



**News Release**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **San Juan Island Fire and Rescue Committed to Continuous Improvement for all Emergency Response**

San Juan Island Fire and Rescue (SJIF&R) remains committed to continuous improvement in our service to our islands' communities to ensure professional, quality, and compassionate emergency response and service.

Why does SJIF&R respond to medical calls?

First: SJIF&R's guiding principle is do what is right for the patient. In emergency services, regardless of the type of emergency, that means safe and timely arrival of trained personnel to start life-saving measures. It is the national standard for emergency response.

Second: Time is critical in an emergency. A wildland or structure fire can double in size every 30 seconds. <sup>1</sup> Every minute in delay of high-quality CPR reduces the patient's chance of survival by 7-10%. <sup>2</sup> In our cold waters, without protective clothing, a person falling overboard from a boat or off a dock loses dexterity in 3 minutes and consciousness within 15-30 minutes. <sup>3</sup> Every minute someone is having a stroke, 1.9 million braincells and 14 billion synapses are lost. <sup>4</sup>

That is why SJIF&R is responding on all emergency 911 calls that our community faces. Your fire department has the most medical first responders in the district, by far, trained to start the chain of survival. We're the only agency in the district staffed 24/7 with the state required minimum of two responders in station. We are ready to be in our rigs with the tires rolling within 90 seconds of a 911 dispatch. We are the only agency that can handle scenes requiring more than medical care, from situations as simple as a lift assist to as complicated as vehicle extrication or rope rescue. SJIF&R and the San Juan County Sheriff are the only agencies providing marine response in San Juan County.

We take the fire engine because it carries life-saving equipment that allows us to begin care immediately. We don't always know what we'll find on scene; if we need to remove a door or use ropes to reach a patient, we want all of our tools within easy reach, not twenty minutes away at the station. The engine responds to every call, just as emergency departments do all over the country. We don't want to waste precious time arriving at a scene and not having the tools we need available for immediate use.

It wasn't always like this in your district, but just because we did things one way in the past doesn't mean that's what we should be doing today or tomorrow. Best practices in emergency services evolve, and so does our training. Our AOs—apparatus operators, or drivers—complete 30 hours of instruction & training, written examination, skills tests, and annual recertification to safely navigate the island's narrow roads, steep and twisting driveways, and other tight spots in addition to their fire and medical training requirements. There's always a staff officer in the passenger seat assessing the AO's performance and the safe operation of our vehicles.

We are always looking for ways to improve our response times and quality of service to our community. That is why Chief Collins, in his letter to the public about the recent levy vote, noted that our department is exploring how to stage two first responders near Roche Harbor, during the day, seven days a week, to enable us to reach you faster if you're on the north end. That is why we're looking at operating two boats, one based in Roche Harbor, the other in Friday Harbor, to more quickly serve our district members who do not live on San Juan Island.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Utah Fire Marshal: <https://firemarshal.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2015/04/Home-Fire-Sprinklers.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Downing, John A. "Hypothermia: Understanding and Prevention":  
<https://seagrant.umn.edu/programs/recreation-and-water-safety-program/hypothermia#graphics>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Saver, Jeffery L. "Time is Brain—Quantified" AHA Journal Vol 37, No 1:  
<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/full/10.1161/01.STR.0000196957.55928.ab>

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*The San Juan Island Fire & Rescue was established on October 6, 1958. Fire District #3 covers all of San Juan Island, including Brown; Henry; Johns; Pearl; Spieden and Stuart Islands. For more information, please visit <http://www.sjifire.org/>*