



## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SAN JUAN ISLAND FIRE and RESCUE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY –**

Update on our COVID-19 response and post pandemic response and service lessons learned  
By Bob Jarman, Chair of Fire District #3

Timing is everything. More than one year ago, San Juan Island Fire and Rescue (SJIF&R) and San Juan Island EMS began working through recommendations from the citizens to join emergency services together into one organization. We have been working diligently to implement the unanimous agreement between San Juan County Public Hospital District #1 and Fire District #3 elected commissioners. While developing a combined all hazard emergency services for our islands, we suddenly found ourselves in the middle of an unprecedented, global health pandemic. All of San Juan Island's public safety emergency service providers immediately evaluated how to provide increased emergency services to our islanders, while minimizing risk to our community members, responders and volunteers. Timing is everything. SJIF&R leadership recognized the need to take actions to protect the community, the membership, and the greater emergency responder community. Immediate action was taken to coordinate emergency service operations between all of the County's public safety providers (Fire & EMS, and Sheriff); concurrently, a direct link to San Juan County's emergency operations. In doing so, the leadership of these organizations created a response plan ensuring all hazard emergency response for all the San Juan Islands while ensuring depth and mutual aid between agencies. The work in implementing the joint all-hazard emergency response with SJIF&R and EMS, paired with SJIF&R's implementation of the already obtained first response medical license from the State, gave us a huge leg up on responding to this public health crisis and, simultaneously, meeting the needs of our community.

Timing is everything. Within 10-hours, Chief Collins had communicated with the Fire Commissioners, declared a State of Emergency for the District, and altered their emergency response deployment plan. The emergency response model changed from all member response for every emergency page to a fully staffed Engine Company, out of HQ Station 31, with four crew members, including at least two Emergency Medical Technicians, and a Command Staff member (Chief Collins and/or Assistant Chief Monin) available 24-hours/7-days a week; all within the existing adopted budget. There have been three crews with four members working rotating 24-hour shifts for immediate response. This has significantly decreased response times and has maximized the health and safety of our entire membership. The rest of our volunteer firefighters remain on call for structural fires, rescues

and any emergencies exceeding a single crew. In addition, there is a dedicated marine response crew to staff Fire Boat One, the only fire and EMS marine response resource in San Juan County, 24-hours a day.

As the pandemic continues and we begin planning our resumption of post-COVID 19 emergency response, we have learned some valuable lessons in how we can better serve our islands' communities. We remain dedicated to serving our communities with the support, commitment, and participation of our membership. The focus and commitment of all our members is to provide the highest level of comprehensive emergency care we can for our entire community throughout the islands we serve and love. Rest assured we are ready and able to respond to your needs.

Be Safe; Be Healthy. Timing is everything.

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*The San Juan Island Fire & Rescue was established on October 6, 1958. The fire department covers about 55 square miles, includes all of San Juan Island, as well as Brown and Pearl Islands. For more information, please visit <http://www.sjifire.org/>*