



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Juan Island Fire & Rescue Continues Planning Post Pandemic Response

San Juan Island Fire and Rescue's (SJIF&R) Commission Chairman Jarman and commissioners are disappointed by the actions taken last night by Public Hospital District's (PHD) to cease the creation of a single all hazard emergency services agency.

The timing and actions of the PHD Board's unilateral decision in the middle of a global health pandemic is troubling. It was unclear exactly what the board discussed because no resolution was provided to the fire commissioners or the public.

The Hospital District Board's decision is not in alignment with the community's vision of a holistic approach of providing efficient, sustainable, and affordable emergency services. This vision was articulated by community members over more than two years of work by the Districts' boards, the former citizen's advisory group, and by our residents who have supported the need to create a single entity to provide emergency services for all hazards. It is the emergency response model proven to be the most effective and efficient for communities on our other islands, through the State, and across the nation.

Like the commissioners, SJIF&R's Fire Chief Norvin Collins is deeply disappointed that the PHD commissioners chose to limit the partnership between our two agencies. Now is the time to continue applying the lessons learned from our coordinated response to COVID-19 and not going backwards in effective, efficient, and proactive emergency services. The coordinated response model currently being deployed for the response to the pandemic demonstrates the positiveness of the ability to provide faster response and comprehensive services.

Community protection is not served by siloed responders; leadership of both agencies broke those silos down over the past year. We will continue to excel in protecting our responders and community. Our agencies will not allow personnel or the public to be placed in harm's way.

The volunteers, paid staff, and the leadership of SJIF&R are fully committed to continue providing all hazard emergency services to our served communities.

It's the right thing to do.

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