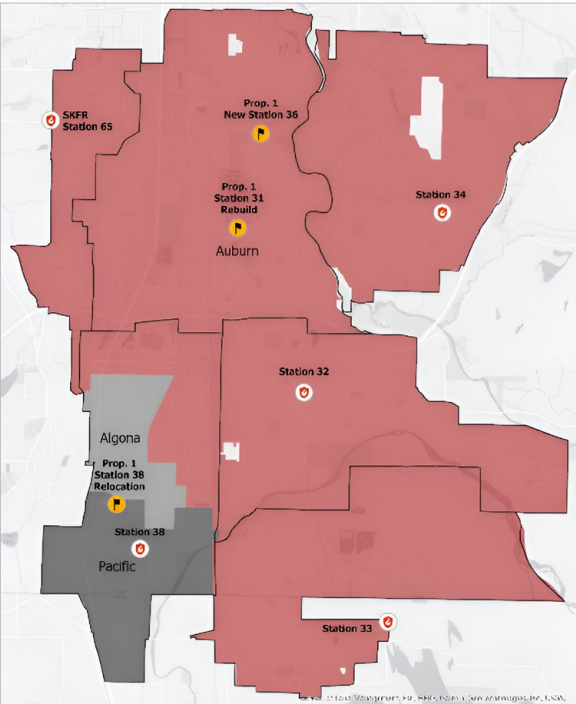


# FIRE WATCH



## VRFA PROP 1 ON NOVEMBER BALLOT

On November 7, 2023, voters in the VRFA service area will be asked to consider Proposition 1 on their general election ballot. “Prop 1” was unanimously authorized for the ballot by the VRFA Board of Governance at their July 11 meeting.



Prop 1 is a comprehensive and data-driven approach to implementing the VRFA’s Capital Facilities Plan [CFP]. Adopted by the VRFA’s Board of Governance in 2021, the CFP considers the location of 911 calls, current and projected population growth, and an assessment of the location and condition of our existing fire stations and support buildings. The projects funded by Prop 1 were determined after a multi-year process of thoughtful data analysis and the input of community members, VRFA staff, elected officials, and subject matter experts. The VRFA Board approved this proposition to seek voter approval for the issuance of no more than \$96.5 million of general obligation bonds maturing within 20 years and levy annual property taxes to pay and retire such bonds. The cost to homeowners of a \$450,000 home is \$12 to \$13 a month.

The VRFA has not sought voter approval for capital facility projects since 2008.

Prop 1 is intended to improve services to all community members and residential and commercial properties located within the VRFA boundaries by strategically locating new fire stations to enhance community-wide response times and resource availability. In doing so, Prop 1 will replace aging, undersized, and unreliable buildings with contemporary, right sized, and resilient buildings that will serve our communities for the next 50 years.

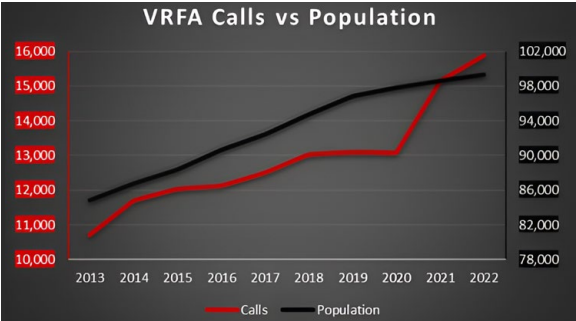
Specifically, the measure will authorize the VRFA to construct a new fire station in the northern part of VRFA’s service area, relocate and rebuild Station 38 in Pacific just south of the Algona border, and rebuild VRFA’s Headquarters Station 31 in Auburn. Prop 1 will also provide funds for the VRFA to build a training facility and will fund improvements to VRFA’s Support Services and maintenance facilities.

The projects funded by Prop 1 will improve the VRFA’s level of service. Over the past decade, increasing calls for service have mirrored the real estate development and population increase seen throughout the Valley. When formed in 2007, the VRFA served a population of 75,000 and responded to 8,700 incidents. In 2022, the VRFA served a population of 97,000 and responded to nearly 16,000 calls for service. The consistent rise in call volume and population for the nine years between 2013 and 2022 can be seen below.

When coupled with the current condition and location of our existing fire stations, the consistent upward trend in 911 call volume and population has stretched VRFA’s resources to their limits. **The projects funded by Proposition 1 will help address these challenges, and benefit homeowners, in three ways:**



- 1 Improved Distribution of Resources.** Building a new fire station in the northern and busiest portion of VRFA’s response area, and relocating and rebuilding Station 38 in Pacific, will more evenly distribute VRFA’s response units. This, in turn, will allow VRFA units to reach more of our service area within our adopted response times and help keep VRFA units closer to their first-due areas. Funding for a training facility will also keep VRFA units in town instead of traveling to Kent or Renton to train.
- 2 Improved Response Times.** This increased call volume has resulted in a steady increase in response times. Why? When fire units are



### PROP 1 INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

**Sat., October 7 | 2 - 4 PM**  
**Station 38** - 133 3rd Ave SE  
Pacific, WA 98047

**Wed., October 18 | 6 - 8 PM**  
**Station 33** - 500 182nd Ave E  
Auburn, WA 98092

**Sat., October 21 | 10 AM - 12 noon**  
**Station 31** - 1101 D Street NE  
Auburn, WA 98002

committed to a 911 call and a second 911 call occurs in the same area, a fire unit from a different part of our response area may have to respond, resulting in a longer response time. For example, in the seven years between 2015 and 2021, response times to 90% of our calls increased by 53 seconds. Though seemingly small, an increase of nearly a minute can make an enormous difference in incidents where every second counts, such as cardiac arrest, stroke, or a fire.

**3 Improved Reliability.** Building modern fire stations and support facilities in the proper location will help ensure that neighborhoods can continue to rely on the VRFA for timely and effective emergency response. Similarly, fire stations built to modern seismic, health, and safety codes and standards will not only keep our staff healthy but will also ensure that we’re able to respond when we’re needed the most. The current Stations 31 and 38, for example, were built in 1985 and 1979, respectively, and both have exceeded their projected lifespans and are not compliant with current building codes for fire stations. Finally, improved training, support, and maintenance facilities will help ensure that our firefighters and their equipment are properly trained, outfitted, and maintained.

If you can’t attend one of the community meetings, information on Proposition 1 is available by calling the VRFA at 253-288-5800, visiting our website at [www.vrfa.org](http://www.vrfa.org), sending us an email at [AskTheVRFA@vrfa.org](mailto:AskTheVRFA@vrfa.org) and following us on Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, and Instagram.

This information is provided by the Valley Regional Fire Authority and intended for education purposes only.



SELFLESS SERVICE

INTEGRITY

GRIT

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# NEW CARES PROGRAM MODEL CELEBRATES ONE YEAR

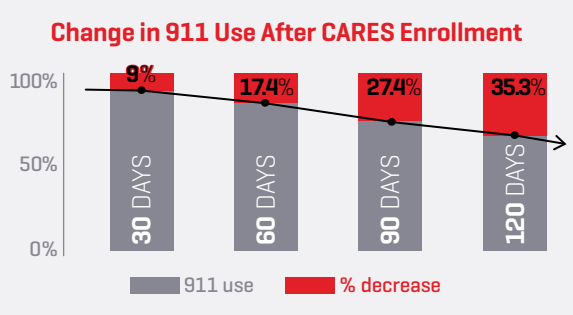


The new VRFA Community Assistance, Referral, and Education Services (CARES) program model has been in place for over a year. This program aims to assist community members with chronic health issues outside of the hospital setting, increasing the availability of emergency response units while decreasing the frequency of low-acuity 911 calls.

In August 2022, the VRFA hired Carrie Talamaivao as the Lead Social Worker, and shortly after, Social Worker Stephanie Lopes joined her. In September 2022, the VRFA entered into a contract to provide CARES services for residents of Mountain View Fire & Rescue. Social Workers Talamaivao and Lopes assist community members in both jurisdictions after receiving referrals from response personnel. Most patients are referred because they can no longer care for themselves, while others have fall or mobility issues, healthcare needs, mental health challenges, substance abuse disorders, and/or unsafe living conditions. Our social workers use various tools and techniques to connect clients with appropriate providers and services, helping move them away from the 911 and emergency department systems toward care that appropriately addresses their needs.

In the past year, the team has connected patients to resources such as Veteran’s Services, fall prevention, home health, hospice, transportation, caregiving, substance use, and mental health support.

Between August 1, 2022, and July 31, 2023, CARES received 444 referrals and worked with 274 patients. Ninety-eight percent of those patients were enrolled in the program, with only four not enrolled due to death, voluntary commitment to a psychiatric ward, or current connection to known resources. Comparing CARES patients’ 911 use before and after enrollment, we’ve found a 35.3% decrease in 911 use 120 days post-enrollment.



Due to the increasing demand for this program in both service areas, we have entered into an agreement with the University of Washington to host three social work interns. The interns will work with

CARES to develop clinical and practical social work skills over the next 9 to 12 months.

## CARES Success Story



First responders referred an older adult with back pain after he had been on the floor for three days following a fall from his bed. He was living in an environment piled high with garbage and other items and was suffering from personal care issues. The CARES Team quickly built a rapport with the man and found he was a veteran, having served four years in Vietnam. The team facilitated a connection with King County Veteran Services, which fully funded a clean-out of his home totaling \$8,000. While working together, he continued to express gratitude for the firefighters who found him at his worst and the social workers who helped him look forward to a better future. Upon closing his case, he reconnected with a family member and planned a move across the state. The CARES Team worked with him for a total of six weeks.

# TWO SUPPORT SERVICES EMPLOYEES RETIRE

The VRFA said a fond farewell to Fire Marshal David Casselman and Administrative Assistant Julie Slevin at the end of June. These two employees dedicated many hours to improving the safety of the communities we serve and will be missed.



DAVID CASSELMAN  
FIRE MARSHAL

Fire Marshal David Casselman retired after 29 years with the Auburn Fire Department and VRFA. As a firefighter, Dave took on numerous challenges. He served as a Medical Program Specialist [MPS] and Competency-Based Training Instructor for 21 years. In that position, he helped develop the current

instruction format and program delivery used to train our Emergency Medical Technicians [EMTs].

He also worked with another MPS on a pilot program to bring the first Public Access Defibrillator to Auburn.

Dave was a Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee [JATC] member for 15 years; ten of them as the team leader. He and a colleague worked with the state to update and re-write numerous training modules.

In 2016, Casselman joined the VRFA Fire Marshal’s Office, conducting inspections and serving as a Fire Investigator. In 2019 he was promoted to Assistant Fire Marshal, and in 2021 to Fire Marshal.

Fire Chief Brad Thompson said, “Dave has always taken the time to study complex issues while also understanding how these issues affect people and organizations. These skills have moved the Fire Marshal’s Office forward in fundamental ways. Dave set out to improve life safety for our communities and accomplished his mission.”

Administrative Assistant Julie Slevin retired after 16 years with the VRFA. Julie started in 2007, assisting with finance and human resources. Two years later, she moved to the Support Services Division, where she spent most of her career. As Administrative Assistant, Julie touched almost every aspect of support services.



JULIE SLEVIN  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

She served as the JATC Manager for 13 years and handled necessary filings for the Veteran’s Administration. She managed office operations, completed countless requisitions, and tracked training and apparatus compliance.

In addition to her work responsibilities, Julie helped with the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, Toys for Kids drive, Scout Night, and numerous other community events and fundraisers.

“Julie has an innate ability to care for others, sometimes putting others’ needs before her own. Julie has consistently demonstrated our guiding value of Selfless Service by supporting the VRFA’s service delivery through several work groups. Her caring work will always be remembered and fondly recalled,” said Fire Chief Brad Thompson.

## FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

# COOKING SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU. PAY ATTENTION TO FIRE PREVENTION.

Fire Prevention Week, sponsored by The National Fire Protection Association® [NFPA®], educates people about the leading risks of home fires and how they can better protect themselves and their loved ones. This year’s Fire Prevention theme is: “Cooking safety starts with YOU! Pay attention to fire prevention.”

According to the NFPA, cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries in the United States, and unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires and deaths. This year’s campaign intends to educate our communities about the simple but important actions they can take when cooking to keep themselves and those around them safe. Staying in the kitchen, using a timer, and avoiding distractions that remove your focus from what’s on the stove are the key takeaways from this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign.

Here are a few steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones:

- **Always keep a close eye** on what you’re cooking. Set a timer for foods with longer cook times, such as those simmering or baking, to monitor them carefully.
- **Clear the cooking area** of combustible items and anything that can burn, such as dish towels, oven mitts, food packaging, and paper towels.
- **Turn pot handles toward the back** of the stove. Keep a lid nearby when cooking. If a small grease fire starts, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner.
- **Create a “kid and pet-free zone”** of at least three feet [one meter] around the cooking area and anywhere else hot food or drink is prepared or carried.



To learn more about Fire Prevention Week and this year’s theme, “Cooking safety starts with YOU! Pay attention to fire prevention,” visit [www.fpw.org](http://www.fpw.org). Additional Fire Prevention Week resources for children, caregivers, and educators can be found at [www.sparky.org](http://www.sparky.org) and [www.sparkyschoolhouse.org](http://www.sparkyschoolhouse.org).



# FIRE CHIEF’S MESSAGE



BRAD THOMPSON

Happy fall, Thank you for taking the time to read about your Valley Regional Fire Authority.

As the brisk autumn air sweeps through our beautiful corner of Western Washington, we once again celebrate the spirit of unity and resilience that defines our home. In this edition of Fire Watch, I wish to highlight the

deep-rooted connection that exists between our fire department and the community we proudly serve.

### Embracing Our Community

At the core of our mission lies a profound truth: we are not just a public safety agency; we are an integral part of this community. The firefighters who stand ready to answer your call are more than just first responders in uniforms; they are your neighbors, friends, and dedicated individuals who share in the joys and challenges which make up our daily life.

The Valley Regional Fire Authority strives to meet our Vision of “Creating the safest community to live, work, and visit.” through our activities which are woven into the very fabric of our community. Our commitment to you extends beyond the moments of crisis. We work diligently to prevent emergencies through

Our mission extends beyond emergencies. We engage with you through preventative measures, community events, and educational programs to enhance safety awareness and promote preparedness.

educational initiatives, community partnerships, and proactive measures to ensure your well-being.

### A Privilege to Serve

Serving is a privilege we hold dear. We take immense pride in being the ones you turn to when help is needed. Our staff carry the weight of this responsibility with humility, knowing that every call we respond to is an opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life.

Preparedness is our foundation. Through continuous training, advancement in capital facilities, and staying attuned to our community’s needs, we equip ourselves to face any challenge that comes our way. When duty calls, we respond with unwavering dedication and commitment to your safety.

### Public Safety: Our Unwavering Mission

Your safety is our paramount concern, a guiding principle that directs our actions and decisions. Whether it’s a medical emergency demanding immediate intervention, or a wildfire threatening our surroundings, we stand ready.

Our mission extends beyond emergencies. We engage with you through preventative measures, community events, and educational programs to enhance safety

awareness and promote preparedness. We strive to empower you with the tools to help you protect yourself and your loved ones.

### Standing Strong Together

As we enter the spirit of the fall season, let us remember we are a tightly knit community bound by shared experiences and mutual support. The Valley Regional Fire Authority, with all constituents represented by your local elected officials, is an embodiment of our shared commitment to safety and well-being.

Please take a moment to acknowledge the dedication of our firefighters, social workers, educators, prevention, and support staff. Their contributions deserve our gratitude. Let us express our appreciation through active participation in safety measures, community events, and by fostering a culture of preparedness.

As the Fire Chief, I am enormously proud to lead a team of exceptional individuals who exemplify our Guiding Values of *Selfless Service*, *Integrity*, and *Grit*. We are here for you, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to this community.

Stay safe, stay connected, and let’s continue to build a brighter future, together.

## VRFA WELCOMES EIGHT NEW TEAM MEMBERS



BETHANY GROVE  
FIREFIGHTER

Bethany was a volunteer firefighter/EMT with Mountain View Fire & Rescue before joining the VRFA. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services from the University of Washington. She enjoys time with her family, baking, and playing the piano.



KYLE STRANGE  
FIREFIGHTER

Kyle grew up in a firefighting family and followed in his dad’s footsteps when he joined the VRFA. He graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in Communications. Outside of work, he enjoys hiking, archery hunting, and snowboarding.



ALEC JOHNSON  
FIREFIGHTER

Alec is an experienced EMT with TriMed. He is a University of Washington Biomedical Sciences graduate. Alec enjoys hiking, working out, and photography in his free time.



KEENAN WALCH  
FIREFIGHTER

Before joining the VRFA, Keenan worked as a Registered Nurse at Harborview Medical Center. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Washington. In his free time, he is an outdoor enthusiast and plays pickleball.



PATRICK MCKELLIPS  
FIREFIGHTER

Patrick worked as an IT and Business Consultant before beginning his career at the VRFA. He has a degree in Business Administration from Seattle Pacific University. Patrick enjoys hiking, camping, cycling, and spending time outdoors in his free time.



JON JOHNSON  
FACILITIES TECHNICIAN

Jon comes to the VRFA with 25 years of experience in facilities maintenance. He has worked with the Greater Seattle YMCA and Western Washington Girl Scouts. Born and raised in the Mt. Baker/Genesee area of South Seattle, he now calls Pacific home.



ROBBIE STEVENS  
FIREFIGHTER

Robbie worked previously as a Volunteer Firefighter/EMT in Fall City, Washington. He graduated with a degree in Public Health from the University of Washington. Off-duty, he enjoys outdoor activities and spending time with family and friends.



CRYSTAL HARPER  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Crystal has over 15 years administrative assistant experience. Before joining the VRFA, Crystal was the Executive Assistant and Event Planner for the WA Trucking Association. When away from work, she enjoys spending time with her young daughter.

### PROMOTIONS

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENTLY PROMOTED MEMBERS!



ANDREW BERGFORD  
FIRE MARSHAL



MIKE HOMAN  
ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL

## SUMMER EVENTS

Over the summer we participated in many community events. We enjoy the opportunity to meet our community members and look forward to attending these events every summer.





# THE VRFA GIVES BACK

The Valley Professional Firefighters Local 1352 takes pride in working on and off duty to support the communities we serve. It is one of the many reasons why being a VRFA Firefighter/EMT is so unique, rewarding, and worthwhile. During the summer months, VRFA firefighters and staff participate in many charitable events, including the Farmers Market Annual Chili Cook-off, Relay for Life, and the Burn Foundation Softball Tournament.



### Chili Cook-off

The Annual Chili Cook-off is a friendly competition between VRFA and the Auburn Police Department. The event has been

held every summer for over ten years and raises funds for the Auburn Food Bank. The competition takes place in mid-August at the Auburn Farmer's Market. For a donation, those attending the market can sample both chilies and cast their vote for their favorite. The VRFA handed the trophy over this year as the Auburn Police Department came away with the victory. But the real winner was the Auburn Food Bank, which received \$1,200 in donations. Firefighters Zach White and Monique Payne participated in the event, with Captain Aaron Martin and Assistant Fire Marshal Mike Homan there to provide support.



### Relay for Life

This year's Relay for Life event was held at Game Farm Park in late July. Firefighter Bethany Grove assisted with the event and shared why supporting those battling cancer is important to her. "My mom had acute myeloid

leukemia. I helped my family as one of her caregivers during that season. She is in remission now, and I am forever grateful for her doctors and nurses. I have deep empathy for individuals battling cancer, knowing, and witnessing how difficult the journey can be," said Grove.



### Burn Foundation Softball Tournament

The Washington State Council of Fire Fighters Burn Foundation hosted the 50th Annual Softball Tournament in late July in Olympia. A record 24 VRFA members participated in the two-day event. This deep-seated tradition coordinated by the Olympia Firefighters Foundation raises money to support individuals suffering from burn injuries and their families. The VRFA softball team was one of 18 first responder teams from Washington who took to the diamond to raise funds for the Burn Foundation. We did not win the tournament but are proud to support this critical mission.



### 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**

### 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

- Troy Linnell**  
Chair, City of Algona Mayor
- Nancy Backus**  
Vice-Chair, City of Auburn Mayor

### Members

- Larry Brown**  
Auburn City Council
- Kerry Garberding**  
Pacific City Council
- Leanne Guier**  
City of Pacific Mayor
- Vic Kave**  
Pacific City Council
- Bill Thomas**  
Algona City Council
- Robyn Mulenga**  
Auburn City Council
- Lynda Osborn**  
Algona City Council

# SCOUTS

at the Fire Station

**Sat., October 21**  
**10 AM - 2 PM**  
**PSRFA Station 74**  
24611 116th Ave SE  
Kent, WA 98030  
*RSVP Now*  
253.856.4482  
MTaylor@PugetSoundFire.org

**Wed., November 15**  
**5:30 - 8:30 PM**  
**VRFA Station 33**  
500 182nd Ave E  
Auburn, WA 98092  
*RSVP Now*  
253.288.5881  
Public.Info@vrfa.org

Follow us on Nextdoor, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, & YouTube



### VRFA HEADQUARTERS

Fire Station 31  
1101 D Street NE, Auburn, WA 98002  
253-288-5800  
Business Hours 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
[www.vrfa.org](http://www.vrfa.org)



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