

The Pulse

Spring 2024

Honoring Our Past, Forging Our Future

The theme of this year's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week – Honoring Our Past, Forging our Future – gives us an opportunity to share some of the field's rich history in North Kitsap and beyond.

The roots of modern EMS stretch back to the time of Napoleon when the emperor's chief physician developed a system to care for soldiers injured on the battlefield. Using ideas developed by the Union Army during the Civil War, the United States civilian EMS systems started organizing in the late 1800s. However, it wasn't until the latter part of the last century that the nation's EMS systems began to resemble the effective life-saving forces they are today.

Poulsbo Fire Department was formally organized in 1936 to serve the City of Poulsbo with a

dedicated group of volunteers. In unincorporated North Kitsap, fire districts began to form in the 1940s as communities voted to provide the volunteer organizations with a portion of property taxes to acquire equipment and vehicles for firefighting. Volunteers were also key to EMS but they operated separately from the fire departments

and funded their needs largely with community fundraisers. In Poulsbo, the ambulance service was organized under the American Legion in 1948. Ensuring adequate ambulance staffing was a constant battle despite the many dedicated community members who gave of their time; in fact, records show that a lack of volunteers caused Kingston Ambulance to suspend service for a time in 1962.

Seattle Fire Department was one

of the first agencies in the country to establish a mobile coronary care unit, staffed by physician-trained firefighters to provide advanced care and rapid transport to hospitals. Medic 1 began service on March 1, 1970.

The EMS Systems Development Act of 1973 authorized federal grants to help establish, develop and expand access to EMS across the U.S. and, in the following year, a presidential

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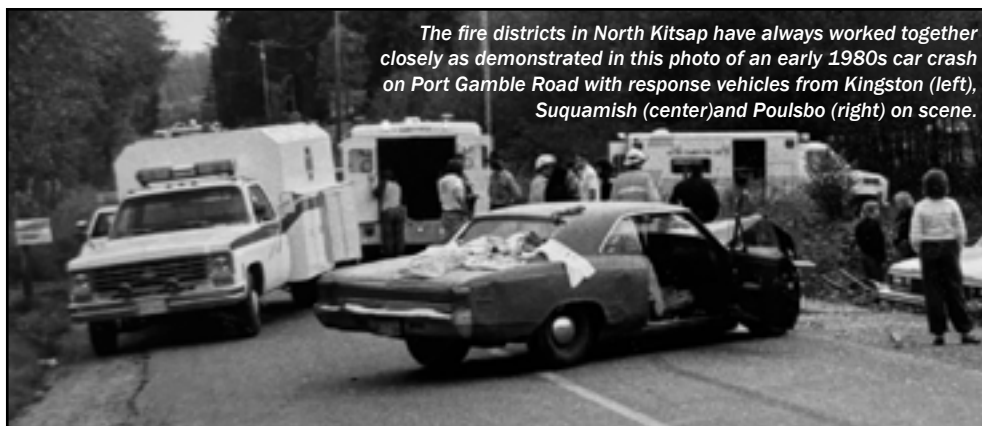
The Pulse, published jointly at least once every year, is one of many cooperative efforts between your two local fire departments:

**NORTH KITSAP
FIRE & RESCUE**

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The fire districts in North Kitsap have always worked together closely as demonstrated in this photo of an early 1980s car crash on Port Gamble Road with response vehicles from Kingston (left), Suquamish (center) and Poulsbo (right) on scene.

**Also In This Issue:
FREE CPR Training
Project Updates**

Update from Your Fire Departments

Read on to learn what the fire departments have been doing to maintain levels of service and prepare for the future as efficiently as possible in a challenging environment.

Leaders at North Kitsap Fire & Rescue (NKF&R) continue to explore possibilities for replacing the aging Suquamish station. However, the combination of limited land availability and design requirements has slowed the process much more than originally expected. Still, evaluation of multiple options is on-going as the district focuses on identifying a plan that is best suited to meet the community's service delivery needs while remaining within budgetary constraints.

NKF&R is on track with its vehicle replacement plan despite lingering pandemic-related labor and materials shortages in the apparatus manufacturing industry. Knowing about these challenges and future impacts to pricing, district leaders placed orders as soon as possible.

Timely replacement of response vehicles not only improves reliability when seconds count, it also helps maintain or improve property and business owners' fire insurance rates as agencies are rated in part on the age of their fleets. The district has a new fire engine on order and scheduled to begin service in 2025. Additional funds and time were saved on an ambulance purchase when the district's long-time manufacturer offered the opportunity to assume a contract canceled by another agency.

At Poulsbo Fire Department, applications for building permits have been submitted to the City of Poulsbo for the construction of Station 76 on Viking Avenue and construction is projected to start this summer. The district has added seven new firefighter/EMTs in preparation for staffing the new station 24-hours-a-day at the beginning of 2025. A new fire engine has been purchased and

Want to Know More?

Get more fire department facts and figures on the web at www.poulsbofire.org or call Poulsbo Fire (360)779-3997 NKF&R (360)297-3619



Among the concerns that drive NKF&R's plans to replace the Suquamish fire station are the facility's advanced age and the property's limited size.

placed into service at Poulsbo Fire's Station 72 on Falkner Road, allowing for replacement of a 26 year-old engine. Two ambulances are being reconditioned and refurbished.

History of Emergency Medical Services

Continued from front

proclamation launched the first National EMS Week to increase attention to these vital services.

The Trident submarine base near Silverdale spurred growth across the county in the mid-seventies. At about the same time, the Washington State Legislature approved a funding mechanism for communities wanting to improve local EMS by voting for a special levy.

At that time, callers had to dial seven-digit numbers to get an emergency fire or medical response

until 911 service was established for Poulsbo and Suquamish in 1977, and for Hansville, Kingston and Indianola in 1981.

Poulsbo Fire absorbed American Legion Ambulance in 1975 and hired its first paid employee, Fire Chief Larry Dibble, in late 1979. The move was made in part to handle the increased responsibilities that came with EMS. Also that year, the community approved funding for EMS by passing a levy with 83% of voters voting "yes."

Although long-time Kingston Ambulance Chief Ray Weaver had volunteered as a paramedic much earlier, Poulsbo Fire was the first agency to employ providers of advanced life support services in the north end, initially relying on off-duty personnel from the county's larger departments as staff until hiring four paramedics of their own in 1980.

Also in 1980, Kitsap County Fire District #5 (Indianola/Jefferson Beach), Fire District #10 (Kingston) and Fire District #14 (Hansville) all passed their first EMS levies.

In 1982, the north-end got its second paid fire chief with Paul Nichol at Fire District #10. Meanwhile, Poulsbo Fire was responding to advanced life support (ALS) calls



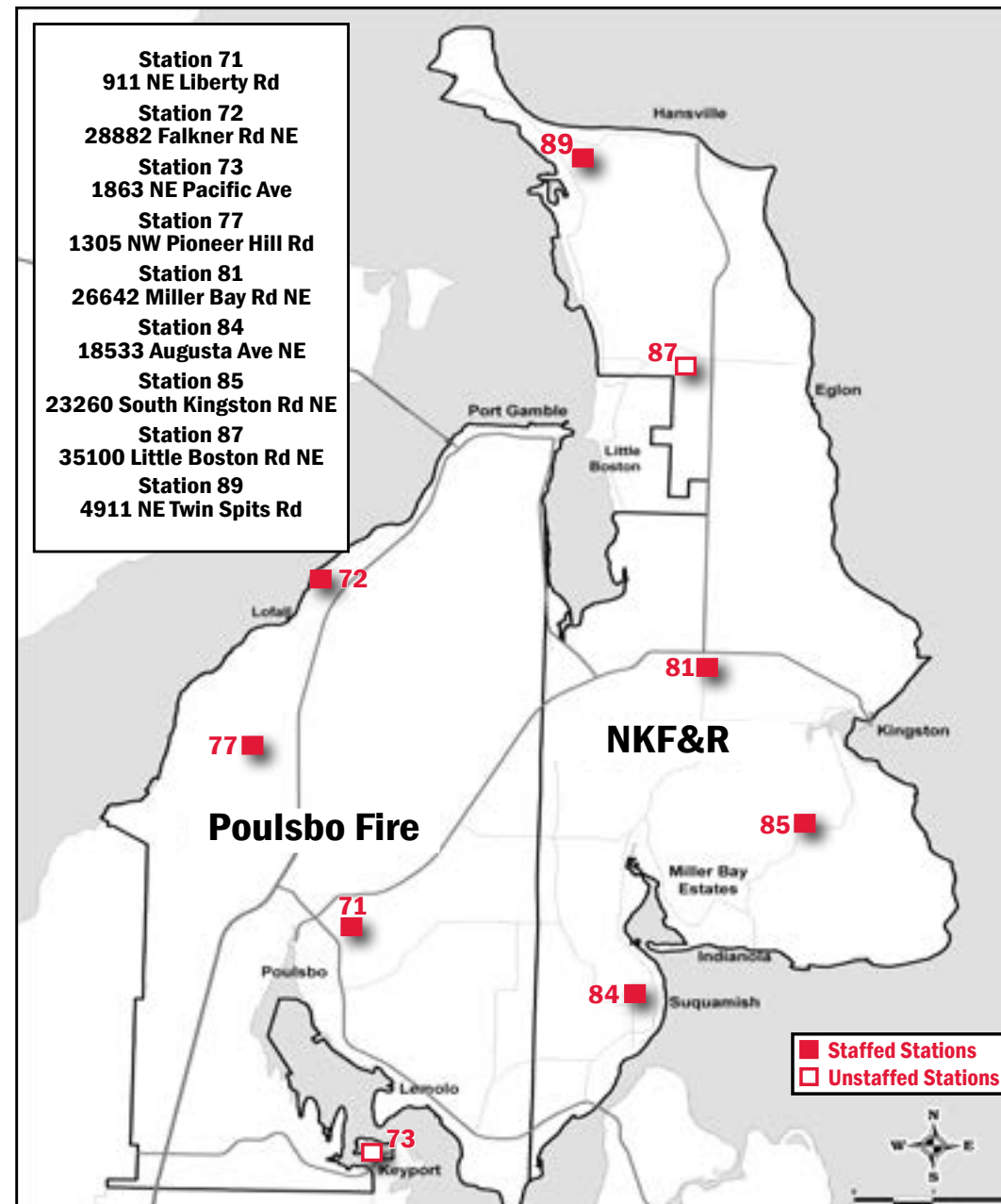
Larry Dibble, Poulsbo Fire Department Fire Chief from 1979 - 1985, helped implement key advances in the local EMS system. Here, he poses with four brand new badges, ready for the paramedics he hired in 1980.

across North Kitsap. However, by the mid-1980s, the demand for paramedic services had increased to the point that it was no longer practical to operate just one ALS unit in North Kitsap. In 1984, Fire District #10 led an effort to establish another

unit out of Kingston, sharing the cost with Fire District #5 (Indianola/Jefferson Beach), Fire District #14 (Hansville) and Fire District #22 (Little Boston). Initially, one full-time paramedic was hired while the other shifts were covered by off-duty personnel from other agencies. Fire District #4 passed its first

EMS levy and used some of the proceeds to contract with PFD for paramedics. That year, the north-end fire departments answered a combined 1,726 calls with 74% of the responses for medical incidents. Thirty-nine years later in 2023, your fire departments handled more than four times (8,094) the number of incidents, with EMS comprising about two-thirds of the total. The area has grown substantially but with the community's on-going support the local EMS system has grown with it, building on its solid roots to become stronger than ever.

Local EMS levies are temporary, and continued funding requires periodic approval by a majority of voters. Watch for more details to come about the districts' upcoming proposals to renew the current EMS levies.



Earlier this spring, Poulsbo Fire Chief Jim Gillard (far left) and other department members pushed the new E-One fire engine into the apparatus bay at Station 72 in a fire service tradition that stretches back to the days when fire engines were pulled by teams of horses.



Kingston's first ambulance -- a used 1935/36 Studebaker -- went on its first run on March 3, 1953.



Wildfires CAN Happen Here

Though occurring less frequently than east of the Cascade Mountains, wildland fires in Western Washington tend to be more severe due to greater fuel load and more populated areas. Worse yet, west side wildland fires are happening more frequently. Community members can do

a lot to prevent and prepare for these incidents.

Wildfire is preventable. Escaped outdoor fires are the leading cause of wildland

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fires except around the Fourth of July holiday when fireworks take over as the most common spark for wildfires. You can do your part by avoiding these and other ignition sources – especially as fire danger rises.

You can prepare your home and property to be more wildfire-resistant, too. Find tips, how-to info and checklists online at www.wildfireready.dnr.wa.gov and www.firewise.org.



Personnel from NKF&R and Poulso Fire were part of the response to last summer's McEwen Fire near Shelton. The incident forced the evacuation of nearby homes and scorched nearly 250 acres before it was contained.

Burn Ban Information Line
(360)297-4888

SIGN UP NOW!

Kitsap ALERT

Emergency Notifications

<https://www.kitsapdem.com/programs/kitsapalert/>

Ready, Set, Go

Wildfire-sparked evacuations are among the situations in which Kitsap ALERT might be activated. Kitsap County has adopted the same system used across the state and the nation; it's important to know the evacuation levels and what each level means:

- **LEVEL 1 (Green) is READY:** Stay alert to the situation and be ready to evacuate.
- **LEVEL 2 (Yellow) is SET:** Get set to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- **LEVEL 3 (Red) is GO:** Go NOW!

FIRE COMMISSIONERS

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