

# FIRE WATCH



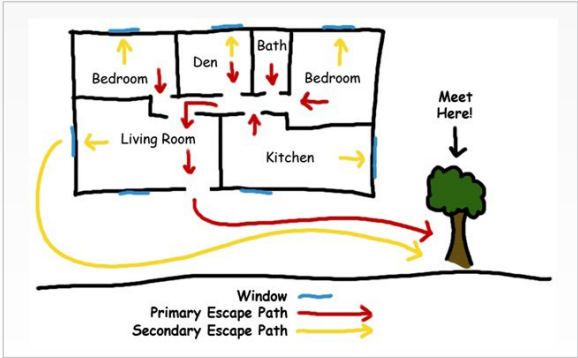
## FIRE PREVENTION WEEK 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

It's the 100th anniversary of Fire Prevention Week™! This year's campaign, "Fire won't wait. Plan your escape™," works to educate everyone about simple but important actions you can take to keep yourself and those around you safe from home fires.

In the event of a fire, time is the biggest enemy and every second counts. In less than 30 seconds, a small flame can turn into a significant fire. To keep you and your loved ones safe, create a home escape plan and practice your plan at least twice a year with everyone living in your home.

### Create Your Home Fire Escape Plan

- Draw your home floor plan using a home escape plan template.
- Label all the rooms and identify the doors and windows.
- Plan two escape routes from every room.
- Provide alternatives for anyone with a disability.
- Agree on a meeting place where everyone will gather after you have escaped.
- Consider buying an Underwriter's Laboratory (UL)-approved collapsible ladder to escape from upper-story windows.



Create a home escape plan and practice at least twice a year.

### If You Live in an Apartment Building

- Learn and practice your building's evacuation plan.
- Know primary and secondary exits.
- If you hear the fire alarm, leave immediately.
- Use the stairs. NEVER use elevators during a fire.

### Practice Your Home Fire Escape Plan

- Review your escape plan with everyone that stays in your house, including children.
- Sound the smoke alarm.
- Practice crawling low beneath the smoke.

- Remember to check doors for heat with your hand; if a door is hot, do not open it.
- Close the doors as you leave to prevent fire and smoke spread.
- Practice with a collapsible ladder, if you have one.
- Go directly to your meeting place; do not stop to find your pets or valuables.
- Remember to GET OUT FIRST, then call 9-1-1 for help.
- Practice your plan at least twice a year.

While practicing your escape plan, test your smoke alarms by pushing the "test" button for 3-5 seconds. Remember to change smoke alarm batteries at least once each year and replace the entire unit if alarms are ten years or older.

For more fire prevention and escape planning tips, visit our website [www.vrfa.org/community/safety-information](http://www.vrfa.org/community/safety-information)



Test smoke alarms by pushing the test button for 3-5 seconds.

## NEW TRACTOR DRAWN AERIAL ARRIVES!



In 2021, we began the process of purchasing a new ladder truck to replace an aging Ladder 331. After several months researching what apparatus would best serve our community, we purchased an Ascendant 107' Heavy-Duty Tiller Aerial Ladder made by Pierce Manufacturing. This style of ladder truck, also known as a Tractor Drawn Aerial (TDA), will enhance our response capabilities due to its maneuverability, ladder reach, and storage capacity. In May, the TDA arrived in Auburn, and firefighters began the lengthy training process. The current

Ladder 331 will be placed into reserve status when the new TDA goes into service at the end of this year.

### What is a Tractor Drawn Aerial?

Tractor Drawn Aerials include a tractor and a trailer with a second driver who steers the rear wheels from the back of the trailer section, commonly referred to as "tilling." A TDA is the most maneuverable aerial apparatus in the fire service. Although they are longer than straight-frame aerials, they can navigate tighter roads and smaller clearances than straight-frames.

### How will the TDA benefit our community?

The increased maneuverability is highly beneficial considering the urban growth within our communities, including multifamily housing developments and mid and high-rise buildings. When paired with the aerial ladder's 107' reach, it will allow us to position the truck in the most advantageous location to conduct a rescue, position the aerial master stream in the best position, and get to a roof more quickly to provide tactical information or to perform ventilation. The truck's storage capacity will also allow us to efficiently deliver various specialized tools to the emergency scene.

The TDA also allows for a quicker aerial deployment time. All ladder trucks use outriggers to stabilize the vehicle when the aerial ladder is in use. Many styles of ladder trucks have four outriggers, but our TDA has only two, allowing us to set up the aerial faster and in more confined areas.

### How will the TDA improve response safety?

The tiller driver sits up high enough to serve as a second set of eyes for the tractor driver when

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EMS SPOTLIGHT

# DIABETIC EMERGENCIES

As our state’s population grows and ages, so does the number of people with diabetes. According to current estimates, about 682,600 adults in Washington aged 20 years and older have diabetes.

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder that primarily results from absent or diminished insulin secretion by the pancreas or defective insulin receptors in the body, which causes an inability of the body to utilize glucose properly.

There are two primary types of diabetes, Type 1 and Type 2. In Type 1 diabetes, the body does not produce insulin. In Type 2 diabetes, your body doesn’t use insulin properly. Most individuals with diabetes can manage the disease with medication. Still, there is the possibility that the delicate balance of insulin and glucose in the body will become disturbed and may cause a life-threatening diabetic emergency.

The two most common diabetic emergencies are; hypoglycemia and diabetic ketoacidosis.

Hypoglycemia, also known as low blood sugar, happens when someone has too much insulin compared with glucose in their blood. It’s more common for people with Type 1 diabetes, but those with Type 2 diabetes who take insulin and other medicines to control blood sugar can also get it. It can happen when they skip a meal, exercise more than usual, drink alcohol, take too much insulin or have an infection.

Diabetic Ketoacidosis, or DKA, is a life-threatening emergency caused when you don’t have enough insulin and your liver has to break down fat into ketones for energy but too fast for the body to handle. A buildup of ketones can change your blood

chemistry and make your blood almost acidic. DKA is the most common complication of Type 1 diabetes, but it’s also possible with Type 2 diabetes. The most common DKA trigger is being sick or having an infection. Some medicines or significant stress, like a heart attack, can cause it, too. DKA can happen fast, usually in less than 24 hours. The early symptoms include extreme thirst, dry mouth, and frequent urination.

More severe symptoms include:

- Tired all the time
- Dry or flushed skin
- Breath that smells fruity
- Nausea, vomiting, or belly pain
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling woozy, confused, or passing out

If someone you know is exhibiting signs of a diabetic emergency, do not hesitate to call 911. If you are aware of the patient’s medical history, please relay that information to the dispatcher, as it will be helpful to the firefighters.

When VRFA firefighter/EMTs arrive, they assess the patient by checking vital signs and taking note of the patient’s level of consciousness. They will take a small blood sample using a Glucometer device to determine current blood sugar levels. For a patient with high blood sugar levels, firefighter/EMTs will recommend transporting the patient



to the hospital for further treatment. Firefighters/EMTs will attempt to provide supplemental glucose orally for those suffering from low blood sugar. If that is not possible because the patient cannot respond or cannot swallow properly, they will call King County Medic One paramedics, who can provide glucose through an IV. In most cases, the patient will need to be seen by doctors at the nearest Emergency Department. In some instances, where hypoglycemia is common, and the patient can answer questions appropriately and maintain normal blood sugar levels, the patient may remain at home as long as someone is there to monitor and support them.

In 2021, the VRFA responded to 222 calls for diabetic emergencies.

To learn more about diabetes visit [diabetes.org](https://diabetes.org)

## DIABETES RESOURCES

Insulin rationing or mismanagement is dangerous and is most often why diabetic patients are referred to the VRFA CARES Team. Patient Assistance Programs [PAP] offer free or low-cost drugs to individuals who cannot pay for their medication.

RX assist is a search engine for those with or without insurance that locates Patient Assistance Programs.  
[www.RXassist.org](https://www.RXassist.org) | 1.877.537.5537

Those in need of healthcare coverage can apply at [wahealthplanfinder.org](https://wahealthplanfinder.org)

# BATTALION CHIEF CONNELL AND FIREFIGHTER KAVE RETIRE



PETE CONNELL  
BATTALION CHIEF

**Battalion Chief Pete Connell** retired in July after a 29-year career with the Auburn Fire Department and Valley Regional Fire Authority [VRFA].

Connell began his career in the fire service on August 4, 1993. During his early years, Pete served as a Public Information and Education

Specialist and a Medical Services Specialist, worked on the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee [JATC], and served on the firefighters’ union executive board. Connell also began teaching CPR and First Aid, becoming the department program coordinator and eventually helping expand instruction through a regional partnership.

Pete was promoted to Captain in 2005 and, in 2008, accepted an assignment in the newly created VRFA Planning & Logistics Division. He helped build the program, focusing on improving the work environment for his fellow firefighters. Pete then tested for and was appointed to the EMS Training & Safety Officer position. In this role, he assisted in developing the VRFA Community Assistance, Referral, and Education Services [CARES] team, helped design and purchase a new model for the department’s medical aid vehicles, and ensured

certification compliance for all VRFA EMTs. Connell received a promotion to Battalion Chief in 2019.

With all of his accomplishments, it is not surprising that Pete received formal recognition. He was awarded Firefighter of the Year in 2002 and named Fire Officer of the Year in 2009. He received a medal of commendation for his work with JATC and six Meritorious Unit Citations for his contributions at emergency incidents.

“Pete is one of the most dedicated and hardworking people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. His dedication to his craft has been a model many of us have tried to emulate. Pete never backed down from a project and was always willing to work hard to get the job done. I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from such a dedicated professional,” said Deputy Chief Rick Olson.



VIC KAVE  
FIREFIGHTER

**Firefighter Vic Kave** served the citizens of Auburn, Algona, and Pacific for 30 years before retiring in June.

Kave was hired by the Auburn Fire Department in 1992. He was named the Valedictorian of his class at the Washington State Firefighter Recruit Academy. He soon found

his niche in the fire service as a 27-year member of the Technical Rescue Team. He took on a team leader role that involved training members to international standards and replacing outdated equipment. For his efforts, Vic was recognized by the President of Dive Rescue International and received a Medal of Commendation from the VRFA.

In addition to technical rescue, Vic served twelve years as a Hazardous Materials Technician and nine years as a member of the Honor Guard. He was a Wildland Red Card certified team member for over 25 years and was deployed numerous times locally and out of the state. Vic also dedicated hours of his time to various project needs for the department, working on and leading committees related to apprentice training, safety, health and wellness, and negotiations.

“When looking back on Vic’s career, it’s impossible to ignore his large impact on our agency and county-wide Technical Rescue Teams. He has trained hundreds of firefighters during his career. But what resonates even louder is Vic’s ability to step up and serve the VRFA and community when it’s truly needed. His willingness to come in and fill multiple roles has been instrumental to our success,” said Fire Chief Brad Thompson.

## PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to our recently promoted members. We are excited to see what they will accomplish in their new roles.



JASON HERMAN  
BATTALION CHIEF



COLTON FOGELBERG  
CAPTAIN



# FIRE CHIEF’S MESSAGE



BRAD THOMPSON

There are several reasons that I most enjoy the fall season, especially the month of October. October presents a change of seasons, with cooler nights and the splash of color from leaves preparing to fall before the onset of winter. Our kids’ fall sports seasons are in full swing; we hear the crunch of leaves underfoot and enjoy the steady rhythm of the school year.

Early in my fire service career, I worked in our Public Information and Education Division, where I helped deliver safety lessons to our communities while also serving as a Public Information Officer at emergency incidents. I fondly recall going into many classrooms and grade levels, teaching our kids different fire safety lessons. Interacting with children as a firefighter and educator is one of the most joyful things I have experienced during my career, and I’m still honored to do so. This year’s Fire Prevention

Week safety message is “Fire won’t wait, plan your escape,” which resonates with me as Fire Chief and as a husband and father.

President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed that Fire Prevention Week would be nationally observed in 1925, making it the longest-running public health observance in our country. It is recognized each year during the week of October 9, commemorating the Great Chicago Fire, which began on October 8, 1871, and caused devastating damage. This horrific fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres of land.

create and share and, when practiced, will help to provide a quick and safe exit.

The entire VRFA staff is committed to our Vision: Creating the safest community to live, work and visit. The VRFA’s Community Risk Reduction Division focuses on proactive efforts to decrease risk through practical data analysis. Our Public Educators concentrate their efforts on hyper-local concerns, and our Fire Marshals are laser-focused on relevant, functional code requirements. We want to partner with you in these efforts by providing the resources you need to create the safest residence for you and your loved ones. You can be confident and reassured

## The entire VRFA staff is committed to our Vision: Creating the safest community to live, work and visit.

It’s critical to plan, especially when considering emergency preparedness. Fire is fast! It only takes a few minutes for toxic, black smoke to fill your home. You can take steps to minimize risk, especially when there are potential life safety concerns. Smoke alarms offer early warning, and proactively created escape plans provide a safe exit for you and your loved ones. A fire escape plan only takes minutes to

that our skilled, fast, and efficient VRFA firefighters will arrive quickly to help you in an emergency. All of our firefighters are highly trained and ready to provide help at a moment’s notice.

Now please, take a few minutes to make your escape plan, and check your smoke alarms when you practice! Be safe, be well.

## THE VRFA APPOINTS TIM DAY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION



TIM DAY  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

In April, the VRFA appointed Tim Day Deputy Chief of Community Risk Reduction. Tim began his fire service career with the Auburn Fire Department (now the VRFA) in 1996. During his initial 20 years at the City of Auburn and VRFA, he worked in multiple operational and administrative roles as a firefighter, Captain, and Battalion Chief. He served as Deputy Chief of Technical Services from 2015 to 2017. Tim left the VRFA in 2017 to serve as Deputy Chief of Operations with the City of Kirkland Fire Department. Throughout his career at the VRFA and Kirkland, Tim has worked on multiple local and regional committees. He has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Washington, a Masters of Public Administration from Seattle University, and has completed the Executive Officer Program from the National Fire Academy.

## THE VRFA WELCOMES THREE NEW TEAM MEMBERS



BEN GROENHOUT  
FIREFIGHTER

Firefighter Groenhout graduated from the South King County Fire Training Consortium [SKCTFC] fire training academy in June. Ben grew up in West Michigan and attended Calvin College, studying Biology, Environmental Studies, and International Development. He worked for a few years as a Staff Scientist for an environmental restoration firm before moving to Seattle in 2012. Since then, he’s worked in domestic sales and international operations for small companies. “I’m eager to serve the community as a small part of the VRFA,” says Groenhout.



CARRIE TALAMAIVAO  
LEAD SOCIAL WORKER

Carrie has 20 years of social work experience in various jobs and settings, including 4.5 years in Fire/EMS. Originally from Michigan, she completed her undergraduate degree in social work at Western Michigan University,

followed by graduate school at Florida State. Carrie moved to the Pacific Northwest in 2007, fell in love with its beauty, and never left. She recently obtained her Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker [LICSW] title, which Carrie says is a career highlight. Carrie says, “I am happy to remain on the CARES Team, supporting patients in need and reducing the impact on emergency services.”



MICHELLE ROY  
RECORDS ANALYST

Michelle has spent the last 25 years serving the community at a local police department as a crime analyst and crime prevention educator. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a Professional Certificate of Data Analytics from the University of Washington. Michelle also has a Paralegal Plus Certificate from Highline College. Michelle says, “I am excited to serve Algona, Auburn, and Pacific as the new Records Analyst for the VRFA.”

## COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE, REFERRAL, AND EDUCATION SERVICES [CARES] PROGRAM UPDATE

The VRFA and South King Fire & Rescue [SKFR] have jointly operated a Community Assistance, Referral, and Education Services [CARES] program since 2016. In April, SKFR notified us of their intent to withdraw from the program in late July. Although we are sad to say goodbye to our CARES partner, VRFA continues to provide this important service. This change has accelerated our efforts to reimagine how CARES can become a key component of our Community Risk Reduction practices.

The VRFA CARES program assists patients with chronic health issues outside of a hospital setting. When developed in 2015 and 2016, the goals of the

CARES program were two-fold: first, to increase the availability of our response units and, second, to decrease the frequency of repeat low acuity 911 calls by connecting community members in need with appropriate resources. An analysis of nearly six years of data found that the most effective way to achieve *both* goals is to invest resources in the *second* goal: connecting people with resources and services that will reduce their reliance on the 911 system.

In this “referral only” model, suppression units – our engines, ladders, and aid units – will respond to all low acuity calls and then refer the patient, as necessary, to VRFA social workers. This process is

already well established and occurs in the field via tablet computers and reporting software. Social workers can “respond” during business hours to assist suppression personnel, but most of their work is completed in a non-response context. When a referral is received from the field, social workers use various tools and techniques to connect the client with appropriate providers and services. In this way, social workers assist clients in moving away from the 911 system toward care that more appropriately addresses their needs.

In our first month as a stand-alone provider, we’ve made significant progress toward bolstering our

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# THE VRFA GIVES BACK

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

The Valley Regional Fire Authority prides itself on three guiding values: selfless service, integrity, and grit. VRFA Firefighter Blake Laidlaw and the charity he oversees, Lionhardt, both authentically embody these values.

Lionhardt is a not-for-profit charity that brings awareness and financial support to first responders battling critical illness and injury. Established in 2013, the name Lionhardt was an obvious choice for those that established the charity. Hardt comes from the last name of Donovan Eckhardt, a firefighter and close friend of Laidlaw who lost his battle with cancer on August 24, 2015. “Lion” is in tribute to Donovan’s character. He was known for “having the heart of a lion” and as a “man of courage, grace, and power.”

Upon Lionhardt’s formation, Blake first served as the Vice Chair, moving into the Chair position in 2015. He and his wife Shayna, who serves as the Executive Director, work tirelessly, rallying volunteers, raising funds, and supporting first responders and their families through unimaginable hardships. This incredible foundation provides many services and support for those in need. Some of the many things they help with include medical bills, travel expenses, house/yard work, food/fuel costs, legal fees, counseling, children’s educational trusts, memorials, and burial services. More importantly, they offer a sense of family, community, and support.

Blake and his family are dedicated to this generous and giving charity and never ask for any notoriety or praise. Laidlaw remains humble and honored to carry on his dear friend’s legacy. When asked, he described two specific moments in Lionhardt’s history that have stuck with him. The first was the event put together to support Donovan himself. Held at the Berliner Pub in Renton, they sold t-shirts with Lionhardt’s original logo. Through word of mouth, they raised \$40,000 in one day. The second memory captures how impactful this foundation is for first responders, their families,



Blake and Shayna Laidlaw

and those directly impacted by tragedy. A local firefighter receiving treatment at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, was informed by doctors that his treatment had run its course and that he should focus on being with family and friends. To fly him home and provide him with the care and nursing staff needed, his family was facing a \$30,000 medical bill. The family reached out to Lionhardt, who managed to pay \$15,000 worth of medical expenses. That incredible monetary donation allowed the firefighter to return home and pass with his friends and his family by his side.

We are honored to have one of our members as an inspiration and leader in our community. People like Blake and his selfless service inspire and encourage us all to do more, give more, and be better. Thank you, Blake, for your continued dedication to Donovan Eckhardt’s memory and the support this charity provides for our first responder community and their families.

Lionhardt hosts an annual golf tournament in September. This year Valley Firefighters Local 1352 stepped up in a big way to support this cause by donating \$5,000.

If you want to learn more or contribute to Lionhardt’s mission, please visit their website at [lionhardt.org](http://lionhardt.org).

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## CARES PROGRAM UPDATE

CARES program. Our initial and most critical step was onboarding our Lead Social Worker, Carrie Talamaivao. Carrie’s previous work within the joint VRFA-SKFR CARES team has allowed us to seamlessly continue these services [be sure to read Carrie’s profile within this issue of Fire Watch].

In addition to helping clients, Carrie and our team are hiring a second full-time social worker and developing enhanced internal practices that support CARES and the VRFA’s overall Community Risk Reduction practices.

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## NEW TRACTOR DRAWN AERIAL ARRIVES

responding to calls. This advantageous position can help spot potential hazards further away, allowing for more reaction time and ultimately leading to safer responses.

### How many ladders does the TDA carry?

In addition to the 107-foot aerial ladder, the TDA will carry over 200 feet of ground ladders of various sizes. Extra ladders increase safety for responders in the form of multiple means of egress during fires and allow for more escape routes for trapped occupants.

### Does the TDA have firefighting capability?

Although the TDA is not outfitted with a water pump, we can fight fire using a Compressed Air Foam System [CAFS]. This system uses compressed air, the 60 gallons of water carried on the truck, and a concentrated foam solution to produce 1,200 gallons of firefighting foam. We can use this foam to tackle a variety of small fires, including car fires,

dumpster fires, and brush fires. When large volumes of water are needed, the TDA can be connected to a fire engine to deliver over one thousand gallons per minute from the tip of its ladder.

### How much training goes into driving and operating the TDA?

Before we place the TDA in service, firefighters assigned to Ladder 331 will complete the following training:

- Classroom sessions focused on driving safety
- Eight [8] hours of drive time through a traffic cone course in both the driver and tiller positions using Washington State’s Emergency Vehicle Incident Prevention [EVIP] curriculum
- Twenty [20] hours of drive time on Algona, Auburn, and Pacific streets
- Dozens of drills to become proficient in deploying the 107’ aerial for roof access and elevated master stream deployment



## VRFA Services

The VRFA provides CPR and First Aid classes, complimentary blood pressure checks, fire station tours, custom-fit bicycle helmets, custom-fit life jackets, smoke alarms, child car seat inspections and more.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

call **253-288-5800** or go to **[www.vrfa.org](http://www.vrfa.org)**

## VRFA Administration

### Brad Thompson

Fire Chief/Administrator

### Rick Olson

Deputy Chief of Operations

### Tim Day

Deputy Chief of Community Risk Reduction

### Mark Horaski

Chief Financial Officer

### Sarah Borden

Human Resources Director

## Board of Governance

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### Lynda Osborn

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253-288-5800

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[www.vrfa.org](http://www.vrfa.org)



The VRFA is committed to our mission:  
**WE SERVE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY**