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MESSAGE FROM BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SPRING 2025

Our Commitment to Strong Leadership, Effective Policies, and Financial Management



As your Board of Commissioners, we are responsible for overseeing district finances, administration, and policy development on behalf of the public. This includes overseeing top leadership, establishing policies and procedures, and ensuring sound financial management, such as budget approval. This update reflects our actions in these areas, as we continue to fulfill our responsibilities with transparency and dedication to the communities we serve.

Ensuring Strong Leadership

We are in the process of conducting an expansive search to fill the Fire Chief position. By expanding our search, we increase the chances of finding the most qualified, experienced leader. We look forward to welcoming the new Fire Chief and hosting an opportunity for the community to meet them once they assume the role.

Strong leadership remains in place during this transition. Executive Director Joe Ganem, who will celebrate his 25th anniversary with us this year, is providing steady administrative oversight and will assist in facilitating this needed leadership. We are confident in his ability to lead both effectively and efficiently.

Implementing More Effective Policies

As a governing body, one of our most important responsibilities is to establish policies that uphold ethical standards and safeguard public resources. We do this by adopting the annual budget; reviewing and approving monthly payroll and expenditure vouchers; ratifying collective bargaining agreements; ensuring compliance to laws and agreements; and adopting policies.

As a result of a state audit, it was identified that policies and procedures needed to be strengthened to ensure adequate controls were in place. We acted by implementing policies to tighten controls around the use of district vehicles and administrative and accounting processes and records.

Practicing Sound Financial Management

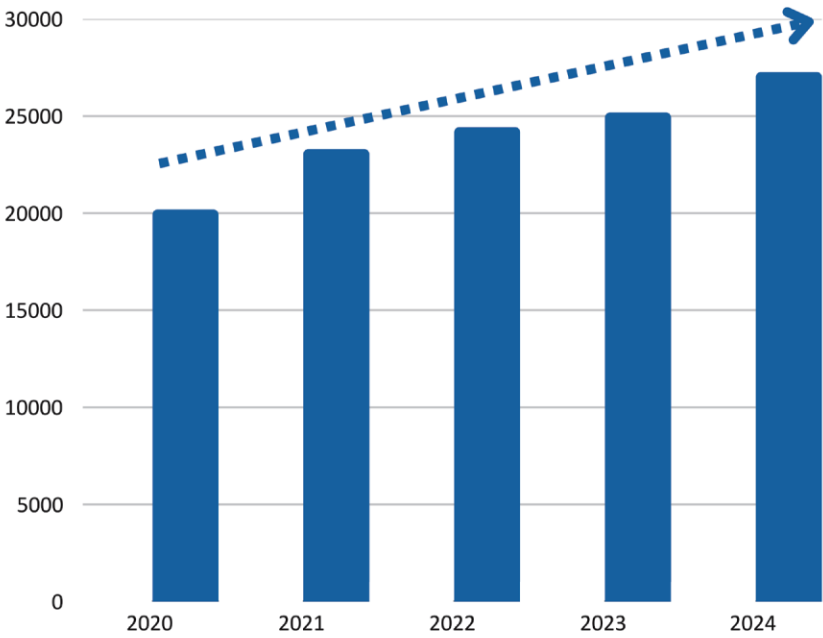
We follow a balanced budget model to manage financial resources. This approach is guided by:

- Taking care of our community and people
- Providing a safe workplace, reliable equipment, and stable career
- Being consistent: doing what we say we'll do
- Make informed decisions that impact financials
- Respect taxpayer dollars
- Limit financial asks: live within our means

We remain committed to strengthening the foundation of South King Fire through actions that reflect a continued focus on transparency, accountability, and service to our communities. As we navigate this transition, we welcome your engagement and input. Together, we'll keep South King Fire ready to serve—today and into the future.

Signed,
Greg Baruso, President, on behalf of South King Fire Board of Commissioners

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CALLS



Dedicated to recognizing the contributions of emergency medical services professionals, National EMS Week is May 18–24, 2025.

The 2025 theme, “We Care. For Everyone.”, reflects our deep commitment to the health and safety of the residents we serve.

As shown in the data above, our fire personnel continue to respond to an increasing number of emergency response calls from year to year.

Join us in honoring our staff for their dedication, skill, and compassion during EMS Week—and every week of the year.

MEETING INCREASED DEMAND WITH STABILIZED FUNDING - THE FBC



In August 2024, voters approved a Fire Benefit Charge (FBC), providing more stabilized funding to meet the growing needs of our communities. In January, we sent informational postcards to residents. Have questions or need more info? Scan the QR code or call (253) 839-6234.

2	STRIKE TEAM BATTLES HISTORIC WILDFIRES/ MIH PROGRAM EXPANDS CARE, BUILDS CONNECTIONS
3	SAFETY TIPS FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY/ SKF OUT IN THE COMMUNITY
4	FIRE EXPLORERS BUILD CONFIDENCE, CHARACTER, AND CAMARADERIE

STRENGTH IN UNITY: COMING TOGETHER TO BATTLE HISTORIC WILDFIRES

In January, four of our firefighters safely returned home after an intense 18-day deployment battling wildfires in Los Angeles County. Lieutenant Greg Willett, Engineer Ryan Dupras, Engineer Tyler Morris, and Firefighter Kris Clark spent 14 days fighting the Palisades Fire, with two days of travel on each end.

Two hours after reaching base camp, the SKF strike team immediately launched into 36 nonstop hours of structure protection, brush clearing, and support for large-scale aerial efforts. All four firefighters remarked on the sheer size and speed of the fire, and the incredible scale of the coordinated response. It was an experience they will never forget.

“The support from the community was incredible,” said Engineer Ryan Dupras. “People brought us food, water, socks, and more thank-you’s than we could count.”



Our firefighters joined crews from across the nation, working tirelessly to contain the flames and prevent further devastation. Their service beyond our state lines is a true testament to their courage and commitment.

Behind every deployment is a larger team making it possible. Many other people assisted behind the scenes with the strike team’s mission: Wildland Team Leader Lt. Brooks Werner; our finance division; the battalion chief’s office; our line firefighters who covered shifts; and our fleet division. We’re so grateful.

Special thanks also go to the families of our deployed members. Life at home doesn’t pause when loved ones are away, and their strength and support are deeply appreciated.



The strike team who deployed to fight against fast-moving wildfires in L.A. County. Pictured from left to right: Eng. Tyler Morris, Lt. Greg Willett, FF Kris Clark, and Eng. Ryan Dupras.

WHAT’S NEW WITH MOBILE INTEGRATED HEALTH: EXPANDING CARE, BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Launched this past July, our Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program helps to improve community health and wellness by empowering residents through mobile healthcare resources. By extending our services beyond traditional emergency response, we provide proactive, patient-centered care to address complex health issues and improve healthcare in our communities.

Meet Maria: Our New MIH Nurse Dedicated to Community Health



We are happy to welcome Maria to our MIH team. She brings a strong passion for healthcare and community service. Born in Ukraine and raised in Washington state, she grew up in a large family and developed an early interest in science, medicine, and health. Inspired by her older sisters who pursued nursing, she followed in their footsteps and now applies her skills to serve the Federal Way community.

She joined our MIH program to make a direct impact, offering healthcare support to individuals in their homes, assisted living facilities, and hospitals. Her role involves following up with patients, connecting them with resources, and ensuring they feel empowered to manage their own health. She believes trust is built through integrity, genuine connections, and listening to each patient’s unique story.

Though new to the program, she has already witnessed the dedication of her team in providing critical care during vulnerable moments. She sees MIH as a bridge between emergency response and long-term healthcare support, and she hopes to become a familiar and trusted presence in the community. Her goal is simple but powerful: to use her nursing expertise to make a difference in people’s lives.

Enhanced Mobility: New Vehicle Strengthens MIH’s Reach and Readiness

Along with welcoming our newest nurse, we are also celebrating the arrival of a new MIH vehicle—a Ford F-150—delivered on March 12, 2025. In collaboration with our fleet team, this vehicle is designed to optimize organization, functionality, and safety.

With increased storage, we can now carry additional durable medical equipment (DME) such as walkers, shower chairs, and canes, along with expanded nursing supplies. The vehicle also includes more seating, which allows for increased training opportunities and ride-alongs, helping to strengthen our team’s skills and readiness. In addition, this vehicle improves efficiency and safety with features such as a sliding compartment for our stair chair, advanced GPS/navigation, backup cameras, and battery-saving technology to prevent power loss during extended home visits. These upgrades directly support our mission of providing timely, high-quality mobile healthcare for those in need.

We are excited about the opportunities that both our new nurse and our upgraded vehicle bring to the MIH program. Together, they represent our ongoing commitment to innovation, patient-centered care, and the continued growth of mobile healthcare in our community.



The MIH team stands in front of our new vehicle, designed for increased space, safety, and storage capabilities. Team includes (from left to right) Maria Gorodyuk, Community Health Nurse; Araceli Moser, Community Health Nurse; Lily Alfaro, Care Coordinator; and Tamara Liebich-Lantz, SW Care Coordinator.

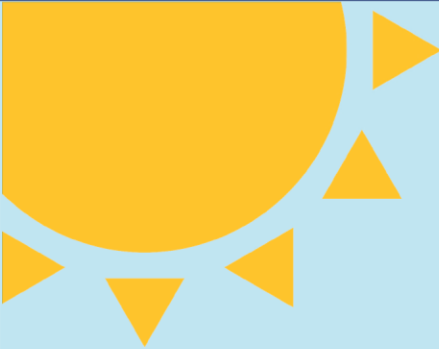
THE SUN IS OUT! TIPS TO HELP YOU AND YOUR FAMILY STAY SAFE THIS SPRING & SUMMER

Spring is here, and it’s the perfect time to start thinking about water safety. May is National Water Safety Month—a time dedicated to raising awareness about safe practices in and around water, especially as summer approaches.

As the sun comes out and temperatures rise, many will head to lakes and rivers to cool off. Whether you’re near the water or diving in, be sure to follow simple safety tips to help prevent accidents and keep everyone safe.



- Be mindful of your surroundings and your and your child’s swimming abilities.
- Never leave children unattended near the water.
- Always use life jackets when near or in the water.
- The water temperatures are still cold; be mindful of hypothermia.
- Only swim in designated swimming areas.
- Always swim with a buddy and stay within arms reach of each other.



With warm weather and summer around the corner, remember to keep safety in mind. Follow these tips from the U.S. Fire Administration to ensure your vacations, camping trips, family reunions, picnics, and Fourth of July celebrations are safe and enjoyable.

- Build campfires at least 25 feet away from tents, shrubs and anything that can burn.
- Use chimneys, outdoor fireplaces, and fire pits outdoors only and at least 10 feet away from your home or anything that can burn.
- Use propane, charcoal and wood pellet barbecue grills outdoors only. Indoor use can cause a fire or carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Place your grill well away from siding and deck railings and out from under leaves and overhanging branches.
- For Fourth of July celebrations, attend a professional/public show to see fireworks.

SOUTH KING FIRE IN THE COMMUNITY: RAISING AWARENESS & VISITING SCHOOLS

In March, firefighters raised awareness and funds for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) Firefighter Stairclimb. This annual event brings firefighters from around the world to take on the ultimate challenge—climbing over 1,300 steps in full gear. Congratulations to all our South King Firefighters who conquered the Stairclimb, climbing 69 floors and 1,356 steps! Every dollar raised supports LLS’s mission to cure blood cancers and improve the quality of life for patients and their families.



South King Fire continues to connect with young learners across our communities. Through hands-on presentations and fire safety awareness, our firefighters help kids feel comfortable around first responders while building trust and promoting safety.



Firefighter Duarte visited Northpoint Cooperative Preschool for Community Helpers Month, sharing fire safety tips.



At Goddard School’s Career Days, firefighters taught kids about fire safety and that firefighters are here to help.



Firefighters visited the ECEAP program at Thomas Jefferson High School to teach kids about what firefighters do.

FIRE EXPLORERS BUILD CONFIDENCE, CHARACTER, AND CAMARADERIE

Now in its second year, the Fire Explorer Program is providing students with valuable hands-on experience, job skills, and educational opportunities while fostering growth in leadership, teamwork, and personal responsibility.

“I have seen a lot of growth from all our cadets,” shares SKF’s Lieutenant Chris Mathis, Lead Advisor. “When they first arrived, they were very quiet with the advisor and each other, but they have since become a tight-knit group full of enthusiasm and drive.”

The program, aimed at youth ages 16-21, helps students build valuable skills to prepare them for careers in emergency services or other professional fields. They’re put in leadership roles often that help boost their confidence and sharpen their communication skills. “Being around other firefighters gives you someone to look up to. I feel like it helps me find my voice and be more confident when trying to help someone out,” adds Cooper Green, a junior at Stadium High School.

Throughout the program, explorers learn how to develop a strong foundation in accountability, maintain gear and appearance in a professional setting, and build self-awareness.

There’s no shortage of memorable moments either. From team workouts to hands-on training with firefighter tools, each experience has deepened students’ understanding of the job. “One moment that I found memorable was getting into bunker gear, covering our faces with our hoods, and trying to find the ends of hoses that were tangled on the ground. It was very physically demanding, but overall, a fun experience,” recalls Cooper.



Fire Explorers learn and practice many skills to prepare them for a career in firefighting or other leadership roles. In this photo, students are standing at attention in preparation for uniform inspection by an advisor. Pictured from left to right is Joseph Greenside, Charles Goode, Kingston Lindsey, and Cooper Green.



Explorer Joseph Greenside learns how to “Take a Hydrant” to provide a water supply to the fire engine.

Another student shared how learning to safely use tools has been valuable, not only in the fire station but in everyday life. For another, a mishap of getting sprayed in the face offered a humorous reminder of the importance of double-checking that a valve is closed.

A strong sense of camaraderie runs throughout the program. “A recent activity that stood out to me was when we were all doing a workout together. It was a friendly but tough competition, and we were all cheering each other on to do the best that we could,” says Joseph Greenside, a Decatur High School junior.

“I feel like this program has helped me be more kind and more generous to people,” explains Charles Goode, a sophomore at Silas High School.

Beyond the hands-on training, the program has helped shape career aspirations too. Some students are now actively planning their next steps, while others have gained clarity and confidence in their goals.

“It has helped me look forward to the future a lot more,” shares Cooper. “I see a path that I want to take, and it’s helping me achieve my goals and get to where I want to be.”

With practical skills, strengthened character, and a deepened sense of service, these young explorers are well on their way to becoming the next generation of community leaders—and possibly, firefighters.

“I would love to see most or all of them join the fire service but more importantly, I want them to learn how to be professional young men that are respectful, accountable, and are not shy about taking leadership roles in whatever they do,” states Lt. Mathis.



Explorers learn how to properly wear the gear and and experience maneuverability and dexterity challenges. Here, Greenside tries on bunker gear.

SOUTH KING FIRE (SKF) Information:

SKF provides complimentary blood pressure checks, ride alongs, and fire station tours upon appointment.

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