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SFMO’s 120th Anniversary - Entering the 21st Century

We are finishing our yearlong review of the State Fire Marshal’s Office (SFMO) 120th Anniversary with a look back at some of our most recent history.

1995: The SFMO was accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). Currently offering 21 levels of firefighter professional qualifications.

1999: Administration of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) program was returned to the SFMO to share state fire incident data to a national database. Agencies reporting to NFIRS increased the data analysis capabilities of local fire risks and response activities.

2000: A water treatment facility was constructed at the Fire Training Academy to reduce wastewater contamination of the surrounding soil.

2009: RCW 18.270 was enacted giving regulation and enforcement of fire sprinkler fitters to the SFMO.

Also, a new 44-bed dormitory was constructed at the Fire Training Academy to increase overnight housing for academy students.

2012: The Regional Direct Delivery program was established to provide training resources to enable firefighters across the state to meet a basic level of safe performance and professional development.

2015: After the devastation caused by the SR 530 Landslide in Oso, on March 22, 2014, RCW 43.43.965 was amended to include all-risk incidents under the State Fire Service Mobilization Plan. This amendment allows for reimbursement to responding resources to an authorized all-risk mobilization event.

2020: All-Risk Mobilization was authorized in support of the COVID-19 pandemic response.

As the population grows and new hazards emerge, the SFMO will continue to support local fire service agencies in providing the highest quality of emergency services to the people of Washington State.
As we close out 2021, the SFMO celebrates its 120th year anniversary. We remain steadfast in providing quality programs and services to the fire service, industry partners, and the public. We remain committed to delivering high-quality training, certification, and licensing programs, conducting fire and life safety inspections and plan reviews, mobilizing resources to all-risk incidents, collecting emergency response information, engaging in community risk reduction efforts, and serving as subject-matter experts within our various programs.

We are focusing on many important efforts throughout the organization. Fire and life safety inspections in state-licensed facilities have resumed after a suspension was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but some modifications are still in effect. Fire agencies are encouraged to make contact with our Deputy State Fire Marshals who are assigned to inspections, if more information is needed.

It’s time to submit all 2021 National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data to our office at NFIRS@wsp.wa.gov, so that your agency’s fire incident activity is accurately reflected. This information plays a critical role in the completeness of the Fire in Washington report and the Statewide Risk Assessment. The Community Risk Reduction Coalition, comprised of representatives across the various fire service organizations and partner agencies, aims to target key risks facing our communities. Additional information will follow on this topic in future publications.

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A Message from the Interim State Fire Marshal

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The Fire Training Academy continues renovations to modernize and enhance training capabilities for the fire service. The Fire Service Certification program is migrating to online testing delivery, and we are exploring technology that will allow for remote and/or hybrid learning. Regional direct delivery of firefighter training continues to be in high demand. The Basic Firefighter Training Reimbursement program is also available to local fire agencies to assist with off-setting the cost of training.

Licensing and certification of the fire sprinkler, fireworks, and cigarette industries continues on cycle. The Fire Sprinkler Demonstration Trailer will be making some appearances in the New Year. Look for educational and enforcement materials being available in the near future.

The SFMO wishes you a happy and healthy 2022! We look forward to continuing to work with you to make Washington a safe place to live, work, and play.

Interim State Fire Marshal
Chad Cross

Spokane Fire Agencies Participating in Pilot for Sound Off Online

Sound Off Online will be a virtual platform to connect Sound Off firefighters, teachers, and state teams. It will allow agencies to deliver and track progress in communities and states across the nation.

Under the guidance of the Michigan Public Health Institute project managers, six diverse jurisdictions will participate on the development team, along with at least one representative from each Sound Off state team. These communities are:

- Spokane Fire Department and Spokane Valley Fire Department (mutual aid/collaborative approach)
- Benton Harbor, Michigan
- Junction City, Ohio
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- State of South Carolina

Populations in these jurisdictions range from 900 to 5 million. It is anticipated Sound Off Online will begin a test run in these areas sometime in 2022 or early 2023.

Through this program, students will learn how smoke alarms help families stay safe from fires in the home. Available resources will be used to educate students and families about the importance of working smoke alarms, the meaning of the sounds they make, and where they belong in a home. Students also will learn how to identify and correct common home fire dangers, and how to plan for a fast escape in case a home fire happens.

The SFMO is excited to continue working with Spokane and Spokane Valley Fire Departments in this new aspect of the Sound Off program. Sound Off Online will measure the program's effectiveness in delivering information in an online format, and may be released to a larger audience in the future.
New Look to Firefighter Certification Written Exams

Answer sheets for written certification exams are starting to look a little different for firefighter certification candidates. The Firefighter Certification Program began migrating its test management platform from the legacy LXR system to the new EVAExam platform in December of 2021, and will be fully migrated to the new platform by March 1, 2022. The migration of exams will be done in groups, starting with the most frequently used exams.

The only change for proctors and candidates will be the look of the answer sheet. Instead of the traditional Scantron™ “bubble” sheets, where candidates completely fill in a bubble to indicate a correct answer, they will indicate their correct answer by making an “X” in a square (see illustration). To correct an answer, candidates will completely fill in their first answer square, and simply mark an “X” in their new selected answer. The new software automatically identifies corrections and allows the SFMO to review corrections on a computer screen, rather than having to go through a stack of bubble sheets and review erasures and other stray marks.

The new exam version groups are below:

In Progress:
- Hazardous Materials - Awareness
- Hazardous Materials - Operations
- Firefighter I
- Firefighter II
- Fire Officer III

Exams Shipping the week of January 4, 2022:
- Instructor I
- Instructor II
- Fire Officer I
- Fire Officer II
- Fire Officer IV

Exams Shipping the week of February 1, 2022:
- All Driver/Operator Levels - Pumper, Aerial, Tiller, Mobile Water Supply, ARFF

Exams Shipping the week of March 1, 2022:
- Airport Rescue Firefighter (ARFF)
- Hazardous Materials - Technician
- Public Educator
- Fire Inspector
- Fire Investigator
AFG Reports Now Available in the NFIRS Data Warehouse

On November 15, 2021, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) announced the availability of six new reports in the NFIRS Data Warehouse. Two reports were developed specifically to aid fire agencies in applying for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG).

The NFIRS AFG Summary Report provides a comprehensive, multi-page report that summarizes the following information: incident type categories, acres burned, EMS, aid, and casualties. The Fire Department Reporting Summary Report provides a full NFIRS reporting history, giving the incident totals for each year, starting with the year that the fire agency started reporting to NFIRS to present.

If you have questions about these AFG reports, or need assistance with generating reports in the NFIRS Data Warehouse, please reach out to the NFIRS Coordinator at NFIRS@wsp.wa.gov or 360-596-3924.

Atmospheric River Event in Whatcom County Prompts Mobilization Prepositioning Action

Already pummeled by one onslaught of rain that swelled rivers and flooded low-lying areas, Whatcom County was poised to get battered again by another “Atmospheric River” on Thanksgiving weekend; a weather event that would again flood areas still recovering from the first round, causing more damage and seriously impacting fire agencies’ ability to respond.

The significant potential for this weather event prompted Whatcom County Fire District 1 to reach out to the Northwest Fire Defense Regional Coordinator and request the prepositioning of swift water rescue resources to Whatcom County. Utilizing Appendix Q of the State Fire Services Mobilization Plan, State Fire Marshal’s Office staff and the Fire Defense Committee reviewed the documentation submitted by Whatcom County Fire District 1, and recommended approval of the request to WSP Chief John R. Batiste. Chief Batiste approved the request at 5:45 p.m. on November 27, 2021.

Two swift water rescue teams were dispatched to stage in Whatcom County the evening of November 27, 2021. One team was from Snohomish County Fire District 26 and the other from fire agencies across King County. Fortunately, the weather system shifted away from Whatcom County and the resources were able to completely demobilize by the afternoon of November 29.

This was the second use of the pre-positioning pilot project authorized by the legislature in the 2021 session, and the first use for a non-wildfire event. The first use of this pilot project was in Okanogan County at the beginning of July, 2021.

For more information about the State Fire Services Mobilization Plan or the pre-positioning pilot project, contact the SFMO at (360)596-3946 or FPBMobe@wsp.wa.gov.
The SFMO’s Firefighter Certification Program has begun implementing computer-based testing for written certification exams. The first computer-based test was administered for a Fire Officer III exam, held in Gig Harbor on December 17, 2021. The SFMO plans to expand delivery of computer-based testing throughout 2022, with the full implementation of new test management software.

Computer-based written exams will be taken in a central location with a test proctor in the room, just like the current pencil/paper method. Candidates who take their written exam via the computer-based platform will be able to see their preliminary written score as soon as they complete the exam. Exam results are not official until the exam session is reviewed by the SFMO. Score notices will still be issued.

In order to conduct a written exam on the computer-based platform, candidates will need to provide either their own tablet or laptop device, or use one provided by their agency. All devices used for state certification exams must have the Safe Exam Browser client installed. Departments and Test Control Officers interested in conducting a computer-based certification exam should contact the Firefighter Certification Program for more information and technical requirements at (360) 596-3945 or ifsacquestions@wsp.wa.gov.

The five agencies participating in the Sound Off program have begun to report success in presenting fire safety messaging to second and third graders in their service areas.

The SFMO began working with Sound Off to promote awareness and access to smoke alarm technologies to reduce fire fatalities. The program includes presentations to elementary students and installation of smoke alarms in the homes of school children.

According to Chris DeBell, Community Outreach Coordinator with Lacey Fire District #3, they provided a pilot presentation to 25 students and received good feedback from the teacher. “She will be our advocate when we more actively pick up the pace on working into more classroom presentations.”

Spokane Valley Fire Department (SVFD) staff met with the three school districts in their jurisdiction at the end of the last school year and received unanimous approval to launch Sound Off for the third grade.

Training has been completed for 12 SVFD firefighters to deliver the program. The program is rolling out by school district; one school district has been completed so far.

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Spokane Fire Department (SFD) completed their pilot course with a second grade class at St. Charles Parish during the first full week of December. This school was chosen because they were impacted by a house of worship arson in March 2021. Although the church was likely the target, the school sustained the bulk of the damage. The students are still relocated in a temporary learning space in the church.

SFD’s grade school fire safety programming has been updated to include the Sound Off curriculum. First through fourth grade fire safety education is scheduled to resume in January 2022, offering both in-person and virtual options.

SFD also implemented a unique twist with escape planning; a new, custom, home fire escape window. The Sound Off program curriculum will travel with their Children’s Fire Safety House (CFSH) to area elementary schools. Thinking outside of the box, Thomas Feeney, a community volunteer and member of the SFD family, designed a custom in-classroom home fire escape window.

Although due to COVID-19 precautions, SFD is not able to bring the CFSH, they will still be able to demonstrate the skill of evacuating out of a bedroom through the use of this prop. The prop easily stows away and can be put together in a matter of minutes. It is a great, cost-effective alternative during the pandemic for departments with limited resources.

All Sound Off materials are available at https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/soundoff-teachers/ and are free to use.
2021 INCIDENT REPORTING SNAPSHOT

JANUARY 2021 - DECEMBER 2021

INCIDENT COUNTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>573,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>231,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>838,679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INCIDENT TYPES

- FIRE: 4.0%
- EMS: 68.4%
- OTHER: 27.6%

PERCENTAGE OF AGENCIES REPORTING TO NFIRS PER COUNTY

- BELOW 50% REPORTING
- ABOVE 50% REPORTING
- 100% REPORTING

WASHINGTON STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE | WSP.WA.GOV/STATE-FIRE-MARSHALS-OFFICE/ | FPBPIO@WSP.WA.GOV
WASHINGTON FIRE FATALITY STATISTICS
JANUARY - DECEMBER 2021

REPORTED FATALITY

INCREASE FROM SAME PERIOD IN 2020

PROPERTY USE

SMOKE ALARMS

FIRE DEATHS BY AGE & GENDER

SMOKE ALARMS

20 PRESENT
(6 OPERATED, 5 DID NOT OPERATE, 9 UNKNOWN)

14 NOT PRESENT

30 UNKNOWN

*Twelve fire fatalities occurred in locations where smoke alarms are not normally installed

*One fire fatally occurred in a location that has not been determined by the reporting agency

*Percentages rounded to nearest whole number, and thus may not total 100%; 1% not shown for gender percentages accounts for 1 fatality where the deceased was unable to be identified.
**SFMO Program Webinars**

**NFIRS Program**

The SFMO is offering a series of free, monthly webinars providing information and training for those who use and participate in the NFIRS program. These webinars will keep fire agencies informed on Washington’s NFIRS program, including identified data quality issues, tips on how to increase overall data quality, and ways to use data to benefit both your agency and your community. The introductory webinar, hosted in November, had more than 40 attendees.

**Using Undetermined, Importance of Correcting and Updating Incident Reports — Wednesday, January 19, 2022 at 11 a.m.**

How often do you use an "Undetermined" code in your incident reports? This webinar will dive into the prevalent use of "Undetermined" codes in Washington's NFIRS data, why this can be detrimental to your data quality, and how to overcome it. Take a deeper look into the NFIRS validation standards, including why some incidents may not be passing, and why it's so important to both correct any critical errors and regularly update your incident reports.

**Incident Coding and Training Resources — Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 11 a.m.**

This webinar will review Incident Types that can be difficult to code and often raise questions from fire agencies, as well as provide NFIRS resources that your agency can use any time, day or night.

**Accessing and Using Data — Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 11 a.m.**

This webinar will show participating fire agencies how to access the data you put into NFIRS, and an easy way you can look at that data to make decisions and put that data to use for your agency and within your community.

**All Things Mutual Aid — Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 11 a.m.**

What is mutual aid? What are the rules for giving/receiving mutual aid? If you paused while answering these questions, this might be a webinar to consider! Learn the true definition and guidelines when it comes to ALL things mutual aid.

**How to Conquer Dollar Loss — Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 11 a.m.**

Many think of dollar loss as just that — loss. What if you look at it as how much you were able to save at an incident instead? Learn the importance of reporting estimated dollar values in fire incident reports, why this is beneficial to your agency, and obtain resources that can help assist you in estimating these values.

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**Fire in Washington Report Available April 1st**

The annual Fire in Washington report will be published on April 1, 2022. Incident data from 2021 submitted to the NFIRS program by January 31, 2022, will be included in the report.

To verify your agency’s reporting status, a monthly incident count report can be found at [www.wsp.wa.gov/prevention-data-collection/](http://www.wsp.wa.gov/prevention-data-collection/).

The NFIRS coordinator is available to assist agencies with implementing the NFIRS program, exporting data, and more. Please call (360) 596-3924 or email NFIRS@wsp.wa.gov for assistance.

**REGISTER HERE**
The SFMO is offering a series of free webinars to fire agencies and personnel that respond to state mobilization incidents. The webinars will delve into various aspects of the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan (Plan) and offer guidance on a range of topics, including what to expect when responding and how to complete the assorted forms.

Mobilization Awareness — Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 10 a.m.
Mobilization Awareness training is required for all personnel who may be called to respond to a state mobilization incident. This training will provide basic information to emergency responders on the:

- Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan
- Operating environment in which the responder will be working
- Necessary systems and procedures in place at a major emergency event for the responder to adequately function and perform
- Appropriate actions and behavior expected of the emergency responder
- Compensable hours for personnel and equipment

Mobe Paperwork 101 — Thursday, March 31, 2022 at 10 a.m.
All reimbursement paperwork is audited by Mobilization staff prior to payment to ensure all hours listed are reimbursable under the Plan. This training will provide information to emergency responders on:

- Required documentation on OF-286s, OF-288s, Crew Time Reports, and shift tickets
- Common documentation errors
- Extraordinary circumstances, i.e., extended travel, reassignments, etc.

Show Me The Money! Reimbursable vs. Non-reimbursable — Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 10 a.m.
In accordance with the Plan, the Washington State Patrol will reimburse fire agencies for eligible costs incurred while mobilized for a major emergency incident. Discussion will focus on Section 16—Personnel Compensation and Section 17—Apparatus Compensation.

Career Reimbursements — Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 10 a.m.
Correctly completed career reimbursement requests with necessary supporting documentation are crucial to processing timely and accurate reimbursements. Career submittals are a time consuming and complex part of the reimbursement process. During this training we will:

- Review compensable hours for mobilized and backfill personnel
- Review the current Personnel Reimbursement Request form
- Discuss examples of correctly completed forms
SFMO Fire Sprinkler Program

The SFMO is responsible for the licensing and certification of the fire sprinkler industry in Washington State. These functions are carried out in accordance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 18.160, Fire Sprinkler Contractors Law, and RCW 18.270, Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitting. Chapter 212-80 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) further defines how the program is administered to include licensing and certification requirements, role of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), enforcement and compliance.

The program has also grown to include educational opportunities for AHJs and industry, as well as the public. Since 2005, the program has worked with an International Code Council preferred provider to offer educational opportunities such as National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET) exam preparation, NFPA standard overviews, plan review, and many other trade-related courses. The courses are free to AHJs and industry professionals, and registration is available on the SFMO website. There is a residential fire sprinkler demonstration trailer available for use at public events, and our staff will demonstrate the effectiveness of these systems. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, outreach opportunities for the trailer have been limited, but we look forward to resuming these services in the future.

Enforcement efforts are generally initiated from complaints submitted to the SFMO. Common allegations are related to unlicensed contractors and uncertified employees. Substantiated violations of the Fire Sprinkler Contractor or Fire Protection Sprinkler Fitting laws can result in penalties consistent with WAC 212-80. If a penalty is assessed, the subject of the complaint will be notified and given time and opportunity to request either an informal conference with the State Fire Marshal or a formal hearing with the Administrative Office of the Courts.

More information on the program is available on the SFMO website or by contacting Education, Enforcement, and Analytics staff at firesprinkler@wsp.wa.gov or (360) 596-3946.

Blanket CMS Waiver Issued

Along with reduced inspections among Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) facilities (nursing homes, hospitals, and ambulatory surgical centers), there is a blanket waiver in place for several Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance services (ITM). Examples of those services include quarterly/annual sprinkler servicing, 5-year internal pipe inspection, annual fire alarm servicing, and fire/smoke damper servicing. For regularly scheduled ITMs, the SFMO received direction from CMS not to cite any of those services if they are past due. Items not included in this waiver are:

- Sprinkler system monthly electric motor-driven and weekly diesel engine-driven fire pump testing
- Portable fire extinguisher monthly inspection
- Elevators with firefighters’ emergency operations monthly testing
- Emergency generator 30 continuous minute monthly testing and associated transfer switch monthly testing
- Means of egress daily inspection in areas that have undergone construction, repair, alterations, or additions to ensure its ability to be used instantly in case of emergency

If a deficiency is found with any of these systems during a physical walkthrough, it would still be cited. This blanket waiver is anticipated to be lifted mid-January 2022.

If there are any questions on our inspection program or who the local Deputy State Fire Marshal in your area is, please call (360) 596-3947.
Roadway Construction at the Fire Training Academy

At the beginning of August 2021, a major construction project started on the road leading to the Fire Training Academy (FTA). The project added salmon bridges to the streams that run under the main access road. Although the bridges are complete, roadway construction continues while final utilities are rerouted. Due to inclement weather and continued construction, use extreme caution when accessing the FTA, by maintaining a slow speed and constant observance of your surroundings. The FTA anticipates the roadway will be fully open by mid-January before the next Recruit Academy starts. The FTA would like to acknowledge Department of Natural Resources, Scarsella Construction Company, and Eastside Fire and Rescue for all their efforts on this project.

If you have any questions about the construction, contact the FTA at (425) 453-3000 or FireTrainingAcademy@wsp.wa.gov.

Upcoming Events and Trainings

**January 10-13:** Fire Instructor I  
North Bend, WA

**January 26-27:** NFA – Building Organizational Support for Community Risk Reduction  
SeaTac, WA

**February 7-12:** Fire Officer I  
North Bend, WA

**February 22-26:** Fire Officer II  
North Bend, WA

**March 8-10:** Vision 20/20 CRR Workshop and Data Collection and Analysis Course  
SeaTac, WA

**March 21-25:** Fire Instructor II  
North Bend, WA

**May 2-5:** Fire Instructor I  
North Bend, WA

**July 8-10, 15-17, & 22-24:** Firefighter II  
North Bend, WA

**September 12-17:** Fire Officer I  
North Bend, WA

**October 15-16, 22-23:** Fire Instructor I  
North Bend, WA

**October 17-21:** Fire Prevention Institute  
Chelan, WA

**October 31-November 4:** Fire Instructor II  
North Bend, WA

**November 14-18:** Fire Officer II  
North Bend, WA
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