



# Chelan County Fire District #6

## Fall 2024 NEWSLETTER

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### A Message From The Chief

This December will mark my third year as Fire Chief. The last three years have brought numerous challenges for myself and the Fire District as we bring needed change to our operations. As we continue to grow, we strive as an agency to meet the daily needs of our communities, citizens and visitors. I am extremely proud of our fire district, its leadership and residents for having the commitment to serve and help us move forward to become the fire district that you want and deserve.



This year we experienced an early start to the wildfire season with fires in March and April, and additional fires continuing through October. We were able to contain these fires below 20 acres and we “dodged a number of bullets” as several incidents had a good chance of becoming large

wildland fires. We fought through equipment issues, access issues and even mother nature. But with all of these challenges, we were able to keep these wildfires from becoming extremely large. We could not have had these successful outcomes without our dedicated volunteers and neighboring partners including USFS, WA DNR and BLM.

There is much work ahead particularly in this era of increasing fire insurance rates and community growth. Our operations are conducted within a very limited annual budget of only \$425,000. This budget has not had an increase from tax assessments (other than an annual 1% increase) since the inception of our fire district in 1955. The cumulative inflation rate since 1955 has been 1,076%. As a result we have had to operate with outdated equipment including 30+ year-old fire trucks and 50-year-old extrication equipment. This limits our ability to rescue victims from vehicles involved in accidents.

We want to hear what level of service you want from our local fire district. We will hold a series of events this winter to gain your input. We look forward to seeing you at these meetings.

TOGETHER WE WILL SUCCEED

### Wildfire Risk Affects Home Insurance Rates and Availability

Several local residents have experienced cancellation of their home insurance policies while others are facing dramatically increased premium rates. This is due to elevated wildfire risk in our fire district. The Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner received more wildfire-related policy complaints in the first half of 2024 than in the previous two years combined. Capacity of our local fire district can affect the availability and affordability of home insurance policies.



Our limited operating resources are used strategically to ensure that we are able to respond to all emergencies including the frequent wildfires that we encounter each year. However, the low rating score we receive from the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau, due to insufficient equipment and facilities, results in barriers to home insurance accessibility and higher premium costs. Constrained funding to our fire district also influences firefighter availability and the response time necessary to address emergency incidents.

Our 4 unstaffed fire stations lack any sleeping quarters so our entirely-volunteer fire fighting force must travel from home or work to the fire station prior to responding to incidents with the necessary apparatus and equipment. This results in a delayed response time of up to 40 minutes. We are doing everything possible to obtain additional resources through various grant funding opportunities. We would also welcome and appreciate donations to help us meet your emergency response needs.

## Grant Funding Obtained for EMS and Firefighter Equipment

We have been fortunate to welcome 15 new volunteer firefighter/EMT's to our force. Limited financial resources restricts our ability to equip new firefighters with the protective gear (PPE) necessary to keep them safe while responding to wildland and structure fires. In addition, our ability to provide comprehensive EMS response has been limited by insufficient medical equipment. The need for this equipment was made clear this summer when we repeatedly responded to wildfires in the areas of Camas Creek, Nahahum Canyon and Blewett Pass. We have initiated efforts to acquire alternative funding to help remedy this risk to our firefighters. We obtained 2 grants through the Washington State Department of Natural Resources which enabled us to equip 10 new firefighters with wildland protective equipment & obtain new computers. We also received grant funding from the Confluence Community Partnership Fund to equip one of our emergency response vehicles with a new automated external defibrillator (AED).



While we are appreciative of this grant funding and the new equipment that was purchased, the funding was not sufficient to completely outfit our volunteer firefighting force nor equip all emergency vehicles that serve your fire district with AEDs. In addition to the new volunteers that lack any PPE, in many instances our long-term volunteers are outfitted with 20+ year-old PPE that can fail to provide sufficient protection to personnel when conducting fire fighting operations. Much of the equipment has been passed down over many years with the majority being purchased in the last century and is now defined by the National Standards board as being obsolete. We are continuing to seek alternative resources to fund essential equipment purchases.

## Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier Visits Fire District #6

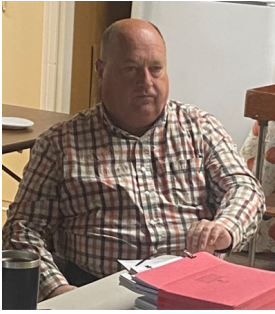
We have been actively engaging our county, state and federal legislators regarding the status of our fire district finances and operations. We have sought to obtain their support in pursuit of alternative funding sources to assist in addressing our needs including requirements for updated equipment as well as a new regional fire station.

In August, Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier (far right in photo) visited our Fire District. She was provided with a tour of our main line fire station in Dryden. Productive discussions were held concerning the needs of our fire district and the assistance that could be provided by Congresswoman Schrier in helping us acquire federal funding to support our firefighting and EMS operations.



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## Opportunities to Share Your Talents!



Dwight Remick

**Do you have some talents that you could share with our fire district?** As an example, Dwight Remick has recently volunteered to assist us with assessment and management of our financial resources. Dwight has extensive expertise in financial management having served many years as Executive Director of Finance & Operations for the Cascade School District.

There are numerous opportunities to volunteer ranging from representing us at planning meetings, to computer work, to creative problem solving as we change and grow to better serve our communities. If you would like to offer to help us please contact Chief Andy Lee at Tel. 509-663-1678 or Email: [a\\_lee@ccfd6.net](mailto:a_lee@ccfd6.net)

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## Volunteer Firefighter Spotlight

**Kip Higdon** is a “gentle giant” with a big heart for his community. He is valued as a 20-year volunteer with our fire district. Kip brings essential skills to our fire district and has been instrumental in keeping our firefighting equipment and vehicles operational. When called to respond to a fire, Kip drives the Tender (water truck) to supply water at incident scenes, a crucial necessity in a fire district that lacks hydrants on 97% of the area served.

Kip has numerous reasons for volunteering, most importantly the opportunity to “continue learning”, the reward of serving his local community and the enjoyment he experiences in working in a community-based family-like fire district. Kip has donated hundreds of hours of service this year, which included staffing the Peshastin Fire Station for 20 days on 12-hour shifts while the Peshastin Bridge was closed for repair. This eliminated the 25-minute response time that would have been necessary during bridge closure to service Peshastin and

North Road residents from the Dryden station. During this period, he responded to numerous accidents on the North Road and helped to quickly contain a firework-caused brushfire that threatened residents.

Kip recently welcomed his son Garrett as a new recruit firefighter and looks forward to his successful completion of training on the way to becoming a full firefighter for our district. Kip values the camaraderie that he experiences with his fellow Fire District #6 volunteers and anticipates continuing to provide services to our community for years to come.



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## Our Fire Commissioners



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

### Upcoming Fire Commissioner Meetings:

December 11, January 8 and February 12

All meetings begin at 7:00 PM, and are held at the Monitor Fire Station

**The public is welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.**

**Chelan County  
Fire District #6**

PO Box 296  
Monitor, WA 98836  
509-663-1678

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## Upcoming Community Meetings

In May of 2024 Chelan County Fire District #6 adopted a new Strategic Plan with the goal of providing a road map for effectively addressing current and future fire district needs. Public meetings were held and we appreciated the numerous comments, concerns and ideas that were provided by local residents.

In the coming months, additional public meetings will be held to gather your input as we seek to identify the levels of service that are desired by our fire district residents. Your participation is essential to our success in providing fire protection and emergency medical services to our community!

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## Tax-Deductible Donations Welcome & Appreciated

Our motor vehicle accident-extrication equipment is 50 years old and requires replacement. New extrication equipment will cost the district \$50,000.

Please consider making a year-end contribution toward this effort.

### Chelan County Fire District #6 Donation

Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to: **Chelan County Fire District #6**  
Mail to: PO Box 296, Monitor WA 98836

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information will be used to provide you with a  
Tax-compliant donation receipt for your records.