth of experience, operational knowledge, and a deep commitment to public service. His leadership will be instrumental as we continue to grow and adapt to the evolving needs of our community. Please join me in welcoming him to this critical role.

Thank You for Passing the August Fire Levy

We are incredibly grateful to the voters for your support in passing the August fire levy. This funding is essential to maintaining strong emergency response capabilities, upgrading critical equipment and ensuring our firefighters

have the resources they need to stay safe and serve effectively. Your investment in public safety directly supports every household, business and visitor in our fire district.

Labor Mountain and Lower Sugarloaf Fires— Standing Strong Together

Our crews recently responded to significant wildland fires, including the Labor Mountain Fire and the Lower Sugarloaf Fire. These incidents tested our readiness and our firefighters rose to the challenge with professionalism and determination. I want to thank every member of our team — on the front lines and behind the scenes — who responded, under difficult conditions, to protect lives, property and natural resources.

We are also thankful for the mutual aid partners who worked alongside us and for the unwavering support from the community during these intense events. It is during moments like this that the strength of our fire district and community truly shines.

Together, we are building a safer, stronger future. Thank you for continuing to support your fire district.

Sincerely,

Chief Andy Lee

Email: andyleechelanfire6@gmail.com
Tel: 509-663-1678

Levy Passage Ensures Essential Services: We Are Deeply Grateful!

In August, Voters responded with a resounding YES to our request for an increase in the Chelan County Fire District #6 levy rate. **The levy measure passed with a 71% yes vote.** The increased funding provided by the new levy rate will enable us to not only maintain and improve fire protection services but will also allow us to continue responding to your medical calls and to motor vehicle accidents throughout our fire district service area. The increased funding will help us address our \$10 million in unmet mission critical needs. These are necessary to protect our firefighters and provide residents with enhanced emergency service response. We thank all of you who participated in our informational meetings at which we obtained your input regarding the service levels that you considered necessary and the level of funding that you were willing to provide to the fire district. Numerous individuals and groups contributed to the levy campaign and were instrumental in its success. *We thank you all! In particular we wish to acknowledge and thank Shon Smith, Andy Woods, Jean Dennis, the Dryden Improvement Club, Randy & Evelyn Arnold, Dwight Remick and Sandy Houston. Your assistance was vital to the success of this campaign.*

Increasing the Spending Power of Our New Levy Funding

We continue to seek creative measures to leverage the increased levy funding that you have provided to us. Many of the fire engines and support equipment used in our operations are obsolete and fail when we respond to your emergencies. Therefore, replacement of this equipment is necessary to provide you with the level of emergency service response that you told us you desire.

To meet this goal more quickly, we are pursuing every available funding option. We are pleased to report three recent success stories:

- \$387,000 in funding was obtained from the Department of Homeland Security FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. These funds will enable us to purchase all new Personal Protective Equipment to keep our firefighters safe while fighting structural and wildland fires, and responding to your medical calls. (This federal grant requires a 5% local funding match. Thanks to your

support of our levy increase, we have the \$19,343 match; Thank You!)

- \$100,000 in funding was obtained from the WA State Department of Natural Resources. These funds will be used to “retrofit” our 4 rescue/brush trucks to ensure that they are safe and reliable when responding to your 9-1-1 calls.
- \$10,540 in funding was secured from the Confluence Health Foundation. These funds will be used to replace our aging automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and equip all our life support vehicles with these updated emergency devices.



Building Relationships with Federal Legislators

Over the past two years, we have worked hard to develop strong relationships with the offices of **Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier** and **Senator Maria Cantwell**. We are requesting their assistance as we seek to obtain federal funding to support our Fire District. Your recent approval of our levy increase demonstrates local support for our Fire District operations, which is imperative to securing federal financial requests. We were invited by Congresswoman Schrier to submit a request for funding to finance the purchase of new wildland fire engines. We were pleased to have our project chosen as a high priority for funding during the first round of the selection process. The next step will be for this project to be included (and funded) in the 2026 Federal Budget. We continue to work with Senator Cantwell’s office on a request for partial future funding to assist us in building a new regional fire station on land adjacent to US 2/97 at the Dryden traffic light.



Federal Legislative Liaison Working Group (left to right):

Randy Smith (Chelan-Douglas Reg. Port Authority), Ruby Gaston (Congresswoman Schrier’s staff), Shon Smith (Chelan County Commissioner), Tim Larson (Fire Commissioner), Phil Guthrie (Fire Commissioner), Rick Evans (Senator Cantwell’s staff), Ray Schmitten (Fire Commissioner) Dwight Remick (Chelan FD 6 financial volunteer), and Chief Andy Lee. Not Pictured; Jean Dennis (Dryden Improvement Club) and Michelle Mazzola (consultant, Resource Solutions LLC).

Volunteer Firefighter Spotlights

Travis McConnell enjoys the camaraderie of working with his fellow firefighters and EMT's to quickly mitigate complex 9-1-1 emergencies.

He particularly excels at facing the challenge of responding to Motor Vehicle Accidents and addressing the immediate needs of these life-threatening events. He says that encountering incidents where he will not know what he will find upon arrival and having to quickly assess the situation (such as patient needs, number of vehicles involved, associated risks including vehicles on fire or blocking the highway, patient entrapment, etc.) is a skill that he wants to develop to its fullest. He is learning the skills required to effectively assemble a triage plan and implementing these plans is highly rewarding.

Travis grew up in Lake Quinault and spent several years working at Stevens Pass and at the Scottish Lakes High Camp. In addition, he spent 17 years serving as a Bosun-mate for the U.S. Coast Guard in Everett. Through these experiences, trauma

mitigation has become second nature to him. Travis is also a well-trained firefighter who has several years of experience with us and many summers working on a Yakima wildland firefighting crew.

Travis joined our fire district as a firefighter in 2020. He is married to Erica (Bland) McConnell, a 4th generation orchardist. On a recent wildland fire, Travis spent most of the day on the fire line only to return home and having to begin spraying his orchard until 3 am in order to stay ahead of the pests.



Travis drove by our "Volunteers Needed" sign for over a year before realizing that he had the time and skill set needed to really make a difference in his community. He invites you to consider volunteering too.

Andy Woods recently designed and developed a new Website for our fire district (Chelan6.org). And he is also one of our Wildland Firefighters.

Andy served in the military for six years before transitioning to work in the computer software industry for nearly 30 years. Andy recently retired and moved to a house on the river along Stine Hill Road where he can launch his kayak from his front deck. He enjoys traveling the world and being in the out of doors.

"I like the training challenges and opportunities to help our community or individuals when they need it most. I'm happy to apply my tech skills and physical discipline to both the website and emergency calls" says Andy.



**Do you have a talent to share with our fire district?
If so please contact Fire Chief Andy Lee at 509-663-1678**

Our Fire Commissioners



Left to Right: Ray Schmitten, Phil Guthrie and Tim Larson.

Fire Commissioner Meetings:

Meetings held the second Wednesday of each month at the Monitor Fire Station and begin at 7:00 PM.

Meeting Agenda and Minutes are posted on our website: chelanfd6.org

Chelan County Fire District #6

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Zero Homes Lost During Our Active 2025 Wildland Fire Season

North Central Washington experienced an extremely active, demanding and prolonged wildfire season during the summer of 2025. Within our fire district, and that of our mutual aid partners, we faced an extensive number of challenging incidents, with our firefighters responding to over a dozen large wildland fires through October 2025.

These fires occurred throughout our response area and resulted from various causes including motor vehicle accidents (Blewett Pass), escaped debris burn piles (Derby Canyon; Peshastin) and dry lightning strikes (Labor Mtn. Fire, Sugarloaf Fire, Allen Fire). We were called repeatedly by our Mutual Aid partners to assist in the suppression of wildland fires (Apple Acres Fire) that were a direct threat to our Fire District. These fires ranged from 100's of acres to 45,000 acres in size and required a multi-agency response.

The large number of wildland fires placed significant stress on our resources particularly regarding availability of both our seasonal wildfire fighting personnel and firefighting apparatus. However, we were successful in ensuring that no homes were lost. During the coming years, the recently passed levy measure will enable additional wildfire protection as we will have the resources to significantly increase our paid summer seasonal firefighter staffing. In the longer term, we will be able to acquire new wildland fire fighting engines that will ensure rapid deployment of resources to wildfire incidents.



Labor Mtn. Fire