



Selfless Service. Integrity. Grit.

ANNUAL REPORT

VALLEY REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

2020



OUR MISSION

*We serve the whole community.
The VRFA saves lives and protects property
through reliable emergency services,
preparedness and prevention.*

OUR VISION

Creating the safest community to live, work and visit.

OUR GUIDING VALUES

Selfless Service. Integrity. Grit.

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FIRE CHIEF/ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE



BRENT D. SWEARINGEN

Welcome to the 2020 Valley Regional Fire Authority annual report. Each year I review the previous year's report to get a baseline of what has changed and how well we did at meeting the short term goals we had set for ourselves the year before. In looking at last year's message, I had commented that service

delivery in the fire service is very similar year over year, with incremental increases in call volume, usually due to an increase in population. The year 2020 was different. As you will see in the following pages of this report, the COVID-19 pandemic dominated all of our operations. Fire departments were some of the first impacted services of the outbreak. Because of the nature of our work environment, first responders work in close teams and spend their time between calls in a communal setting. This pandemic complicated every aspect of the organization from running calls to performing building inspections, delivering supplies, and performing basic business functions.

I'm incredibly proud to say that our men and women rose to the occasion and surpassed what many thought was doable. People from the different divisions pulled together working groups to educate themselves on the developing science of the coronavirus, and what we needed to do to keep ourselves and the public safe, all while still delivering excellent service. Several innovative practices came out of these groups described in this report.

When test kits for infection became available, VRFA personnel were on the front lines, along with other area departments, helping King County Public Health set up a drive-through mass testing site at the Government Services Administration [GSA] site in south Auburn. When vaccines became available, the fire departments again stepped into the breach and provided the staffing and medical expertise to vaccinate and monitor tens of thousands of residents using the drive-through facility. As of this writing, the vaccination and testing site are still open and staffed by your VRFA fire personnel. Hopefully we are turning the tide on the pandemic.

2020 was also the year that the danger of wildfire was brought to this side of the Cascades. High winds combined with low humidity spawned and drove large wildfires through our neighboring communities of Bonney Lake and Sumner. While the VRFA response area was not impacted like those in Pierce County, the same conditions that led to the fire spread there exist in abundance in our communities.

People from the different divisions pulled together working groups to educate themselves on the developing science of the coronavirus, and what we needed to do to keep ourselves and the public safe, all while still delivering excellent service.

In conclusion, it was a rough year for everyone. The VRFA was forced to adapt and overcome conditions that have not been seen in over a century. I can't overemphasize the courage and grace that was shown as the organization rose to the challenge.

The voters of the VRFA service area again showed their trust in the organization by passing a tax lid lift last February. This allowed us to reset our funding ratios and lower the fire benefit charge, thus holding the overall tax burden revenue-neutral. Thank you.

Thanks also go out to the Board of Governance, which once again provided needed leadership and support to our efforts. As the response to the pandemic has shown, our communities can accomplish great things if we demand them of ourselves. Be safe.

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

2020 REVIEW

As your elected Board of Governance members, we are pleased to share with you the accomplishments of the Valley Regional Fire Authority during an unusual year in 2020. COVID-19 impacted many of our services and programs. Despite the adversity, we modified our business practices, changed station life, and responded to over 12,000 incidents.

We have always maintained a conservative budgeting approach, ensuring that our skilled workforce have the tools and equipment they need to do their job. Even during a pandemic, our firefighters adapt and continue to deliver the highest level of professional fire and emergency medical services to our communities. Also, a big thank you to the citizens for supporting Proposition I [tax levy] in February. The VRFA was able to restore its funding balance and lower the Fire Benefit Charge.

For the thirteenth consecutive year, the annual accountability and financial audit produced a report free of findings. Each year's audit, performed by the Washington State Auditor's office reviews many of the VRFA's internal controls and financial practices. This year, auditors focused on unemployment self-insurance, payroll leave, and financial condition/fiscal sustainability. They found that our work was fully compliant with state law and our policies/procedures. We strive to be good stewards of tax payers dollars, and are pleased with our fiscal management.

Our goal is to ensure that the VRFA meets the needs of our diverse and growing communities. To address the increasing demands of services, the VRFA created a five-year strategic plan. The department is diligently working on five major initiatives that will meet the community's expectations for fire department-based safety services. We also continue to partner and assist local agencies by sharing resources to serve the region better. In 2020, we assisted with fire investigations, plan reviews, and social services to neighboring departments and communities.

Thank you for your continued community support. Your assistance has allowed us to meet the increasing demands for emergency services in our communities. Better days are ahead of us, and we will remain resilient, serving the citizens of Algona, Auburn, and Pacific.

Stay Healthy, Stay Safe,

Leanne Guier,
Board of Governance Chair
City of Pacific Mayor



LEANNE GUIER
CHAIR
PACIFIC



DAVE HILL
VICE-CHAIR
ALGONA



NANCY BACKUS
MAYOR
AUBURN



CLAUDE DACORSI
AUBURN



KERRY GARBERDING
PACIFIC



TROY LINNELL
ALGONA



LYNDA OSBORN
ALGONA



LARRY BROWN
AUBURN



DAVID STORAASLI
PACIFIC

FIRE STATION LOCATIONS

STATION 31 | NORTH AUBURN
1101 D STREET N.E., AUBURN, WA



STATION 32 | SOUTH AUBURN
1951 R STREET S.E., AUBURN, WA



STATION 33 | LAKELAND HILLS
500 182 AVENUE E., AUBURN, WA



STATION 34 | LEA HILL
31290 124TH AVENUE S.E., AUBURN, WA



STATION 35 | SOUTHWEST AUBURN
2905 C STREET S.W., AUBURN, WA

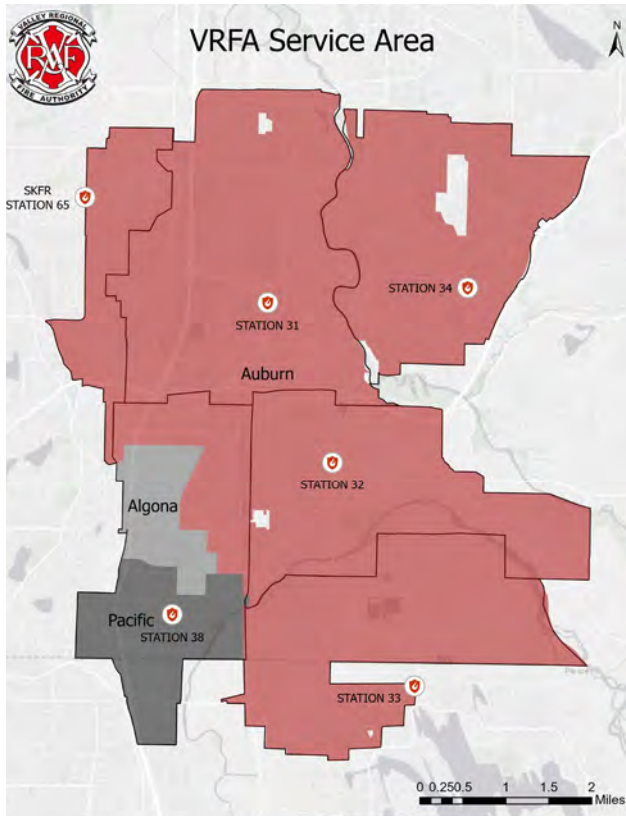


STATION 38 | PACIFIC
133 3RD AVENUE S.E., PACIFIC, WA



VRFA OVERVIEW

WHO WE ARE



The Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) was established on January 1, 2007, and operates a legally organized Regional Fire Protection Service Authority (RFPSA) as authorized in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Title 52. A nine-member Board of Governance (BOG), consisting of the mayors and two city council members representing the three founding cities of Algona, Auburn, and Pacific govern the VRFA. The VRFA also serves King County Fire District #31 by intergovernmental contract. The VRFA provides emergency and support services to 37 square miles in South King County and North Pierce County, commonly known as the Green River and White River Valleys. The 2020 Census estimates put the resident population at over 97,000 for the three cities.

Six fire stations provide service: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 38. The VRFA also contracts with a neighboring fire department, South King Fire & Rescue (SKF&R), to provide coverage for the "West Hill Annexation Area." Fire stations 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, and SKF&R Station 65 are staffed 24/7 response stations. Station 35, the only nonresponse station houses Emergency Management, the Fire Marshal's Office, Support Services, and Public Information and Education.



VRFA OVERVIEW

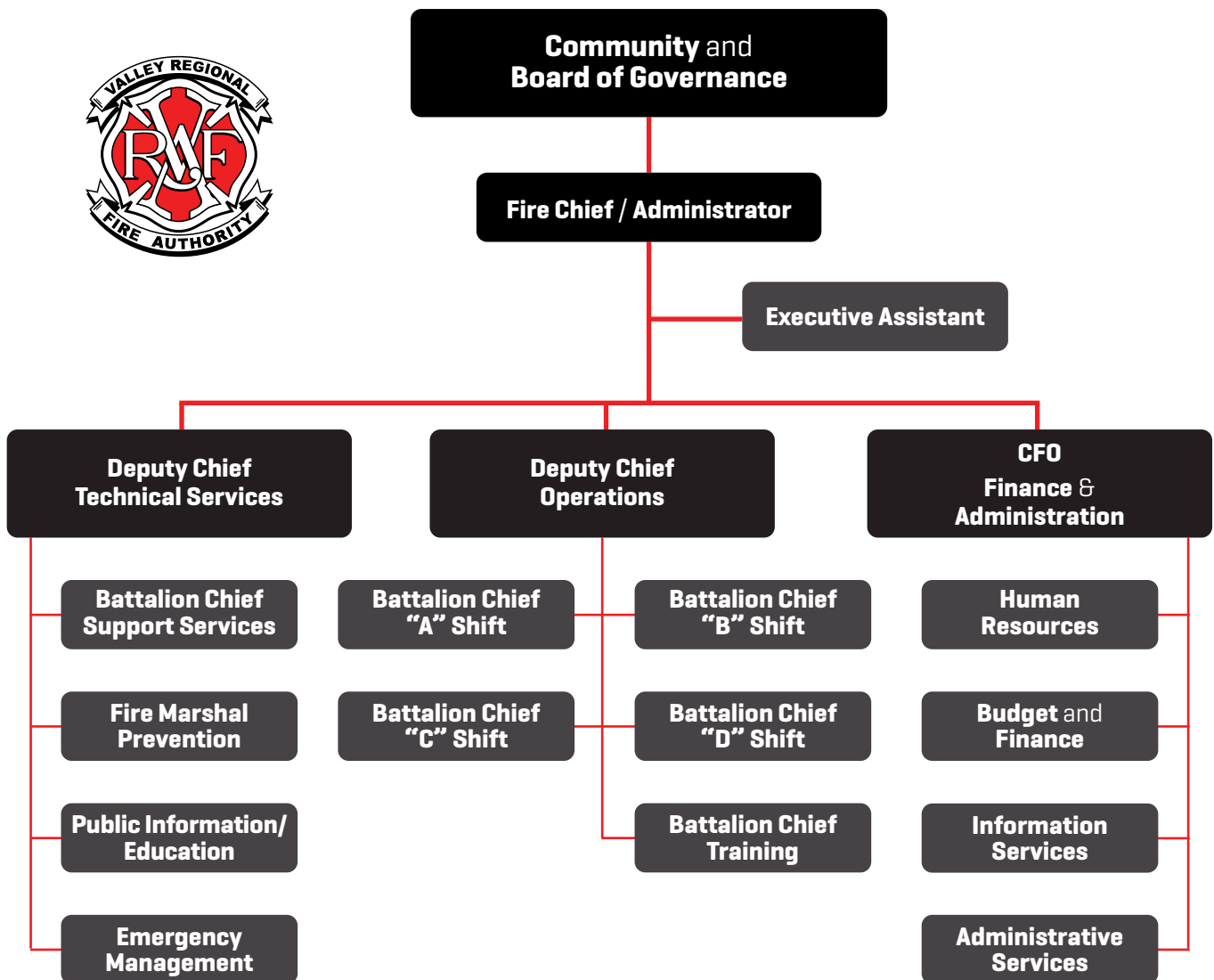
WHO WE ARE

The VRFA operates a single battalion with five response zones. The VRFA is organized into three divisions: Operations, Technical Services, and Administration. The operations division is responsible for all emergency response operations and is staffed by 108 uniformed first responders. These men and women staff the fire apparatus in the response stations through a four-shift rotation that provides a constant staffing level 24/7. A battalion chief oversees each shift, and a deputy chief manages the entire division.

Technical Services encompasses various functions, including Fire Prevention, Public Information/Education, and Support Services. The Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for building safety inspection

programs, building plan review, and fire investigations. Support Services includes Planning, Logistics, EMS, and a Mobile Integrated Health program. The Fire Marshal supervises Fire Prevention, and a battalion chief manages Support Services. A deputy chief oversees the entire division.

The Administration Division, managed by the chief financial officer, handles all financial matters, records management, human resources, and information technology. Clerical support and other administrative services are provided through the Administration Division. All personnel in the administrative division are non-uniformed positions.

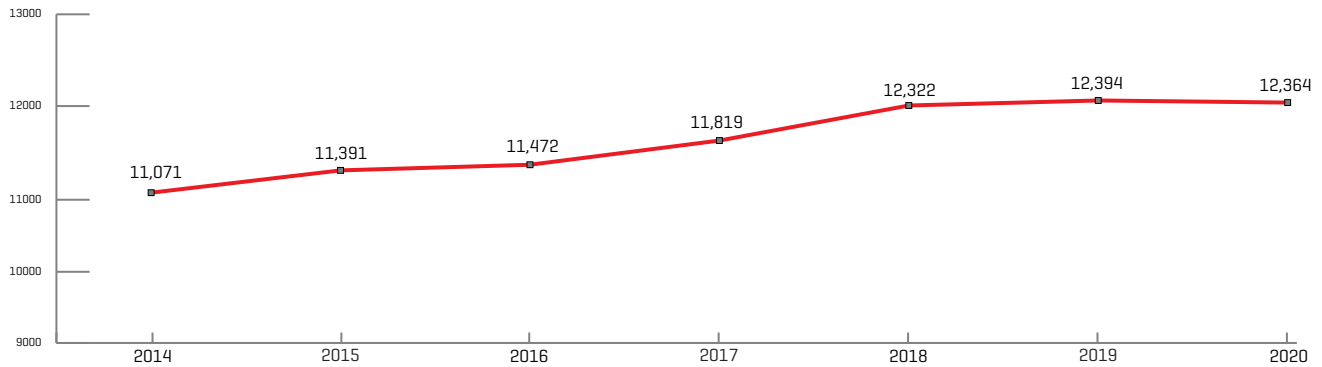


VRFA OVERVIEW

WHO WE ARE



CALLS FOR SERVICE BY YEAR



GROWING FACTS

ALGONA

3,223 Population in 2020

140th Largest city in Washington

6,025th Largest city in the U.S.

Algona's population has increased by 6.93% since the most recent census in 2010. Algona reached its highest population of 3,223 in 2018. Spanning over 825 acres, Algona has a population density of 2,495 people per square mile.

AUBURN

87,135 Population in 2020

14th Largest city in Washington

393th Largest city in the U.S.

Auburn is currently growing at a rate of 3.09% annually, and its population has increased by 24.16% since 2010.

PACIFIC

7,331 Population in 2020

107th Largest city in Washington

3,845th Largest city in the U.S.

Pacific is currently growing at a rate of 0.77% annually, and its population has increased by 10.97% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 6,606 in 2010. Covering over 1,559 acres, Pacific has a population density of 3,030 people per square mile.

Reference: worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/pacific-wa-population



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

2020 HONORS



FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

AARON MARTIN
FIREFIGHTER/EMT



FIRE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

BILL MACK
BATTALION CHIEF



GRIT AWARD

JEREMY ELLIOTT
FIREFIGHTER/EMT

VALOROUS UNIT CITATIONS

February 10, 2020 – Rescue of a man trapped under rock and concrete blocks from a collapsed retaining wall in Auburn.

ANDREW COOK
FIREFIGHTER/EMT
DANIEL SEQUIST
FIREFIGHTER/EMT
DAVID REPNIK
FIREFIGHTER/EMT



LEFT TO RIGHT: FF SEQUIST, BC GARY BARKER, DC BRAD THOMPSON, FF COOK, FF REPNIK

LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

January 26, 2020 – Quick extrication of a trapped, critical patient following a high-speed crash on Auburn Way South.

JOHN STIVERS
FIREFIGHTER/EMT
ROBERT ALLEN
FIREFIGHTER/EMT
ERIKA BARTLETT
FIREFIGHTER/EMT



LEFT TO RIGHT: FF ALLEN, FF STIVERS, FF BARTLETT

LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

September 4, 2020 – Rescue of older adult female at an apartment building fire in Auburn.

JOEL TOLINE
CAPTAIN
WILL HIGHLEY
FIREFIGHTER/EMT
KYLE FISHER
FIREFIGHTER/EMT



LEFT TO RIGHT: FF WILL HIGHLEY, FF KYLE FISHER, CAPT. JOEL TOLINE

RETIREMENTS

HONORING YEARS IN SERVICE

The Valley Regional Fire Authority would like to recognize the following individuals for their years of service:



JANEEN RUGE | CAPTAIN | 21 YEARS



LARS MICKELSON | FIREFIGHTER/EMT | 20 YEARS



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

The VRFA finance and administration team faced the same challenges as everybody else in 2020, and we are grateful that our group stayed healthy, with no direct impacts from COVID-19.

Our team remains committed to our core financial responsibilities, which are:

- Defined processes for budget development;
- Receipt of independent financial audits; and
- Assurance that resources are available to maintain adopted levels of service.

Notwithstanding the challenges faced in 2020, we are pleased we met our goals in each of these areas.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

VRFA conducts a rigorous annual budget process to ensure that:

1. All programs are reviewed for need;
2. New initiatives are considered in light of available resources; and
3. Our Board of Governance takes an active role in budget development.

Our budget approach and success allowed us to absorb all pandemic-related costs without seeking additional budget appropriations.

FINANCIAL AUDITS

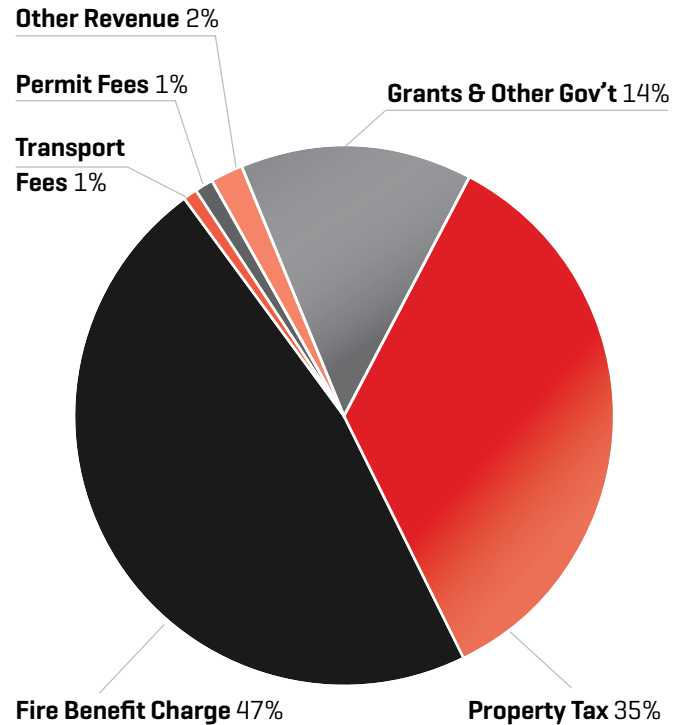
We remain committed to good stewardship, evidenced by our thirteenth consecutive clean financial and accountability audit reports from the WA State Auditor.

RESOURCES

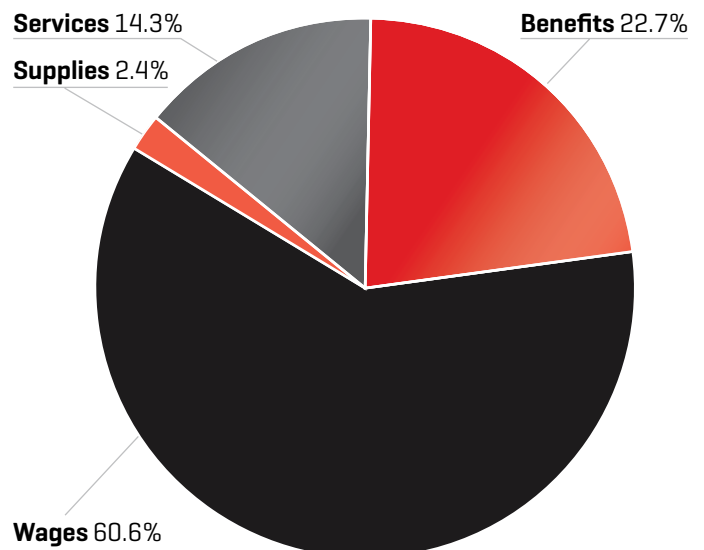
Resource availability remained strong. We accomplished this by maintaining adequate financial reserves, the seeking of non-property tax related revenue sources, and stringent budget controls [year-over-year expenditure growth – including costs related to the pandemic – were only 0.78%].

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to serving you in 2021.

2020 REVENUE



2020 EXPENDITURES



OPERATIONS

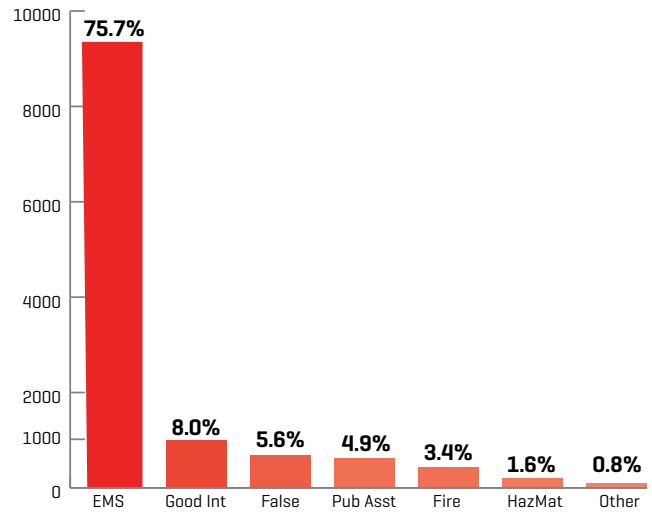
The Valley Regional Fire Authority provides an all-hazards emergency response to the Algona, Auburn, and Pacific communities, with automatic and mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions. A large majority of the calls we respond to are for emergency medical aid. The remaining responses are for fires of all types, vehicle accidents, water rescue, hazardous materials, and other rescue and aid calls.

Twenty personnel respond to emergencies from five strategically located fire stations. These stations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by four shifts. All VRFA firefighters are state-certified Emergency Medical Technician/Defibrillation Technician (EMT-B) and are International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) certified to the Firefighter II standard.

Valley Communications Center, the fire alarm center in South King County, dispatches the appropriate resources depending on the type of emergency to provide fire suppression, Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Life Support (ALS) and, technical operations. King County Medic One responds along with VRFA crews on calls requiring Advanced Life Support.

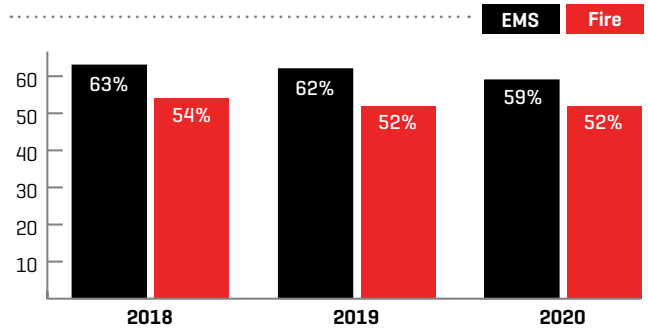


2020 CALLS BY TYPE



PERCENT RESPONSE TIME OUTCOMES

Total Response Time (TRT) is the amount of time it takes a unit to arrive at a scene once the call is received at the Fire Alarm Center. The VRFA has established a TRT benchmark of seven minutes and 34 seconds [7:34] for EMS calls and seven minutes and 49 seconds [7:49] for fire calls. The following graph shows how often we met those benchmarks in each of the last three years.



OPERATIONS



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 2020 proved to be a challenging year for all, the fire service and VRFA included. In early March, the VRFA and other fire agencies in King County worked closely with Public Health and King County Emergency Medical Services to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19. The VRFA quickly put plans in place to protect all staff and the citizens we serve. Workplace protections were developed and implemented at all of our stations to protect staff at work and home. In response to emergency service delivery changes, the VRFA put an additional aid car known as the “Clean Car” into service on April 3. Four firefighters staffed the Clean Car, working two at a time, on 48-hour shifts over a two-week rotation. They responded from a location separate from the VRFA’s five fire stations to keep them isolated, reducing the risk of exposure to other VRFA staff. The Clean Car responded on calls when requested or where a patient had a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. We took the Clean Car out of service as increased training and protective measures were put in place. The extra time provided by placing the Clean Car in service allowed for establishing best practices for staff when called to respond where COVID-19 exposure is a legitimate risk.
- We placed Tender 334 into service in 2020. It provides a critical water source [2500 gallons] at incidents where there are no fire hydrants and interurban vegetation fires in remote areas.



2021 GOALS

- In 2021, we will use previously identified funds to purchase a new ladder truck. With the rapid growth of the VRFA’s service area, the new truck will provide emergency response for the changing skyline and the ability to navigate narrow streets.



OPERATIONS

WILDLAND FIRE

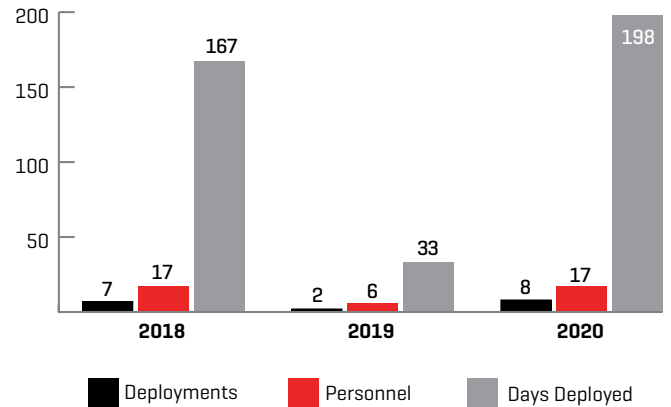
2020 turned out to be more than just the year of COVID-19. The Valley Regional Fire Authority responded to nearly 120 brush, wildland, and urban interface fires within our jurisdiction. These fires ranged from simple grass fires to those that threatened homes and structures.

On September 7th and 8th, Western Washington experienced what is known as “an east wind event.” High temperatures, low humidity, and winds from the east out of the Cascades characterized this event. This combination of factors increased the threat of a fast-moving wildfire event. VRFA firefighters responded to numerous brush fires created from downed power lines due to these increased winds and higher temperatures. While the VRFA was fortunate to avoid any losses of homes and businesses from wildfire, other neighboring jurisdictions were not. The Sumner Grade Fire in East Pierce Fire and Rescue and the unnamed 277th fire in the Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority’s jurisdictions were significant incidents created by the same east wind event. This same type of fire could have happened in our VRFA communities. The Valley Regional Fire Authority provided mutual aid to assist in the control and containment of these large fires. While Western Washington may not see the frequency of wildland fires that Eastern Washington does, this type of threat to our community is real and growing worse. The VRFA remains committed through training, education, and response to quickly contain these types of incidents and keep our community safe.

The Valley Regional Fire Authority maintains a 20 person “Red Card” program. The members of this program train to the Northwest Coordinating Groups (NWCG) recognized standard for wildland firefighting. The program includes firefighters, captains, and battalion chiefs. During 2020, these specially trained personnel deployed across Washington, Oregon, and California to help mitigate wildfires that raged throughout the year.

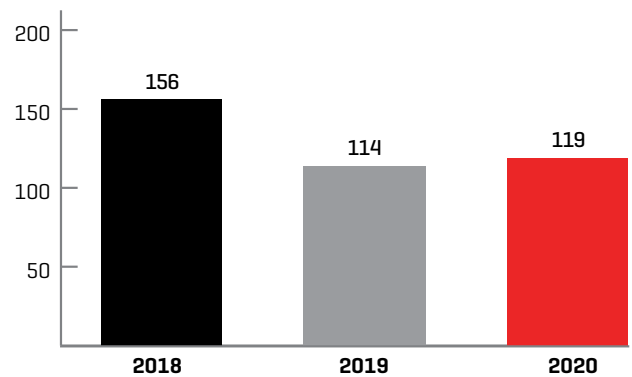


WILDLAND DEPLOYMENT HISTORY



BRUSH AND WILDLAND FIRE INCIDENTS

Included in these numbers are bark, grass, vegetation, brush, and forest fires. We saw a decrease in these types of fires in 2019 after we launched our annual Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Home Project of the Week campaign on our social media pages. The campaign encourages community members to take action early to prepare their homes for wildfire fire season.



OPERATIONS



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Developed COVID-19 procedures for deployments.
- Of 20 qualified personnel, 17 deployed to eight separate large wildland fires in Washington, Oregon, and California. These 17 wildland firefighters deployed for a combined total of 198 days.
- The VRFA collaborated with the Renton Fire Authority, assisting them in getting their personnel wildland experience for the Renton Fire Authority's developing red card program.
- We purchased additional gear for members, including personal web gear and shelters, eliminating the need for sharing the resource amongst personnel after they have deployed. This allowed members to "set up" their equipment in a manner that would benefit them on the emergency scene.
- Additional purchases included the needed resources to operate in the COVID-19 environment. We established new guidelines to keep resources separate, minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infections.

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE

In September, Firefighter Jeremy Nylund deployed as part of the Washington State Task Force 1 (WA-TF1), a federally funded disaster response team based in Pierce County. The team was dispatched to southern Oregon to search for victims of the devastating wildfires that struck that region. The VRFA has six representatives on WA-TF1. They train with regional task force members annually to prepare for many types of disasters. These specialists and their home unit backfill personnel are paid for by the federal government when deployed.



2021 GOALS

- Develop and maintain a balanced budget to address increased departmental wildland needs.
- Research and begin funding for replacements of a Type 5/6 brush truck to replace an aging apparatus.



OPERATIONS

TECHNICAL RESCUE TEAM

In 2020, Valley Regional Fire Authority's (VRFA) Technical Rescue Team (TRT) continued to respond from Station 33 in Lakeland Hills. Sixteen rescue specialists, consisting of four captains and 12 firefighters, are housed out of the technical rescue station. Each member of the team maintains annual training in several technical rescue disciplines. The VRFA's rescue technicians were an integral component of South King County's technical rescue response plan in 2020. As one of the only two fire department dive teams in South King County, Dive 333 responded to several water emergencies throughout the county. The technical rescue team also responded to non-water-related emergencies. When responding to non-water-related technical rescue emergencies, the firefighters responded in Engine 333 (E333). Specialized equipment on E333 is used on technical rescue incidents. Additional response capabilities available to the technical rescue team include a 16' inflatable Achilles boat and a 14' inflatable Northwest River Supplies (NRS) raft.

OPERATIONAL/TRAINING CHANGES

2020 provided training challenges for the technical rescue team brought on by COVID-19. On an annual basis, the VRFA's technical rescue team routinely conducts training with other technical rescue teams throughout South King County. Larger training events were canceled or reduced to smaller company level (five or fewer firefighters) exercises. The technical rescue team members met the annual objectives in each of their disciplines.

The VRFA's technical rescue team saw two long-standing team members retire in 2020, Neil Pedersen (20 years) and Lars Mickelson (10 years). Their spots were filled by Drew Larson and Travis Schade.



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Purchased two kayaks to keep rescuers out of the water while providing a more desirable view of the rescuers' surroundings.



2021 GOALS

- The technical rescue team will place new lift bags on E333. The lift bags replace obsolete lift bags, which are identified as essential pieces of equipment when needing to lift heavy objects.



OPERATIONS

TRAINING DIVISION

The Training Division consists of two Valley Regional Fire Authority members working as part of the South King County Fire Training Consortium (SKCFTC). One battalion chief and one captain are part of a 25-member cooperative team made up of 13 fire department agencies throughout South King County.

The VRFA battalion chief working in the SKCFTC is responsible for the Operations Division. The Operations Division oversees training in firefighter fundamentals, live-fire, ladder truck, quarterly training assignments, extrication, water rescue, technical rescue, and hazardous materials.

The VRFA captain is an Instructor at the Recruit Academy, which trains over 60 recruits each year. The captain ensures that each recruit receives appropriate training and certifications are complete.



OPERATIONS

TRAINING DIVISION



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- VRFA firefighter/EMTs logged over 17,000 hours of training in 2020. The training was down by almost 3,000 hours from the previous year due to the impact of COVID-19. Even with a reduction in training hours, the training division was still able to provide six weeks of live fire block training with units rotating from Zone-3 and Eastside Fire and Rescue. The live-fire multi-company operations included over two-hundred apparatus rotations over six weeks.
- Over two-hundred apparatus from 12 fire department agencies rotated to the training tower to complete firefighter fundamentals training. This training is a three-station rotation that includes different skill sets that incorporate all jobs and ranks in the fire service, from firefighter to battalion chief.
- The Training Division met all of the required training for 2020, ensuring our members retained their certifications in all firefighting areas.



2021 GOALS

- Expand incident command training to certify officers and acting officers by holding an additional certification class every year.



TECHNICAL SERVICES

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Support Services Division includes three sections; Planning, Logistics, and Emergency Medical Services [EMS]. Working with internal staff and strategic partners outside the VRFA, Support Services purchases supplies and provides maintenance for facilities, vehicles, and equipment. Emergency Medical Services [EMS] is an integral part of the VRFA response to 911 calls. The EMS section ensures that skills and competency are at a high level and all required certifications are in order. The Support Services Battalion Chief is the Health Officer for the VRFA. This year proved to be the beginning of a long journey with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. A health team was assembled and worked diligently throughout the year to address issues related to the pandemic.



2021 GOALS

Primary goals for Support Services in 2021 include:

- Replacement of the Support Services delivery van
- Replacement of the CARES vehicle
- Replace personal protective equipment and fire hose that are at the end of their service life
- Restoration of the Pirsch antique fire engine
- Update emergency back-up power at stations 31 and 35
- Enter into a new ambulance services contract
- Improve inventory and asset management



TECHNICAL SERVICES

EMS

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the EMS Division's normal activities in 2020, requiring that we modify our programs and how we approach them. Although the pandemic posed many challenges, it also brought opportunities to respond creatively. We quickly adapted to social distancing requirements and added additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We also learned how to be successful with distance learning.



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The EMS Division teamed up with Planning, Logistics, and the Fire Marshal's Office to form the VRFA Health Team. Together, the team tackled many difficult and challenging events related to COVID-19. The team was able to develop innovative solutions to tackle these challenges and keep our workforce and community safe.
- The EMS Division applied for and was awarded a grant through the Medic One Foundation, which allowed us to purchase Feedback CPR Manikins. The specialized training manikins provide immediate feedback on the rate and depth of compressions and measure ventilation volumes. During CPR training, this additional information prepares our firefighters to deliver quality patient care during a cardiac arrest event.



2021 GOALS

- Provide consistent EMS training throughout the South King County Fire Training Consortium (SKCFTC) and complete Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) feedback for 100% of our patient care records.
- Partner with SKCFTC and Medic One to introduce *FirstPass* for all patient care run reviews. *FirstPass* is a software program that monitors the data from the patient care records and studies the documentation for accuracy and protocol compliance. What used to take days or weeks can now be accomplished in minutes. The EMS Division can take immediate action to correct documentation errors or to provide positive feedback and training.

COVID-19 VRFA TIMELINE



TECHNICAL SERVICES

CARES

2020 was a year of change and growth for the CARES team, both expected and unexpected.

We changed our name from Community Medical Team [CMT] to Community Assistance, Referral and Education Services [CARES]. Our mission did not change, but the CARES name puts us in step with other similar Mobile Integrated Health [MIH] programs in the Puget Sound region and nationwide.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- We completed Interlocal Agreements (ILAs) with KCFD #44 [Mountain View Fire & Rescue] and KCFD #28 [Enumclaw Fire]. KCFD #44 serves the unincorporated area east of Auburn and the city of Black Diamond. Under these ILAs, CARES receives referrals from the two departments. Our team of social workers provides case management for the patients they refer.
- To help manage the increased workload, CARES hired a third-social worker, Brittany Padjen, to join our team. She brings with her a wealth of experience in working in mental health and substance abuse. This experience helps make our team of social workers very well equipped to help our citizens with the myriad issues they face.



Brittany Padjen

2021 GOALS

- CARES plans to replace our 11-year-old SUV with a roomier yet more fuel-efficient vehicle to meet the team's needs and better serve our patients.
- Explore new training and partnering opportunities.

2020 CARES NUMBERS

**448
RESPONSES**

**986
REFERRALS**
Our referrals patients called 911 a total of 5,669 times in 2020

327 ENROLLED PATIENTS
Among enrolled patients, 911 usage dropped 34.1% based on a 60 day intervention period



Carrie Talamaivao, Captain Roy Smith, Tamara Lantz, Firefighter Johan Friis



TECHNICAL SERVICES

LOGISTICS DIVISION

The Logistics Division spent much of 2020 working through challenging supply chain issues related to the pandemic. Fortunately, the VRFA had prepared for such a large scale situation by having a cache of EMS equipment stored for just this occasion. The department supported our community by loaning a few thousand N95 masks to our local hospital when they were unable to acquire them from any other resource.



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Moved to a station-based ordering system for fire stations and EMS supplies. Station-based ordering enables station captains to order their supplies directly from the vendors while keeping VRFA warehouse space for emergency supplies.
- Forty sets of bunker gear were purchased, replacing expiring gear in compliance with fire protection standards.
- Purchased 3,200 feet of fire hose to replace damaged or expired hose on the fire engines.
- One set of battery-powered extrication equipment purchased for Engine 338.
- Replaced emergency power generator at Station 35.
- Started the process of restoring our antique fire engine.



2021 GOALS

- Work on improvements to our inventory and tracking systems, allowing more efficiency and more responsiveness to our firefighters.
- Replace the 14-year-old logistics van, used daily to deliver supplies to our fire stations.
- Complete process of restoration of our antique fire engine to make it "parade ready."



TECHNICAL SERVICES

PLANNING DIVISION



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Accreditation:

- In 2019 the Standards of Cover report was completed, which allowed the VRFA to begin work on the Fire Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM). Planning was assigned a category of the FESSAM that encompassed how the VRFA responds and plans for emergencies. This process of accreditation will help the VRFA organize, document, and continually improve its efforts.

Fire Garage Consortium:

- The Fire Garage has been a long-standing partner and has worked well with the VRFA. In 2020, the VRFA noticed that there would be a significant cost increase to the services performed by the Fire Garage. The Planning Division performed a critical analysis of the services provided, cost, and long term projections. Additionally, other “fire garages” (maintenance shops) were contacted and asked to give an overview of the services they could provide and at what cost. The Fire Garage ended up being the best overall fit for the VRFA.

Response and Station matrix update:

- The VRFA worked with neighboring agencies to improve overall service. We made minor changes to the number and type of apparatus sent to 911 incidents and improved station order models. Station orders allow the VRFA, and other fire agencies to dispatch from the fire station closest to an incident, regardless of the jurisdiction. When that particular fire station is out on another call, a station order allows the VRFA dispatch center to have a predetermined “next up.” In 2020 the number of stations potentially dispatched for an emergency was increased from 25 to 50. This change will help ensure the VRFA is providing the best service possible.

Puget Sound Emergency Radio Network (PSERN):

- PSERN, for several years, has been working on replacing the radio network in the Puget Sound area. The VRFA, like many other agencies, was tasked with identifying inventory of radio equipment. The VRFA has nearly 300 pieces of radio equipment. Firefighters take these radios into fires, receive messages on the way to 911 calls, and communicate during natural disasters when the radio network may be compromised. We expect to swap out this equipment with new and compatible radio equipment in 2022.

COVID19 Health Team Liaison:

- The VRFA was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The VRFA planning division helped evaluate impacts to the community, VRFA services, citizens, and VRFA personnel’s overall health and safety. Throughout 2020 the Health Team met to help develop directives, policy, and new procedures to reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19. Wearing N95 masks on all 911 incidents, cleaning and disinfecting gear and equipment, social distancing in a fire station, and developing a new response model are just a few examples of this work. The development of a dedicated aid car to suspected COVID-19 calls gave us the confidence that the disease would not infiltrate our fire stations from the field, keeping firefighters healthy and free from exposure. This successful plan limited the number of personnel who interacted with a confirmed patient or a patient suspected of having COVID-19. The VRFA is fortunate to say that we were one of the few fire departments that did not have a recorded COVID-19 workplace exposure through 2020.



TECHNICAL SERVICES

FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

The Fire Marshal's Office provides professional services to our member cities and their citizens in several technical fields, including investigations, code resolution, life safety system testing and maintenance, and community development. In 2020, while the pandemic impacted some services provided by the Fire Marshal's office, most of the work tasks did not change. Cooperative efforts were instituted between the Fire Marshal's office and our member cities, businesses, and developers to incorporate life safety requirements required by code with innovative approaches to keep reviews, inspections, and compliance on schedule. These efforts allowed safe community development to continue and provided support and guidance to existing businesses that remained in operation during the restrictions.



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Fire Marshal's office refined and enhanced primary, in-office operational functions to streamline efficiencies and services provided to our customers. An excellent example of these efforts is the Fire Marshal tab on the department website. The new section enabled the fire marshal's portion of the website to be more forward-facing, easier to navigate, and provide one-stop service. The website's goal is to provide accurate and updated information in one place to all our customers for various supportive interactions while keeping pace with changes in our service model over time.



TECHNICAL SERVICES

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

Fire investigations are highly technical and skilled work. Investigation work includes a response to the scene, fire scene forensic investigation, follow-up, and report writing. It requires close coordination between incident commanders, business/homeowners, community support groups, and investigative personnel to bring an emergent incident to a productive and successful conclusion.

2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In November 2020, the Fire Marshal's office's investigative members signed a temporary services agreement with Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority (PSRFA) to assist them with fire investigations. While taking on a significant addition to their workload, this interim agreement enabled PSRFA to reorganize their investigation program and move forward with a newly instituted investigation mission. The VRFA assistance will run through the middle of April 2021.
- We assisted regional partners in training and facilitated testing for the Washington State Patrol fire investigator certifications. Ten new state fire investigators received certification.

2021 GOALS





- The Fire Marshal's office will establish an internal training program to enhance our knowledge and service at fire incidents.
- The FMO is exploring new ways to provide a regional fire investigation unit.

FIRE INVESTIGATION

- 32 WERE DETERMINED TO BE ACCIDENTAL
- 38 WERE UNDETERMINED
- 5 WERE INCENDIARY
- OTHER FIRES ARE STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION

83 FIRES INVESTIGATED

ESTIMATED DOLLAR LOSS BY FIRE TYPE

 STRUCTURE FIRE \$3,725,650	 VEHICLE FIRE \$187,700
 BRUSH FIRE \$3,500	 NON-STRUCTURE FIRE \$102

ESTIMATED TOTAL DOLLAR LOSS \$3,916,952



TECHNICAL SERVICES

CODE RESOLUTION

The Fire Marshal's Office receives and reviews various questions and inquiries regarding fire codes and compliance. Some referrals come directly from the cities, while concerned citizens generate others.

Topics resolved by this office include:

- Fire lane issues
- False alarms at apartments and business complexes
- Illegal burn complaints throughout the service area



2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Successfully resolved 37 code investigations throughout the jurisdiction.



2021 GOALS

- The Fire Marshal's office is instituting a quality assurance program for code complaints to track and assure a complete process and customer experience.

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION INSPECTIONS

140 CERTIFIED INSPECTIONS

68

ENGINE COMPANY INSPECTIONS

26

NEW BUSINESS LICENSE

Risk Reduction inspections are a proven proactive strategy to actively engage our communities and assist emergency personnel with reducing the frequency and severity of all emergency hazards and incidents. Community Risk inspections focus on commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings in the service area. The VRFA inspection program's migration from a generalized blanketing of the response area to a more "high hazard" targeted approach is nearing completion as the VRFA has collected data. In 2020, in conjunction with the Governor's proclamation for keeping Washington citizens safe during COVID-19, we suspended physical inspection efforts. Onsite inspections will resume in 2021 when it is safe to return to an in-person program. The goal of the FMO is to continue to refine this program as a community engagement and continue to collect targeted data to identify critical inspection occupancies.



TECHNICAL SERVICES

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The VRFA and the Fire Marshal’s office provide various development services in collaboration with our member cities. Fire Marshal personnel provide analysis and guidance to new businesses when they submit for a business license. This service provides an initial introduction and direction on safely operating any type of business within the adopted codes and standards.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

351
 CONSTRUCTION INSPECTIONS

210
 NEW BUSINESS

54
 PRE-CONSTRUCTION APPLICATIONS

214
 LAND USE

352
 CONSTRUCTION REVIEWS

Construction plan review and its associated inspections are integral to fire-safe economic development in our cities. Plan review includes code review of new and renovated construction, life safety systems, and a large variety of business and hazardous material operations.

In addition to a formal plan review, Fire Marshal personnel require several site inspections to ensure as-built construction matches the approved plans.

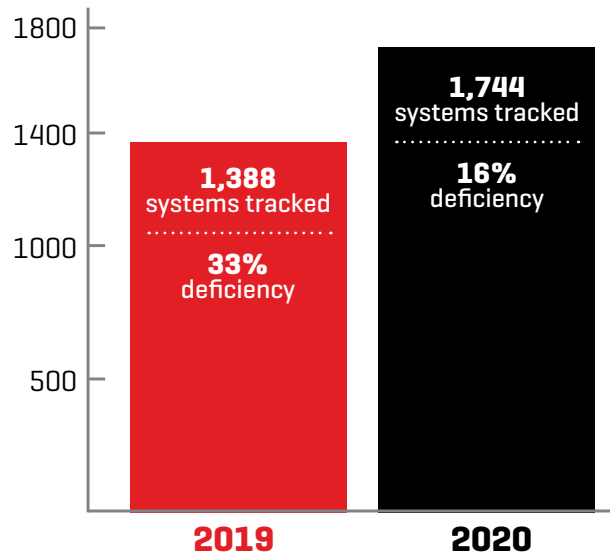
In conjunction with business license and construction reviews, the Fire Marshal’s office provides comprehensive land use analysis to each city and potential developments. Initial development contact is conducted through pre-application meetings between developers, the city, and Fire Marshal

personnel. At each step of a project, the Fire Marshal’s office researches and reviews requirements of the project for compliance with the city codes, design standards, and the International Fire Code. Particularly in Developmental Services, the Fire Marshal’s office has leveraged technology as stipulated in our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to improve efficiency, timing, and data retention, providing a more seamless service to our customers. The goal of the FMO is to provide the most professional service available in development assistance while vigorously maintaining accepted industry safety standards and code.


FIRE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE AND TESTING

One of the leading causes of large fire events is the lack of maintenance for building safety systems such as fire alarm, sprinkler, and suppression systems. To enhance inspection services, the VRFA uses a third-party web-based service, Compliance Engine, to comprehensively confirm and track inspections, testing, and code compliance for these systems in our jurisdiction. Compliance Engine has yielded excellent benefits to our fire safety service. System deficiencies dropped from 33% in 2019 to 16% in 2020. This type of improvement has tangible benefits to business and citizen safety by preventing various factors that contribute to catastrophic events. Actively managing and engaging in this service model meets several VRFA and FMO strategic goals and allows for real-time analysis and intervention where it could compromise public safety.

FIRE SYSTEMS TRACKED



2020 FIRES BY CITY

 TOTAL FIRES 83	AUBURN	61
	PACIFIC	14
	KENT	6
	ALGONA	1
	SEATAC	1

TECHNICAL SERVICES

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

This year presented many challenges for the Public Information & Education Division due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the annual school program was getting started, we had to suspend classes as our local schools went to distance learning. We could no longer perform in-person car seat checks, fire extinguisher classes, and helmet fittings. In the fall, as the pandemic continued, we were forced to cancel our annual Scout Night event. In response, we had to think outside the box and find other ways to provide educational opportunities while maintaining social distancing.

Our Public Information Team focused on meeting our external communication strategic plan goals, specifically Goal 5B of the strategic plan.



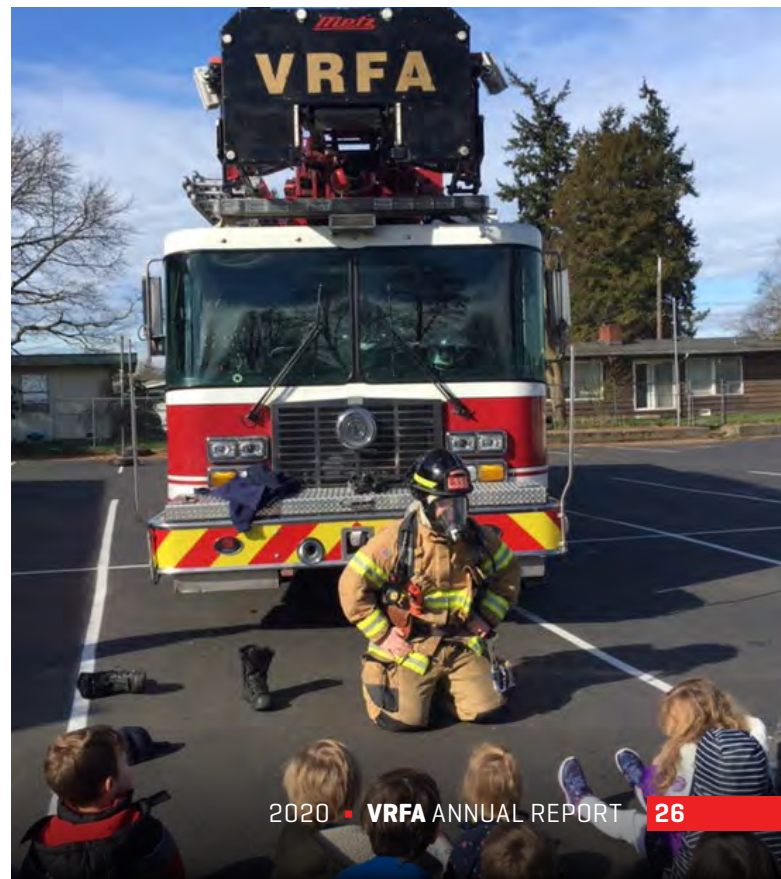
2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Surveyed NextDoor subscribers to determine what information they are looking for from the VRFA [Goals 5B.1 and 5B.3].
- On our website, we converted many stand-alone educational handouts [previously in PDF form] to web pages, allowing non-English speakers to utilize existing Google Translate technology to access this important safety information [Goals 5B.1 and 5B.2].
- Acquired Sendible, a social media management tool. Sendible allows us to provide information more consistently. The PIEO team can now schedule posts in the evening and weekend hours to reach people while they are on social media. We began creating and uploading ready to go safety messages to the management tool to provide consistent messaging from all team members. [Goal 5B.1]
- We added LinkedIn to our social media platforms. LinkedIn offers the opportunity to reach prospective employees. The PIEO division will be working closely with human resources throughout 2021 to create content for the LinkedIn page.
- Launched a Summer Safety Academy on our website. Families were able to work at their own pace to complete six weeks of lessons on fire safety, bike safety, water safety, disaster preparedness, and more. At the Summer Academy conclusion, we hosted a drive-by graduation event to present certificates of completion.



2021 GOALS

- Continue to expand on our online education resources until we can meet with our community in person again.
- Maintain newly developed online outreach where appropriate.
- Analyze social media insights to determine when and in what format to post content.
- Utilize data from call reports to determine where there are gaps in our safety messaging.



TECHNICAL SERVICES

2020 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

49 
SMOKE ALARMS

274 
BATTERIES

29  CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

WERE GIVEN OR INSTALLED FOR SENIORS AND LOW-INCOME HOMEOWNERS.

COSTCO

World Vision 

The Costco Corporation and World Vision provided the smoke & carbon monoxide alarms through a grant.

Energizer.

The Energizer Company supplied the batteries through a grant award.

40 BICYCLE HELMETS 

We provided over 40 bicycle helmets to children and adults in need. The Auburn Area Fire Medic Campaign awarded the VRFA a grant to purchase the helmets.

 **6**
CLASSROOMS

of kindergarten through second-grade classrooms received fire and life safety education before schools transitioned to remote learning.

Before pandemic restrictions,



we provided fire safety education and fire engine visits



to four groups from preschools and childcare centers.

14 FAMILIES 
participated in a remote eight-week



"Summer Safety Academy,"

including education on fire safety, water safety, bicycle safety, poison prevention, and other topics.



3 BUSINESSES &
2 SCHOOLS
received evacuation training.

The VRFA participated in



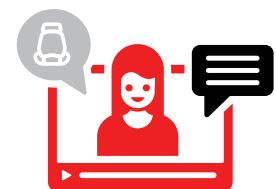
2 DRIVE-THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS.

We completed

 **4**
IN-PERSON CAR SEAT INSPECTIONS

before pandemic restrictions went into effect.

We referred those looking for car seat inspections to



virtual providers for the remainder of the year.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

In 2020, the VRFA implemented a five-year strategic plan based on priorities as expressed by the community. A committee of civic leaders, business owners, local government employees, private citizens, and representatives from the VRFA divisions of labor and administration created the strategic plan. The strategic plan addresses the long-term direction of the VRFA.

External stakeholders worked with facilitators to share and document their experiences, opinions, advice, and desires regarding the VRFA and the agency's future. Internal stakeholders conducted VRFA-specific SWOT analysis [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats] and updated the agency's mission, vision, and values. This comprehensive process revealed gaps in departmental capabilities and services while indicating five major strategic initiatives. Below is a summary of the initiatives and the progress that occurred in 2020.

#1 ACCREDITATION

Becoming an accredited agency, and the overall implementation of the strategic plan over the next five years.

- Two-thirds [2/3] of the accreditation process is complete. The self-assessment manual and site evaluation will take place in 2021.

#2 CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN

Developing and implementing a plan for facilities and equipment for future growth and improvement.

- A Capital Facilities Plan was developed and will be presented to the Board of Governance in early 2021. It is a six-year plan that addresses facilities and equipment for future growth and improvement.

#3 STAFFING

Examining current staffing levels, models, and procedures and identifying areas for improvement.

- Strategies are being examined to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in our hiring practices.
- The VRFA is examining staffing levels, models, and procedures to account for new stations and equipment. A station design committee was created to research modern fire station design and trends.
- A needs and design analysis for a new aerial ladder truck was conducted. A ladder truck will be ordered in 2021.

#4 MENTORSHIP

Ensuring the enduring success of the VRFA and its staff through sustainable internal mentorship.

- The VRFA is examining different mentorship and leadership training that ensure the agency and staff success through sustainable internal mentorship.

#5 COMMUNICATION

Examining both internal and external communication processes for service gaps and improvement areas.

- The VRFA is examining internal and external communication processes for service gaps and areas for improvement.

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The VRFA's strategic plan and initiatives will guide the agency in identifying future needs for meeting the community's expectations for fire department-based safety services. The strategic plan serves as a road map for how the VRFA will meet the demand for services within available resources.

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THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN 2020.





VALLEY REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

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