

search...

MAIN MENU

- Home
- About NWFR
- What We Do
- Training
- FAQ
- Employment
- Contact Us
- District 4

LOGIN FORM

Username

Password

Remember me

Login

[Lost Password?](#)



Home

New Automatic First Response

Whatcom County citizens may not recognize the ambulances and fire engines responding to their emergency calls.

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue and Whatcom County Fire District No. 7 Collaborate Efforts to Create a Safer County.

Written by Tali Bendzak

Whatcom County citizens may not recognize the ambulances and fire engines responding to their emergency calls because of the innovative Automatic First Response Agreement that was recently implemented. Since Feb. 15, 2008, North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) combined emergency response efforts with Whatcom County Fire Protection District No. 7 to better protect the community. The agreement consolidated the operational boundaries separating NWFR from District No. 7, resulting in faster response times and a decrease in travel time.

Due to the cooperative efforts on behalf of both NWFR and District No. 7, the Whatcom community is considerably safer when emergencies occur. The original boundaries between the two districts remain intact, but the agreement identifies a new set of borders for operations. Now, NWFR and District No. 7 respond to fire, medical, and other calls within each other's districts. The new boundaries designate a first and secondary responder for locations within each district. Meaning, NWFR may be the first responder to a call from District No. 7, or vice versa.

This change is highly beneficial to the community because it may dramatically decrease the time it takes to respond to an emergency call. When NWFR's station is closer to the incident than District No. 7's nearest station, then NWFR should be the first to respond, despite the district in which the incident occurs. Also, the new agreement identifies locations of secondary response. If NWFR's apparatus and crews are unavailable to respond to a call within their district, because they are currently responding to an incident elsewhere, then District No. 7 is automatically dispatched to the location.

The first and secondary responding districts are indicated by the location of the emergency call within the new operational boundaries. The crew closest to the incident is now the responding crew, rather than waiting for the availability of crews within the district of the call. This type of proximity-efficient responding saves the fire department travel expenses and the citizens crucial minutes when requesting emergency service.

One or both districts may respond to an incident depending on its type and extent. Medical calls such as victims of a cardiac arrest have five minutes for a high likelihood of resuscitation. Single-room fires reach the dangerous flashover stage in five to eight minutes. The response time is critical to the protection of the community.

Most fire departments use a mutual aid agreement to request emergency assistance from neighboring districts. More efficient response can be offered by an Automatic First Response Agreement, because it is previously arranged and assistance is automatically dispatched, thereby significantly decreasing response time. NWFR and District No. 7 continue to use mutual aid agreements with neighboring districts, but have organized an Automatic First Response Agreement to provide a higher quality of service to their districts.

Seeing an ambulance or fire-engine respond to an emergency call outside of its district should be a sign of progressive improvement in the overall service of both fire districts.

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue is a fire protection district serving 147 square miles in the northwest corner of Whatcom County including the City of Blaine and the communities of Birch Bay, Custer, Laurel and the unincorporated areas surrounding the City of Lynden. NWFR operates from 10 fire stations with 36 full-paid firefighters and 60 volunteers. Whatcom Co. Fire Protection District No. 7 serves 73 square miles including the City of Ferndale and the surrounding area. District No. 7 operates from 6 stations with 23 full-paid firefighters and 75 volunteers. Both NWFR and District No. 7 are "all-risk" fire and emergency service providers, responding to fire, medical, rescue, and hazardous material emergencies.

