



Community Dispatch

NEWS FROM NORTH MASON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY | FALL 2020

Emergency Management Campus to Follow New, Innovative Design Approach

The North Mason Regional Fire Authority (NMRFA) has been working on the design of the new emergency management campus — using a new approach called progressive design build.

This approach became available to Washington State public agencies in 2015 and results in financial savings. To date, NMRFA is only the third fire service organization in the state to take advantage of progressive design build.

Traditionally, public projects first engage an architect to develop a design and scope for the project. With the design complete, the project goes out to bid, at which point the contractor is unable to make any changes, even if they would lower overall costs.

“Progressive design build allows you to partner with an architectural and design firm, and a builder concurrently. The design and contractor team develop and build the project together,” explains Fire Chief Beau Bakken. “This brings a team approach to the project, along with a tremendous amount of savings and a design perspective that you would lose in the regular bid process.”

NMRFA has hired Architects West and contractor firm TRICO for the project and has been meeting with them since July. The design process will be complete by the end of the year.

The project will be funded by a \$10 million bond approved by voters in November 2019. NMRFA obtained a credit rating of AA-minus, resulting in further cost-savings to taxpayers.

“A credit rating of AA-minus is a big deal for a smaller agency like ours,” Bakken says. “It puts us in a position to get the best possible interest rates on a bond sale. We were able to capture a historically low interest rate that will bring more than \$1 million in savings from interest.”

At 18,500 square feet, the new campus will be 2.5 times the size of current Station 21. Upon completion of the project, the existing building will be leased to Mason County. The building will house the North Mason Precinct of Mason County Sheriff's Office and a satellite of the Mason County Division of Emergency Management.

The two buildings, located on adjacent properties, will bring North Mason emergency services to a single campus. This will help streamline and improve response to incidents that require interagency coordination.

Construction of the new building will begin in early 2021, with estimated completion at the end of the year.



Rendering of proposed Station 21 courtesy Architects West

In This Edition

Response during COVID-19... p. 2	Online CPR training p. 3	Virtual Safety Days p. 5
Grant for water tender p. 2	Mental health program p. 4	'Mr. Do Everything' p. 6
New firefighter/paramedics ... p. 3	2021-'25 strategic plan p. 4	Cooking with care p. 7
	Tahuya fire station update p. 4	New power gurneys p. 7
	EPS expands with new role ... p. 5	Rescue swimmer program p. 8

COVID-19 Brings New Patterns to EMS Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every individual and organization, and NMRFA is no exception. The past 10 months have brought extreme fluctuations in the use of local EMS services. At the beginning of the pandemic, NMRFA experienced a historically low call volume. This was followed by record-setting increases, which are expected to continue.

From February to May, NMRFA had a 27 percent decrease in calls.

"Folks were not using the 911 system. Maybe they were scared to go to hospitals or maybe they assumed we were busy responding to the pandemic and didn't want to use us for minor illnesses," says Chief Beau Bakken.

In an effort to encourage the community to use emergency services when needed, NMRFA launched several informational campaigns. In addition, the Fire Authority educated the public on new safety measures put in place to protect patients and crews.

In May, a new pattern emerged. Service calls increased beyond previously recorded levels; call volume is currently 6 percent higher than before the pandemic. It is typical for the beginning of summer to bring an influx of temporary residents to our community, but the increased volume has not abated since. This is likely due to work and school being remote, allowing people to stay in what would typically be their summer homes.

"What we feel happened was people who came for the summer stayed, and they brought family and friends, so the population skyrocketed," Bakken says. "In my 25 years with the Fire Authority, I've never seen this. The pandemic has driven people to our community, and we're all feeling the effects."

The Fire Authority expects this increased demand for emergency services to persist as long as remote school and work continue and summer residents remain in the area. To help with the increased load, NMRFA has been tapping resources from neighboring agencies.

Chief Bakken notes that early on in the pandemic, as information was limited and fear was heightened, North Mason's crews never wavered in their service to the community. Many NMRFA members faced the same challenges as the rest of our society, including spouses being out of work or childcare issues and the stress that comes along with that. Despite these unprecedented times, every member of NMRFA was steadfast in the commitment to serve and take the personal risks necessary to protect our community.

"Even though we knew we were seeing patients diagnosed with COVID-19, it didn't stop our responders from caring for folks. There was never a hesitation about responding and showing up to work," he says. "As a chief, it made me so proud to see that dedication and commitment in any circumstance that comes our way."

Federal Grant to Pay for New Tender

FEMA recently awarded NMRFA a \$380,000 grant for a new water tender, which will replace a rig from 1975.

NMRFA hasn't purchased a water tender since a voter-approved bond financed two of them in 1998. Of the five existing water tenders, the newest one is more than 20 years old.

"This is a huge win for us," says Assistant Chief Scott Cooper. "We knew we had to upgrade our fleet,

but getting there was tricky because we also have an engine on the replacement plan for this year."

In addition to having modern features such as LED lighting, improved suspension, a backup camera and a state-of-the-art communication system, the new tender has extra water capacity. The other tenders carry 2,500 gallons of water and have a 500-gallon pump. By comparison, the new one will carry 3,000 gallons and will have a 1,000-gallon pump.

"The new tender will be capable of pumping to the primary attack engine with a sustained water source, which we haven't been able to do in the past," Cooper says.

This Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program award is the culmination of multiple attempts over the past five years. Originally, NMRFA applied for \$500,000 for a combined tender and engine.

"This time, we reduced the request to \$380,000 but for a larger tender, and we finally got the grant after rethinking it," Cooper says.

NMRFA firefighter/EMT Anthony Rhead is largely credited for rethinking the request (read related story, page 6). The process is highly competitive and FEMA reviews applications in as many as 20 rounds. Last year, the program ran out of funds before NMRFA's application made it through the phases.

"Since we didn't get screened out, I knew we still had a chance and I told the chief I'd like to try it one more time," Rhead says.

Rhead researched previous years' water tender award recipients and contacted those fire agencies for insights. As a result, he recommended downgrading the request to \$380,000 for a water tender rather than a multipurpose apparatus with "various bells and whistles." And this time, NMRFA's application was approved in one of the early review rounds.

"Not only will this water tender be safer but will also have some firefighting equipment in it, so we'll be able to use it to fight wildfires as well as protect homes," he says.

NMRFA's Apparatus Specifications Committee has been working on the design of the tender. The Fire Authority expects to receive several bids and place the tender into service in the second half of 2021.



NMRFA SERVICES

360-275-6711 ext. 2 | northmasonrfa.com

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

Due to COVID-19, Santa had to cancel his North Mason run this year. We wish you Happy Holidays and we'll see you next year!



Two New Firefighter/Paramedics Join the Team

Kyle Severance has been a paramedic for three years, working for an ambulance company and later for East Jefferson Fire Rescue. He loves using his skills to improve patient outcomes.

"Every patient, every case, every medical call is different — there's no textbook scenario," he says. "I like that challenge and seeing how the care we give can turn a patient around and positively impact their outcome."

Severance started in emergency services as part of his high school senior project in 2001. He became a volunteer firefighter and attended the fire academy.



"Then the opportunity to become an EMT arose. Medicine wasn't on my radar but it offered college credits

so I thought, why not," Severance says.

Severance spent four years volunteering as a firefighter/EMT at a fire department on the Washington coast. He found passion in medicine, which lead him to take

a job for an ambulance company. After 10 years with the company, Severance decided to attend paramedic school.

"Medicine is my niche and I love it — but I missed the firefighting side so I put myself through another fire academy this year," he says.

NMRFA hired Severance shortly before he finished the academy. He loves that his new job allows him to work in both the fire and medical aspects of emergency services.

"I also love rural medicine because you have to use the full gamut of your skills," he says. "You have to be sharp and push your limits."

Outside of work, Severance likes to snowmobile in the mountains in the winter and ski-boat in the summer with his family.

Zack Jensen started in emergency services in 2015 with Mason County Fire District 3 — first as a volunteer, then as career firefighter/EMT. As a North Mason High School graduate, he's familiar with the local community. Additionally, he had worked with NMRFA crews on mutual aid calls during his time with District 3.

Jensen loves the challenge of the medical side of EMS, and decided to attend paramedic school last year.

During the final year of school, medic students must participate in a preceptorship. This is an internship program that combines classroom instruction with hands-on training, including a pairing with a professional paramedic. During his final quarter, Jensen was precepted at NMRFA — and by seren-

dipity, a full-time position for a paramedic opened up at that time.

"The Fire Authority was hiring as I was finishing up medical school," he says. "It was almost like I was being interviewed while still in school."

Jensen loves the fast pace of his profession, as well as the environment of an emergency services agency.

"I'm always seeing something new, and I enjoy helping someone who's having a serious problem,"

Jensen says. "It comes down to how well you're trained, and that makes a big difference."

A resident of the West Sound region his entire life and North Mason since 2005, Jensen feels lucky to work in the community where he grew up. He enjoys learning the North Mason areas that are new to him, such as Tahuya.

Outside of work, Jensen enjoys kayaking in North Bay. He also loves hiking. One of his favorite hiking spots is the Gold Creek Trail in Dewatto.



Learn Basic CPR Education Online

Every year, 475,000 Americans die from cardiac arrest, according to the American Heart Association. Globally, cardiac arrest claims more lives than colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, influenza, pneumonia, auto accidents, HIV, firearms and house fires combined. That's why providing CPR training to the community is so important.

Due to COVID-19, NMRFA was forced to cancel traditional CPR classes for the remainder of the year.

"We are extremely saddened to cancel these classes because we know that when CPR is administered rapidly, it saves lives," says Emergency Prevention Specialist Lacey Newman. "According to the American Heart Association, nearly 45 percent of cardiac arrest victims survive when by-

stander CPR is administered immediately. Considering that the odds of a cardiac arrest victim surviving double when bystander CPR is performed, CPR training is of utmost importance."

To account for the lack of in-person training, NMRFA is providing online CPR education. This will not be a formal class that leads to CPR certification. Rather, the goal will be to teach those who have never had the opportunity to learn hands-on CPR and to provide a refresher for those who have learned it in the past.

"We want as many people as possible to feel comfortable performing bystander CPR so that we can reduce the number of fatalities caused by cardiac arrest," Newman says. "People who feel comfortable performing CPR are more likely to step up

and help until the paramedics and EMTs arrive. Every minute counts."

To teach the basics of hands-on CPR for the general public, NMRFA has published a tutorial video. Newman hopes the video will provide both knowledge and encouragement for bystanders to step up and perform compression-only CPR if they witness someone in cardiac arrest.

"It's important to us, at North Mason Regional Fire Authority, to do all that we can to prepare our community for emergencies in an effort to save lives," she says. "Teaching CPR virtually is just one of the ways we are trying to serve and protect our community through this pandemic."

The video was filmed in October and is available at northmasonrfa.com and on the NorthMasonRFA Facebook page.

NMRFA to Trailblaze Mental Health Program

Emergency responders work under extraordinary conditions every day and often go through horrendous experiences. Although many responders face mental health issues, there's no robust, concerted effort in the emergency services community to provide mental health support.

NMRFA wants to change that in Mason County. The Fire Authority led an effort to secure a \$140,000 federal grant to fund the development of a local mental health and wellness program for emergency responders. A countywide work group is being assembled to develop the framework for the program.

"There's no model out there for a robust program, only bits and pieces in some jurisdictions," says Chief Beau Bakken. "We want to see what's working or not working in other areas and create a comprehensive program under one umbrella."

The Need for Mental Health and Wellness for First Responders

Across the nation, EMS and fire professionals experience many of the same issues, ranging from stress and depression to post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Our responders see things an ordinary person should not experience, and we expect them to execute their job with precision and almost perfection in stressful situations," Bakken says. "And we ask them to do this almost every day. It takes a toll over time."

Physical wellness programs are a staple in this profession, but mental health resources

Findings from studies over recent years have shown that:

- **21 percent** of EMS personnel have **clinical depression**.
- First responders (firefighters and law enforcement officers) have **PTSD rates** as much as **five times higher** than average, and are **more likely to die from suicide** than in the line of duty.
- Both male and female firefighters have **higher divorce rates** than the average population.
- **85 percent** of first responders experience symptoms related to **mental health issues**.

are typically limited to small components such as employee assistance programs. The vision behind the compressive mental health program is to build resilience and give emergency responders — as well as their family members — the tools they need to cope with their experiences.

"First response tests individuals in a very unique way, and we want to bring in resources and professionals who specialize in emergency services," Bakken says.

The program will be available to both volunteer and career firefighters and EMS responders across Mason County. NMRFA's goal is to implement the program during the first part of 2021.

2021-'25 Strategic Plan Adopted

NMRFA will start the year 2021 with a new five-year strategic plan in place. The plan follows six months of planning and input sessions with stakeholders, including Fire Authority and community members.

"The 2021-'25 Strategic Plan looks at what we need to do over the five-year period to meet the needs and challenges of the Fire Authority and the community in a calculated fashion," says Fire Chief Beau Bakken.

The top categories included in the new plan reflect priorities such as the growth of wildland fires due to climate, environmental and population changes; the growing workforce; new preparedness tools such as mental health (see related story); and the continued focus on aging facilities and equipment.

NMRFA has been relying on short-term planning for the last 15 years, and this will be the fourth five-year plan to be adopted. Strategic planning enables the Fire Authority to follow guidance that is well coordinated, thought-out and documented. Many efforts that have been underway — including the emergency management campus — have been part of this process.

"We couldn't be more ecstatic with the accomplishments we've seen come out of the strategic planning process," Bakken says. "The planning allows us to maintain sight of where the organization is going, while we're still focused on day-to-day activities. We're going to do our work and respond to emergencies, but at the same time we want to make sure we can meet the changing and growing needs of our community."

Tahuya Fire Station Apparatus Bay Complete

The new apparatus bay at the Tahuya Fire Station recently opened its doors, following the completion of the construction project in July. The 3,800-square-foot facility includes a 400-square-foot mezzanine, as well as parking capable of accommodating a large fire truck, in case there is a demand for one in the future as our community grows.

Remodeling the old fire station 81 will be part of Phase 2. The remodeled building will provide offices, kitchen facilities and space for both station staff and volunteers.

The timeline for Phase 2 will be established after the emergency services campus project in Belfair is underway. Staggering the timelines will allow the Fire Authority to devote full attention to each of these two very important projects.

A virtual ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the apparatus bay recently took place. The celebration video is available on the NMRFA website and Facebook page.



NMRFA Expands Emergency Prevention Services



NMRFA added a new position this summer — Emergency Prevention Specialist — expanding on the public outreach and education activities that were already in place. Lacey Newman, a second-generation firefighter and a Belfair native, has been serving in this new role since June.

“The job is to work with youth, seniors, the business community and other groups and individuals to prevent emergencies,” says Chief Beau Bakken. “That’s where we find the most success — when people don’t have to call 911.”

Newman manages a variety of prevention programs, such as Vial of Life, life jacket loaner and first aid/CPR. She also coordinates services such as the distribu-

tion of smoke detectors and bike helmets, and installation of address signs and Freedom Alert systems.

Another aspect of her job includes creating educational content for social media and writing safety articles for the local media. When regular activities resume, Newman will also organize public events and will be available for presentations.

“The main goal is to keep our community safe by working to prevent emergencies before they happen, using prevention methodologies such as public education and community outreach,” she says.

Newman hit the ground running on her first day of work — she had one week to make preparations for Virtual Safety Days (see related story, below). While her focus is on emergency prevention, she will also continue to serve as an EMT.

Newman’s father, Tom, a Seattle firefighter, started his career as a volunteer 20 years ago in Belfair at what was then called Mason County Fire District 2 (MCFD-2).

“Being raised by a firefighter, I have always had a great amount of respect and admiration for the men and women who work in emergency services,” Newman says.

With a passion for helping others, she

pursued a bachelor’s degree in psychology, with minors in sociology and family studies. While working as a flight attendant in 2014, Newman had the opportunity to help passengers who had medical emergencies during flights.

Through those experiences, she realized she also had a passion for emergency services. She became a volunteer with Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue and later a career firefighter/EMT.

Newman lived in Belfair for the first 15 years of her life. Following her father’s local volunteer work, her sister, Courtney, spent some time as a resident for MCFD-2.

“As a kid, I remember coming to Station 21 and being the ‘patient’ for fire and EMS drills while my dad and my sister volunteered,” she says.

As an adult, she’s thrilled to work out of the very same station, with some of the same firefighters her father and her sister trained with.

“This community is a huge part of what shaped me into the person I am today,” Newman says. “It’s such a privilege to be back here, serving my hometown. I love that this job allows me to connect with community members and think proactively how to keep our community safe.”

Safety Days Go Virtual

Launched in 1997, Safety Days is one of NMRFA’s most successful programs. During this annual event, firefighters spend a day at the elementary schools for fun, interactive activities that teach a variety of safety skills to more than a thousand K-5 students.

Last spring, schools were closed and students were learning remotely due to COVID-19. This put a wrinkle in Safety Days plans. Instead of cancelling the event, NMRFA adapted to the situation.

“It was super disappointing that we couldn’t link up with students, but we didn’t want to miss an opportunity to try to interact in a different format,” says Chief Beau Bakken.

Traditionally, NMRFA and other emergency agencies partner with the North Mason School District to set up safety stations at each school. Throughout the day, students rotate through the different stations.

“The goal is to teach important safety information to the kids in our community and remind them to take proper safety precautions as they head into the summer months,” says NMRFA Emergency Prevention Specialist Lacey Newman.

To replace the in-person event this year, NMRFA provided the school district with five safety videos. The topics included bike helmet safety, life jacket safety, fire safety, the dangers of carbon monoxide, and knowing when and how to call 911.

“The videos were created in one very busy week,” says Newman, who was tasked with the project on her first day on the job.

Newman wrote the scripts, filmed and edited the videos, all within one week. Many members of NMRFA stepped up to be the talent for the series. Chief Bakken and his son, along with emergen-

Learn Safety Virtually

Want to view the safety videos? Visit northmasonrfa.com or the NorthMasonRFA page on Facebook.

cy responders Ryan Cloud, Kyler Gracey, Cooper Lindsey, Lt. Laura Chester and Tanner Zuber, starred in the videos.

The schools posted the videos on their websites, encouraging students to watch them independently. Bakken notes that Virtual Safety Days reached two new demographics this year: parents and homeschooled students.

“Parents watched the videos alongside their kids, and they would never get that information if we were just at the schools,” he says.

One outcome was an increase in requests for bicycle helmets and prevention services, compared to previous years. The total reach far surpassed the traditional Safety Days, as the videos were also posted on the NMRFA Facebook page. Four of the five videos brought 2,500 views each on Facebook. The most popular topic, life jacket safety, had nearly 4,000 views. Total views for all five videos reached nearly 13,000.

“We heard a lot of positive feedback from members of the community,” Newman says. “I am so glad we were still able to get this important safety information out to the public, in the midst of the pandemic, and do it in a way that people enjoyed.”



Firefighter/paramedic Ryan Cloud demonstrates bike safety for a safety video with help from Rowan Bakken.

Anthony ‘Mr. Do Everything’ Rhead — Firefighter of Many Talents



When equipment like an emergency light or a radio needs replacement parts, firefighters can't simply run to the nearest hardware store.

These types of problems are simple in everyday life — but in emergency services, there's usually a process.

Luckily for North Mason's team, “Mr. Do Everything” — a.k.a. Anthony (Tony) Rhead — most likely has the answer. The firefighter/EMT has been with the Fire Authority for 15 years and has “picked up little things along the way.”

“If we ran into an issue and nobody knew the answers, somebody had to find out,” he explains.

He frequently volunteered to be that somebody, and over the years this experience has built up to broad knowledge on how to handle almost any situation.

His quest for knowledge doesn't only come in these reactive scenarios — Rhead often thinks proactively as well.

“Tony lives and breathes improvements to the fleet and is always looking for things that enhance public safety and firefighter safety,” says Assistant Chief Scott Cooper. “Sometimes I wonder if he sleeps at night or if he's researching — he has a lot of ideas on how to improve operations.”

When not busy responding to calls, Rhead does a little bit of everything.

He recently coordinated the water rescue program for the Fire Authority. Additionally, he's on the Apparatus Specifications Committee, which designs NMRFA's new rigs. He's also an integral part of the wildland fire program. Not only does Rhead frequently deploy on wildland fires, but each spring he ensures that the brush trucks and other supplies are ready for the wildland season.

“He does it all, and is constantly doing apparatus upgrades and fixing things,” says Capt. Ryan Cleveland, Rhead's shift captain.

The Biggest Win

Rhead's greatest impact is perhaps the \$380,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant received from FEMA this summer for a new water tender (see related story, page 2). The grant is highly competitive and numerous fire agencies apply for the funds each year.

“The process is very thorough and you have to put a lot of work into explaining how it's going to help the local area,” Rhead says.

He wrote the application last year for a \$500,000 multipurpose rig that combined

a water tender and a fire truck. Applications go through several rounds, and those with the highest scores are funded during early rounds. Unfortunately, FEMA ran out of funds before reaching NMRFA's request.

Rhead saw another opportunity and received Chief Beau Bakken's green light to try again. Rhead spent hours researching fire departments that had received grants for water tenders, to find out what they had done differently.

“I talked to chiefs and captains who were willing to share the strategies they thought helped them,” he says. “I came up with a strategy to scale back what I asked for, and for how to justify it.”

The hard work paid off through one email this past August, when FEMA notified Chief Bakken that NMRFA's grant was approved. Rhead didn't learn about the grant award until two days later, as he'd been on vacation and out of cell phone range. Chief couldn't reach him right away with the great news.

“If it wasn't for Tony, there's no way we would have received the grant,” Cleveland says.

This isn't Rhead's first awarded grant. He was one of the driving forces that made it possible for NMRFA to receive a \$12,000 grant for hazmat response supplies and another \$12,000 grant toward the purchase of a brush truck. The equipment and apparatus acquired from these grants will serve NMRFA for years to come.

An Evolution of Skills

One experience that helped enhance Rhead's grant application writing skills was the knowledge acquired through his participation in the Managing Officer Program, administered through the U.S. Fire Administration. This two-year program is focused on developing professional and personal skills in change management and risk reduction for leaders in emergency services. Because of this program, Rhead has learned how to better use data in fire services.

“The program is not teaching you to be an incident commander — it's about everything else in the background,” Rhead says. “It makes you more aware of what's going on, why that's happening in the

community and what you can do within your organization to prevent the incident or improve your response.”

Soon, Rhead will have even more data that may lead to future improvements. As part of his culmination project, he's



been managing the Fire Authority's drone program. Capt. Jeromy Hicks began the trial program before leaving NMRFA — and Rhead proposed reviving it for his final project and paper.

He received his drone pilot certification in November 2019 and has been collecting data ever since.

“The drone gives us an eye in the sky, whether it's a drowning victim or a wildfire scene, before we engage,” he says. “It gives us a view that we don't get from the ground, so we know what resources we need.”

Rhead doesn't currently have a new grant in mind, but there's no doubt that before long, Mr. Do Everything will come up with another project to progress NMRFA toward better serving our community.

Fire Prevention: Cooking with Care

By Lacey Newman, Emergency Prevention Specialist

Kitchen fires are the most common cause of home fires, with 44 percent of reported home fires originating there. As the holiday season quickly approaches and many of you prepare to cook up your favorite holiday meals, we want to take the time to review some important fire safety tips to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

Prepare:

Be sure there are working smoke detectors installed in every bedroom, outside of bedrooms, and on every level of the home. Smoke detectors are a life-saving tool, as they allow you valuable time needed to evacuate your home in the event of a fire.

Smoke rises, so it's important to mount smoke alarms high on walls or ceilings. Wall-mounted alarms should be installed within 1 foot of the ceiling.

Proper placement is key. Ensure that your smoke alarms are installed at least 10 feet from your cooking appliances to minimize bothersome false alarms while cooking. False alarms often lead people to remove the battery, rendering the smoke alarm useless.

Prevent:

Keep kids at least 3 feet from the stove and areas where hot food or drinks are being prepared.

Keep anything capable of catching fire away from the stovetop. This includes potholders, oven mitts, curtains, loose shirt sleeves and countless other objects.

Keep your stovetop, oven and burners clean. Remnants of food and grease in and on your appliances increase the risk of a kitchen fire.

Stay in the kitchen at all times while frying, grilling or broiling food. If you must leave, be sure to turn off the stove before exiting the kitchen.

Check your food regularly if you are simmering, baking, roasting or boiling food. Remain in the home while food is cooking and be sure to use a timer to remind yourself when your food is expected to be done.

Remain alert! Do not cook when you are overly tired or if you have taken medication that makes you drowsy. It is also unsafe to cook if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Extinguish:

If there is a pan fire on your stovetop, slide a lid over the pan, turn off the stove and let the pan cool.

If you have a grease or oil fire, cover it with a lid and turn the burner off. Never add water to a grease fire, as this will cause the fire to grow and spread rapidly. If you have baking soda nearby, pour it into the pan, put the lid back on top of the pan, and allow the pan to cool.

If a fire starts in the oven, turn the oven off and keep the door closed. After an oven fire, make sure your oven is serviced before you use it again.

Evacuate:

If there is a fire in your home, get out of the house and call 911.

All of us at North Mason Regional Fire Authority wish you and your loved ones a safe and wonderful holiday season.



New Power Gurneys Improve Safety for Patients, Responders

NMRFA recently collaborated with Mason County Fire District 3 and Mason County Fire District 6 to obtain a \$360,000 federal grant for new power gurneys. Funded through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, the grant paid for a total of eight power gurneys. NMRFA received five of them — one for each ambulance.

“There’s been a push in the industry in the last few years toward battery-powered, electrically operated gurneys as a standard, but they’re very expensive,” says Capt. Carl Ehresman.

The electrically powered equipment has two components. One is the cot itself and the other is a loading module, which is mounted into the ambulance and must meet safety and crash-resistance standards. Once the gurney is locked into the loading

module, the operator can lower and raise it with the touch of a button.

Traditionally, emergency responders have used manually operated cots to transport patients from their location to the ambulance. Lifting those cots into an ambulance is not without risk, both for the patient and the responders, Ehresman explains. For responders, in particular, there’s a high risk of back injuries.

In addition to improving safety, the power gurneys help streamline response. In the past, it took two or more people to load heavy patients, which required sending extra personnel to a scene.

“Now we can have crews available to run the next call, and we’ve improved safety,” Ehresman says. “The power gurneys are an absolute game-changer.”



Capt. Carl Ehresman demonstrates the loading of a power gurney into an ambulance.



North Mason Regional Fire Authority
PO Box 277
Belfair, WA 98528

Presort Std.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit #1628

Visit us online for 24/7 information: northmasonrfa.com

Rescue Swimmer Program Trains NMRFA Responders for Water Emergencies

Surrounded by water, the North Mason area is a popular destination for recreation. To ensure that the local emergency responders are prepared for the unique challenge of water emergencies, NMRFA has implemented a rescue swimmer program.

The program provides training and certification for NMRFA personnel, along with rescue gear. This past summer, all personnel participated in either a water-based rescue class or in-house awareness training.

"Each summer, water recreation becomes bigger and bigger around here, and this summer was our busiest ever," says Capt. Jordan Reese, NMRFA's training officer. "Part of our job is to determine risks in our area and mitigate them, and this program is part of that mitigation."

The training covers aspects such as searching for submerged individuals, responding to a group rescue and providing aid in the water. Rescuers also practice using gear, including wet suits, swimming flippers, gloves, hoods and personal floatation devices.

"It doesn't matter what time of the year it is because the equipment allows us to provide rescues in any season," Reese says.

To practice the water rescue tactics and techniques, responders

will attend a recertification class every year.

"We want to prevent accidents, so we hope to train and never have to use these skills — but we've already used the training in real-life situations multiple times," Reese says.

He reminds the community that it's still important to maintain safe recreation practices.

"First step is for people to be safe, and we know that it's not always possible," he says. "But do understand the dangers of getting in the water — and don't overdo your limits."



NMRFA personnel practice water rescue in Hood Canal over the summer.