



Community Dispatch

NEWS FROM NORTH MASON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY | FALL 2017

Setting the Stage for the Next Four Decades of Growth

Not too long ago, progress was slow in North Mason as lack of sewer capacity hindered development. Now, Belfair has a state-of-the-art sewer facility, a new highway bypass is coming, and new commercial and residential construction is brisk. The signs of growth are everywhere.

With this growth — and an expanded service area — the North Mason Regional Fire Authority has been trying to keep pace. As call volumes have doubled since 1991, the number of personnel has grown tremendously. But not everything has scaled with the increased demand on services. The average age of NMRFA's buildings is 35, and this age is starting to show.

"We've done a miraculous job of maintaining the facilities but we'll have to do something soon," said Chief Beau Bakken.

One challenge is the geographic diversity of the service area, which spans 136 square-foot miles. NMRFA needs to ensure that all areas receive fast response, which can be a challenge in communities like South Shore.

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THEN vs. NOW



Built in 1974, Station 21 housed no overnight staff and

was all volunteer. It also regularly hosted community events and bingo.



Station 21 now houses as many as 10 career and volunteer

staff each night. It also serves as the headquarters for administrative office staff.

-1982-

-2017-

SERVICE CALLS

388

1,896*

SERVICE AREA

32 sq. miles

140 sq. miles

*as of 10/16/17

Calls over time

1982: 388

1991: 1,068

2007: 1,717

2016: 2,262

1982

1991

2007

2016



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Forum to Address Local Opiates Crisis



America's opioid problem has been in the spotlight in recent months, as it has become a national public-health crisis. On average, more than 90 Americans die from opioid-related overdoses every day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the economic burden caused by opioid misuse reaches nearly \$80 million.

Closer to home, Mason County has the second-highest per-capita rate of opioid-related overdoses in Washington state: 14.7 deaths per 100,000 people in the county, vs. 9.6 state average, according to the state Department of Health. Those statistics may come as a surprise to many in the local community.

"In cities, the problem is visible, but it's not as apparent in Mason County," said NMRFA Fire Chief Beau Bakken. "But I'm here to tell you, it's as bad here as in any socioeconomic area."

North Mason's first responders have seen the addiction to opiates escalate over time, and this reflects a nationwide trend. The National Institute on Drug Abuse says that the problem began in the 1990s, when pharmaceutical companies marketed prescription opiates as effective pain medication that didn't cause addiction. The addictive qualities didn't become clear until years later, when the misuse and overdoses increased dramatically.

"It's something that reaches every demographic, and it could be

your friends and neighbors," Bakken said. "It could be people who appear to be functioning fine, and it could be kids."

Various agencies have been trying to address the crisis in Mason County, but they often have different goals and perspectives. Bakken wanted to see a more concerted effort, and he called together stakeholders that include medical providers, educators, law enforcement and emergency medical services.

"We were all working independently on the issue," Bakken said. "We needed a chance to talk about the problem together and learn about each other's perspectives."

As part of the ongoing dialogue, NMRFA will host a public forum on November 15, 5 to 8 p.m., at North Mason High School. The event will model a similar one that took place in Shelton and was highly successful, with more than 200 people in attendance.

In addition to hearing from local professionals on opiates-related topics, the forum will seek the public's input on action steps that the community should take.

"Other communities are generating solutions," Bakken said. "We need to start by identifying, as a community, that we have a problem."

COMMUNITY FORUM NOVEMBER 15

The community forum will take place 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, November 15, at North Mason High School. The public is invited to come and learn about the issue from local medical and emergency professionals, and to participate in a discussion of action steps.

New AmeriCorps Member Becomes Second-Generation NMRFA Volunteer



Newly recruited AmeriCorps volunteer Sadie Criess stands next to her mother's gear.

As a high school student, Belfair resident Sadie Criess watched her mother, Stephanie Criess, get involved with North Mason Regional Fire Authority as a volunteer firefighter/EMT. Stephanie Criess loved the experience so much, she went on to become a career firefighter and then advance to a paramedic.

Her mother's involvement got Sadie's interest in the fire service, and she took an EMT course at Tacoma Community College last year.

"I like helping people so when my mom told me about the EMT program, I tried it and fell in love with it," Sadie Criess said.

When she heard about an opening in NMRFA's AmeriCorps program, Criess jumped at the chance to participate. As the newly recruited AmeriCorps volunteer, she joins the

fire authority for the next 10 months to focus on fall prevention awareness.

"Our main focus will be fall prevention for seniors, including classes around the community," Criess said.

She will build off last year's fall-prevention program and expand the curriculum. She will also be involved with other outreach programs, such as fire prevention, and with various community events.

A full-time student at Olympic College, Criess has lived in Belfair most of her life. In high school, she was a Running Start student and a member of Junior ROTC, graduating as the executive officer of her unit.

"I know this community well, and this is just another excuse to be involved," she said.

NMRFA SERVICES

- Free smoke detectors
- Car seat inspections
- First aid/CPR workshops
- Address signs
- Vials of Life
- Free bike helmets
- Blood pressure checks
- Burn regulations
- Home safety inspections
- Loaner life vests
- Commercial building fire inspections
- Auto-dialer units
- Commercial lock boxes
- ...and more

Call 360-275-6711 ext. 2

Firefighter/EMT Receives Outstanding Community Service Award

The Kiwanis Club of North Mason recently recognized NMRFA's Community Outreach Coordinator Robert Collamore with the club's 2017 Outstanding Community Service Award. Collamore, who joined the fire authority earlier this year, received the recognition for his heroic action to save an elderly woman from drowning in July.

Collamore was driving to the Tahuya fire station in a service truck when the emergency call came in. Although he didn't have his medical or rescue equipment, Collamore was only a couple of miles away and responded immediately. He identified an elderly woman floating in Hood Canal, about 100 feet from shore. She was not moving and clearly needed help.

After flagging a boater who was on the water, Collamore made his way to the woman. He couldn't transfer her to the boat safely so instead, he dragged her by the arm to the shore while hanging onto the boat.

Collamore began performing CPR on the patient, who was not breathing and didn't have a pulse. He gives credit to the local community response team members, who arrived on the scene before paramedics and other crews, and continued CPR as he gave in to exhaustion.

"The community response team is the first line of defense for all emergencies in Tahuya," said Collamore, who is NMRFA's community outreach coordinator. "Without them and without the station being staffed, that person wouldn't have had a chance."

After 20 minutes of intense resuscitation efforts, responders were able to restart the woman's heart, and transported her to a hospital. Although she wasn't able to fully recover and passed away the next day, her rescue gave family members the chance to say good-bye.

"Robert's selfless and heroic actions on that day gave the woman every chance for survival," Chief Beau Bakken said. "They gave a grieving family an opportunity to say 'I love you' one last time."

Collamore grew up in Gig Harbor and moved to Alaska for eight years, working as an EMS coordinator for the fire department in Fairbanks.

He said he joined the fire service because he wanted to be part of a team that solves problems.

"I like using critical thinking to solve



Firefighter/EMT Robert Collamore with Del Morton of the Kiwanis Club after receiving the 2017 Outstanding Community Service Award during a North Mason Chamber of Commerce luncheon in October.

unique problems you don't see every day," he said.

Collamore emphasizes that the CRT plays a crucial role in emergency and disaster response.

"We're always looking for new members. It's all about neighbors helping neighbors," he says. "Training is flexible and there's a place for everyone."

"The community response team is the first line of defense for all emergencies in Tahuya.

- Robert Collamore
Community outreach coordinator

"At that point, the training takes over," said Collamore, who's had water rescue experience. "We have to be able to rescue anybody, anywhere, in any situation."

Once they were back on shore, Col-

County's Chiefs Implement Unified Incident Management System

NMRFA, along with other Mason County fire and EMS jurisdictions, is implementing a new incident management system that will standardize terminology and processes across the entire county. The purpose of an incident management system is to provide structure for the command and control of emergencies and large-scale incidents. Using a unified system will enable the agencies to better coordinate and communicate during joint response.

Over the years, local agencies have collaborated informally to minimize communication disruptions and deficiencies that can occur when multiple incident management systems are used during cross-jurisdiction emergency response. But this informal

approach wasn't sufficient to mitigate the operational gaps.

"Because we didn't have a standard, we talked with our counterparts in the county about creating a committee of county chiefs that could recommend a common incident-command delivery system," said NMRFA Assistant Chief Scott Cooper, who co-chaired the ad-hoc committee.

The committee included representatives from nine fire/EMS agencies, as well as MACECOM, Mason County's emergency communications. Their research included input from agencies in Kitsap, Thurston and Snohomish counties and presentations from two vendors. The Mason County's Chiefs Association accepted the recommen-

dation to implement an all-risk, all-hazards, integrated tactical accountability system offered by Kent-based IMS Alliance.

After a basic training class in October, a cohort of 35 responders will undergo advanced training in November. Additionally, 12 will be trained next year to become instructors, so the program becomes self-sufficient.

As part of the implementation, the terminology will also be standardized for dispatch and radio traffic and processes.

"The long-term goal is to have standard operating procedures countywide for any type of incidents and rescues," Cooper said. "Standardizing incident command is the first step."

Command Vehicle Puts North Mason on Par with Big Cities

North Mason may look nothing like Puget Sound's big cities, but it does encounter the type of emergencies that are more frequent to large urban areas. That means the local emergency crews have to be prepared to respond to any kind of incidents.

When a bigger emergency happens, one important component of the response is the field command post, and NMRFA now has a state-of-the-art incident-command post built into its newly purchased command vehicle.

Replacing a '99 Chevy Suburban, the new Ford Expedition greatly improves safety and communication for responders and it's designed to accommodate future needs.

"There's a lot of technology just emerging, and the command box is prewired and designed to add new things quickly," said firefighter/EMT Anthony Rhead, who was on the apparatus specifications commit-

tee. "If the county adds a new computer system, for example, we can add it quickly and be up and running."

The command box, located in the back of the vehicle, includes filing cabinets for incident forms, chargers for phones and equipment, as well as a white board. The pickup's back hatch doubles as a cover during rainy weather.

"It's basically our office in the field," said Capt. Carl Ehresman, one of the battalion captains who would be using the vehicle during incidents such as large car accidents, home fires or wildfires. "This allows me to be very portable and more efficient."

The vehicle comes equipped with the latest safety features and new communication technology. The siren can be safely controlled from the

steering wheel, whereas in the past the driver had to reach down to manually control it. A wireless headset system also allows for hands-free communication.

"The driver's eyes can now stay focused on the road, and the control for lights and radio are no longer out of view," Rhead said.

Mason County Public Works outfitted the vehicle once all the gear and technology was ordered from vendors. Public Works staff's experience includes assembling emergency response vehicles for the sheriff's office and for other local fire jurisdictions.

Completing the equipment installation locally gave NMRFA staff an advantage.

"We could visit Public Works or give them a quick call if we had questions,"

Rhead explained. "It's a lot more personal vs. using a larger builder, and it went really well."

Rhead said the rig puts North Mason on par with big fire departments.

"With the technology it already has or what we could add, this would rival the technology you'd see in Seattle," he said. "We have the same type of emergencies as big cities, even if less frequently, and we need to be able to respond to them now and be positioned for the future."



Above, Capt. Ryan Cleveland with the new command vehicle. Left, Capt. Carl Ehresman at the command post in the back of the vehicle. Seen are a white board and headphones, among other equipment.

CPR IS AS EASY AS... C-A-B

Adapted from the American Heart Association

Compressions



Push hard and fast on the center of the victim's chest

Airway



Tilt the victim's head back and lift the chin to open the airway

Breathing



Give mouth-to-mouth rescue breaths

FUTURE GROWTH, from p. 1

"We constantly ask ourselves, how do we get to people faster in emergencies? How do we position our firefighters best? Especially since we are now out of space to house additional personnel," Bakken said.

As part of a capital facilities plan, fire commissioners will be looking for answers to those types of questions. Next year, an advisory committee will work on a proposed long-term capital facilities plan.

"We need to plan for the next 40 years," Bakken said. "We've done a good job getting as much as we can out of all our facilities, but now we need to position the fire authority for growth."

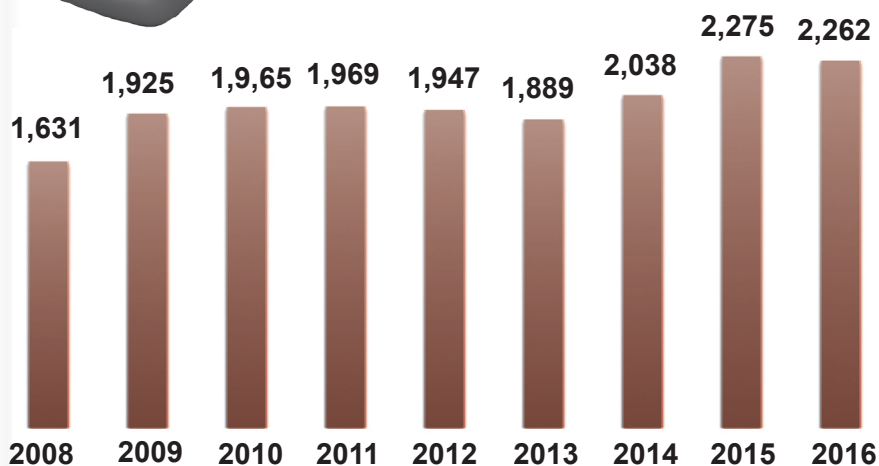
The community will be asked for input to help plan for future needs, including facility upgrades and response time. Public meetings will be scheduled once the advisory committee begins its work.

In the meantime, fire commissioners are moving forward with the project to upgrade the Tahuya fire station, which is the oldest of NMRFA's nine fire stations.



Call History Over the Past Decade

2017 to-date: 1,896
(as of 10/17/17)



Chaplains Provide Support to Those Facing a Crisis

When emergency personnel respond to a life-threatening emergency or a crisis situation, one member of the team — the fire authority's chaplain — is dispatched for a special reason. Whenever an individual or a family is dealing with a disastrous incident, the chaplain's role is to provide support and resources to individuals affected beyond the immediate patient.

"It's a misnomer that the chaplain's role is focused on religious services. The chaplain program is designed to help take care of an individual going through a traumatic moment," said NMRFA Chief Beau Bakken.

The chaplain responds to situations such as a sudden or motor-vehicle death, injury or medical event requiring hospitalization, a house fire or a CPR event. Personnel on the scene or the reporting party can also request a chaplain in a scenario that appears stressful.

"When the emergency is taken care of, we're also concerned about the folks who are impacted after the emergency is suppressed. They're patients just as much as the patients we treated," Bakken said.

Some chaplains are ordained ministers, and they'll ask the individuals affected if they have a religious affiliation and would like a prayer.

"If the answer is no, that's the end of it

— we're respectful and aware that religion doesn't always play a role in the healing process," Bakken said.

Gary Shirbish, a Baptist minister who's been volunteering as a chaplain with NMRFA for more than four years, said the chaplain's role is broad.

"We are not there to preach sermons or get someone to attend our church — we are there to serve and help," he said. "The chaplains involved in this program are highly compassionate people, and they respond because people are hurting."

Some of the services that chaplains provide include:

- Coordinating assistance with Red Cross, when applicable
- Directing community resources
- Helping alleviate a psychological emergency
- Providing transportation to the hospital where the patient is being taken
- Offering emotional support

The chaplain often remains at the scene until a family member or the funeral service arrives. After the incident, the chaplain may offer to follow up in a few days. At the family's request, chaplains can also perform memorial services for individuals who don't have a clergy connection.

"We're trying to be sensitive as well

as respectful of people's right to privacy," Shirbish said.

NMRFA has two designated chaplains and can now draw from a pool of chaplains available 24/7 as part of a new, countywide network used by the Mason County Sheriff's Office and other county fire agencies.

The chaplains go through a screening, interview and background-check process. They train through a 40-hour chaplaincy program at the Washington Justice Training Center.

"We make sure we have the right individual for the role because they have to work in tense and stressful situations," Bakken said. "When our chaplains are called out, it's the worst of the worse, and they have to be mentally tough and work with very delicate scenarios."

The presence of a chaplain allows the emergency crews to focus on the patients and the mitigation of the emergency. Chaplains can also debrief responders after a particularly stressful incident, such as a fatality accident, to make sure the emergency personnel can safely process their experience.

"Most of the chaplains' calls are in the middle of the night," Bakken said. "These volunteers respond out of the goodness of their hearts."

NMRFA Deploys to 12 Wildland Fires

During this year's wildland fire season, trained NMRFA crews were ready to deploy 24/7. Between the end of June and the end of September, fire authority's wildland firefighters were deployed nearly continuously for as long as two weeks at a time.

They responded to 12 wildfires, most of them in Eastern Washington. One of the deployments was to the Jolly Mountain Fire near Cle Elum, which grew to more than 35,000 acres and brought in about 800 firefighters.

"With all the rain this past winter, we anticipated a lower fire risk, but that wasn't the case, and two of our brush trucks were gone most of the summer," said Capt. Ryan Cleveland, who coordinates the NMRFA wildland response program. "It was a successful year, and everyone stayed safe."

Last year, NMRFA piloted a program that recruited graduating seniors from North Mason High School and trained them to fight wildfires. This year, the program was refined and started earlier in the year to allow for more training time.

About a dozen students applied for six spots and were selected through a competitive process. NMRFA provided college scholarships to four of the students.

Grapeview resident Jeremy Carnahan said the best part of the experience was working around people who inspired a positive attitude.

"They wanted us to succeed. They were there to be a friend while working together through the same task," he said.

The recruits' training began with basic CPR and wildland in-house classes, and later included a weeklong fire academy through the Department of Natural Resources. The academy simulated the field experience with 10-hour days, campouts and use of equipment and gear.

For Carnahan, the real "test" came during the fast-moving, 400-acre fire near Rochester, Thurston County, in August. He was there for 10 days, working 13-hour shifts with many crews from around the state.

"That's the one I really got to see what it's like," he said. "You have a pretty good adrenaline rush most of the time, and you have to be active, on your toes."

One of the program's benefits to NMRFA is financial — in addition to paying the deployed firefighters, the state pays the participating fire jurisdictions for use of equipment. This year, NMRFA received around \$60,000.

Another benefit is the ability to recruit young people into the



The Monument Hill Fire in Quincy, Washington, was one of the wildland fires that received aid from NMRFA crews.

fire service, as some program participants become interested in volunteer or career firefighting after this experience.

Carnahan is one example. He originally planned to attend Olympic College and become a welder. After participating in wildland firefighting, he decided to apply to EMT school instead. His plan now is to become a career firefighter and continue to fight wildfires during the summer.

"Everybody out there in the field typically has a great work ethic. You have a goal to reach and you all work together," he said of his summer experience. "It's not easy work by any means and everybody's encouraging you and helping you. I've never seen it anywhere else."

New Procedures in Place for Major NMSD Emergencies and Disasters

When Hawkins Middle School went into lockdown this past April after reports of an active shooter, several dozen emergency personnel responded from more than a dozen agencies, including state and federal. Fortunately, the fears proved unfounded and no one was hurt, but the incident identified a need for better incident command, communication and student reunification process.

"It was a learning experience for the

school district and for responders," said NMRFA Assistant Chief Scott Cooper.

Since then, representatives from the school district, sheriff's department and NMRFA have been meeting to discuss a response plan for major incidents. They are addressing aspects such as location for command posts at each of the schools, better staging of personnel and better communication with parents and the public.

"The biggest lesson was, once we make

sure that everyone is safe, how do we streamline the reunification process after a lockdown and how do we communicate current information," Cooper said.

A letter was sent to North Mason School District families with procedures following a disaster or emergency. The letter provides instructions for student pickup, the channels that will be used to communicate in the event of a disaster or incident, and other information that families need to know.



Keep Your Season *Merry* with These Safety Tips

With the arrival of the winter season, there are more fire hazards in your home. The onset of cold weather brings the increased danger of residential house fires related to heating devices. And with everyone getting into the holiday spirit, decorations like candles and lights become additional sources of injuries and even death.

Don't let this time of year to turn from merry to tragic. Follow these basic tips to keep you and your family safe this winter as you're making your house more warm and bright.

SPACE HEATERS



According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating

equipment is a leading cause of residential fires. Between 2010 and 2014, heating equipment — including central heat and space heaters — ranked second in reported home fires and injuries from residential fires, and tied with cooking as the second-leading cause of residential fire deaths.

Portable heaters and fixed space heaters (such as wood stoves) are involved in more fires than central heaters and are more likely to result in death. The NFPA says that the leading cause of fires that result in home fire deaths is heating equipment placed too close to sources that can ignite, including upholstered furniture, clothing, bedding and mattresses.

1 -- Only use a unit that has the seal of a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL. This ensures the heater's safety features have been tested by a qualified third party.

2 -- Place the heater at least 3 feet away from combustibles. Some heaters can produce enough heat to ignite nearby sources such as furniture and clothing, and all heaters need adequate space for airflow.

3 -- Ensure there's nothing next to the heater that can fall on top of it and that it sits on a stable surface.

4 -- Never run the heater's cord under rugs or carpets, and don't plug it into an extension cord.

5 -- Keep children and pets away from the hot surface of the heater.

6 -- Be aware that specific heaters such as kerosene and electric have additional requirements — educate yourself about the safety requirements for your type of heater and follow the manufacturer's instructions closely.

CHRISTMAS TREES & LIGHTS

Fires from Christmas trees or lights are rare, but they do happen — and 1 in 34 of them result in death. Keep in mind that Christmas lights and extension cords can also be a tripping hazard in traffic areas.

1 -- Make sure the tree is at least 3 feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces, heaters or heat vents and candles.

2 -- Maintain your tree by watering it regularly. It's the dry trees that typically cause problems.

3 -- Do not place the tree where it would block the door or an emergency exit.

4 -- Inspect the Christmas lights before you use them and discard any that have frayed or pinched wires.

5 -- Inspect the extension cords you plan to use and discard any that are old or have damaged components.

6 -- Do not run extension cords or tree light cords under carpets, rugs or decorative fabric.

7 -- Unplug extension cords that feel hot, as that may be a sign of overloading.



The NFPA says that candles start more than a third of all fires related to home decorations, and 20 percent of fires due to candles occur in December.

1 -- Never leave candles unattended.

2 -- Ensure candles are placed in stable holders.

3 -- Keep them at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.

4 -- Place the candles in areas where they will not be knocked over accidentally.

5 -- Consider using flameless candles — they look, feel and smell just like the real deal.

CANDLES





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Firefighters to Provide Coats to Local Kids in Need

Operation Warm is back. North Mason Professional Firefighters Local 3876 is once again joining the International Association of Firefighters for "Firefighters for Operation Warm," an annual program that provides new winter coats to more than 200,000 low-income children across North America.

Last year, local firefighters provided coats to an entire class at Sand Hill Elementary. This year's planning has been under way for several months, and the school and students will be selected with input from North Mason School District.

NMRFA's firefighters raise money for the coats at events throughout the year. This year, all proceeds from the dunk tank that NMRFA had at the Taste of Hood Canal were dedicated to Coats for Kids, as were some of the donations from the recent Corn-hole Classic bean-bag game tournament.

"Any way community members can contribute at our events is extremely helpful," says Laura Friese, firefighter/EMT and Local 3876 vice president. "Keep your eye out for our fundraisers all year round. Your help is very much appreciated."

Santa's Schedule



DEC. 8	4-7 p.m. Tahuya River Drive, Collins Lake, Maggie Lake
DEC. 9	2 p.m. Trails End Comm. 4 p.m. Twanoh Falls
DEC. 15	4 p.m. Cedar Street 5 p.m. Riverhill Comm.
DEC. 16	4-7 p.m. Lynch and Beards Cove
DEC. 22	5-7 p.m. Fire Station 21

