

FIRE WATCH

PROP 1 PASSES

The VRFA extends our heartfelt gratitude for our communities' support of Proposition 1 during the November 2023 general election. The funding provided by this ballot measure will allow the capital projects found within the VRFA's current Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) to become a reality. Two of these projects will likely break ground in late 2024. The first, a new fire station on 30th and I Street Northeast in Auburn, will become VRFA's sixth response station, Station 36. When complete in 2025, Station 36's team of three firefighters will provide a more rapid response to the northern portion of VRFA's response area and increase response capacity throughout VRFA's entire service area. The second project slated to begin in 2024 is the relocation and rebuilding of Station 38 from its current location on 3rd Avenue South to the corner of Ellingson and Tacoma Boulevard in Pacific. Due to the development requirements of Station 38's site, it is scheduled to open a few months after Station 36, likely in late 2025 or early 2026.

The collective goal of TCA, the design committee, and VRFA leadership is to build cost-effective, contemporary, and functional buildings.

In addition to Stations 36 and 38, Prop 1 will fund the rebuilding of VRFA's headquarters, Station 31, on its current site north of Fred Meyer in Auburn. Once operational, this new two-story building will allow most of VRFA's support staff to co-locate within one facility. The current Station 31 will remain open during the 14-month construction process, which is scheduled to begin in mid to late 2025. Finally, Prop 1 will provide much needed funding to enhance VRFA's training, Support Services, and vehicle maintenance spaces. Staff are currently looking at options to address these needs.

Article continued on page 3...



EMS SPOTLIGHT

FACT STUDY



In collaboration with UW Medicine, King County Emergency Medical Services is conducting a study to enhance the quality of care for individuals who experience cardiac arrest in King County. The study will assess the effectiveness of modifying two elements of CPR – rescue breathing and chest compressions – as they are administered

by Firefighter/EMTs. Our VRFA firefighters have completed the necessary training and are working together to practice the new procedures included in the study.

The treatments being considered for resuscitation care are proven to be safe and effective. However, it is unclear whether one strategy is better than the other in improving cardiac arrest survival rates. The study is expected to last up to four years and, depending on the results, some techniques may be adopted for ongoing use.

What will be studied:

The goal of the first intervention is to compare the effectiveness of rescue breathing using the current approach of a "bag valve mask" versus the use of a device that is placed in the patient's airway to more directly deliver oxygen to the lungs. The current method involves placing a mask over the patient's mouth and nose and squeezing an external bag to supply air to the lungs. The new method involves using a curved, single use plastic tube called I-Gel. This device is inserted into the patient's mouth and down the throat to a point just above the larynx. The I-Gel has several potential benefits, such as easy insertion, minimal risk of compressing the tissue of the airway, and stability within the airway after insertion.

The goal of the second intervention is to determine the optimal rate of chest compressions per minute during CPR. Fire departments from around King County will be assigned a specific compression rate during various parts of the study. These rates will be 100, 110, or 120 per minute. First responders will use a metronome to guide compressions to ensure the correct rate is administered.

How the study will work:

Firefighter/EMTs will be using one standard-of-care approach for several months. This first approach involves rescue breathing using the I-Gel and a

compression rate of 120. After that, they will switch to a different method involving rescue breathing with a bag-mask and a different compression rate. The EMTs will receive refresher training before each transition to ensure they are well-versed in both techniques. The researchers will review records of each rescue attempt to ensure that the first responders applied the assigned study treatment.

Patient consent:

When someone experiences a cardiac arrest, it is critical to provide immediate care to increase their chances of survival. However, since individuals in this life-threatening situation are unconscious and cannot provide informed consent to participate in a study, the researchers at UW Medicine have obtained a federal exception that allows them to enroll patients without their consent. Rescued patients will be notified of their study enrollment once they regain consciousness. UW Medicine researchers have previously used this method in collaboration with EMS professionals to address other urgent clinical questions related to cardiac arrest. This approach to research has contributed to the world class success of King County's EMS system.

People may opt out of the study in advance or withdraw consent after they recover. Please contact FACTstudy@kingcounty.gov if you have questions or choose to opt out of the study.



SELFLESS SERVICE

INTEGRITY

GRIT

IN THIS ISSUE >>

- Pg. 2 Fire Benefit Charge
- Pg. 2 Captain Bill Austin and Firefighter Kyle Fisher Retire
- Pg. 2 Lithium-Ion Battery Safety
- Pg. 3 Fire Chief's Message

- Pg. 3 VRFA Members on the Move
- Pg. 3 Three University of Washington Interns Join the CARES Team
- Pg. 4 The VRFA Gives Back

FIRE BENEFIT CHARGE

Sometime in 2024, the VRFA will be asking our communities to renew our primary source of funding, Fire Benefit Charge (FBC).

First authorized by voters in 2006, the FBC shifts funding away from exclusively property taxes to a source that considers the actual cost of providing fire protection services to a specific building or residence. In doing so, the FBC ensures a more stable source of revenue to support response times and service levels for fire protection, emergency medical services, personnel training, and the purchase of necessary equipment.

What is a Fire Benefit Charge?

The Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) is a fee assessed based on the cost of providing fire protection services to a specific building or residence. The FBC is determined by the type of occupancy and square footage.

Does the VRFA still collect property tax?

Yes, but at a reduced rate. Per state law, the VRFA cannot collect more than \$1.00 per \$1,000.00 of assessed value and is limited to 1% annual growth. Without the FBC, the VRFA could collect an additional fifty cents on top of the \$1.00 per \$1,000.00 assessed value.

Is the FBC in place indefinitely, or do the voters have to authorize its continuation?

The VRFA has asked voters to reauthorize the FBC every six years since the VRFA's inception, first in 2012 and then in 2018. New legislation allows the VRFA to request a ten-year or lifetime authorization the next time we request voter approval.



When will the VRFA ask the voters for reauthorization?

The current voter authorization expires in 2025, so the VRFA will need to seek voter reauthorization in 2024. VRFA's leadership team will work closely with the Board of Governance to determine the most suitable time to place this renewal on the ballot.

How do I calculate my FBC?

The formula uses total square footage, building category, and other factors to determine the FBC rate. A calculator can be found on our website here: <https://www.vrfa.org/about/fire-benefit-charge/>.

Are any discounts offered?

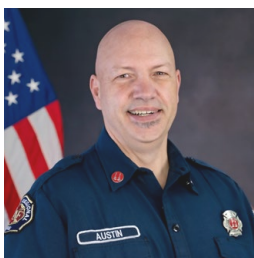
Yes, there is a 10% discount for commercial and residential sprinkler systems. Residential sprinkler discounts have been applied for all recorded systems. If you have a residential sprinkler system and have not received the discount, please contact us by telephone: **253-288-5800** or email: askthevrfa@vrfa.org.

Can I appeal my FBC?

Yes, the VRFA has an appeals process in place. You can find information about the appeals process and the FBC by visiting <https://www.vrfa.org/about/fire-benefit-charge/>.



CAPTAIN BILL AUSTIN AND FIREFIGHTER KYLE FISHER RETIRE



Over his 33 years in the fire service, Austin found many ways to contribute to the legacy Auburn Fire Department and the VRFA. In addition to his firefighting duties, Bill became a Public Information and Education Specialist for five years, teaching safety classes

to all ages and serving as a liaison to the media. After that, Bill became part of the first Respiratory Team. As a Respiratory Specialist, he assisted in researching and purchasing all new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), testing and maintaining the equipment, and training firefighters on proper use. He represented his department at many events as a member of the Honor Guard and was deployed several times as a Red Card-certified wildland firefighter.

Bill was always very thoughtful about others and tremendously dedicated to his craft.

"I enjoyed the different types of work required on the deployments. It was both exciting and humbling. The biggest reward was the gratitude of those we could help," said Austin.

Austin received the "2012 Firefighter of the Year," an honor bestowed upon him by his peers. Shortly after receiving the award, Bill was promoted to Captain and placed in charge of the respiratory program. He managed the program for nine years.

Later in his career, Austin took on the challenge of site supervisor for the COVID testing site and then the vaccine site in Auburn. He served a year and a half between both.

"Bill's retirement marks the end of a remarkable firefighting career. He was always very thoughtful about others and tremendously dedicated to his craft. He personally taught me much. We will miss his passion and tenacity," said Fire Chief Brad Thompson.



In 1996, Firefighter Kyle Fisher began his career with the Auburn Fire Department, now VRFA. He began working as a Medical Program Specialist early in his career, teaching skills to his fellow EMTs and assisting in developing medical protocols and best

practices. Kyle served in this capacity for over 20 years, teaching classes until retirement.

"Kyle has made a profound impact, first with the legacy Auburn Fire Department and then the Valley Regional Fire Authority. It is impossible to quantify the influence that he has had. Kyle made a career of ensuring that he made the people around him better at all ranks," said Deputy Chief Rick Olson.

He was a Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC) member for 20 years, tutoring, testing, and setting the foundation for nearly every firefighter currently working at the VRFA. Kyle was also instrumental in developing and implementing the VRFA's current wildland fire program. He obtained his Red Card certification and spent several summers fighting fires along the West Coast.

Kyle made a career of ensuring that he made the people around him better at all ranks.

At the beginning of the Pandemic, when much was unknown about COVID-19, Kyle jumped in to find a way to serve sick patients while protecting EMTs through a specially equipped medical aid unit. When asked about this, Kyle replied, "I like to be in the middle of chaos and find ways to work through the challenges."

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety



Lithium-ion batteries power most of the electronic devices we use daily, but if not treated with care, they can overheat, catch fire, or explode. Avoid these risks by taking these precautions:

- **Always follow** the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Use only the battery** designed for the specific device.
- **Only use the charging cord** that came with the device.
- **Do not charge the device under** a pillow, on your bed, or on a couch.
- **Stop charging the device** or battery once it is fully charged.
- **Store batteries away** from anything that can catch fire and keep them at room temperature.

If you notice an odor, change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, or odd noises, stop using the battery immediately. If possible, move the device away from anything that can catch fire.

It is crucial to remember that you should never dispose of lithium-ion batteries in the trash. Instead, recycle them by taking them to a battery recycling location or contacting your local garbage service.

FIRE CHIEF'S MESSAGE



The VRFA holds international accreditation from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, fostering a culture of continual quality enhancement. This issue of Fire Watch underscores our commitment to this culture and its significance for you.

First, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support. In November 2023, you graciously supported Proposition 1, a critical step for our capital facilities plan. Your affirmative vote is deeply appreciated. We recognize that this investment comes from you, and we pledge to be steadfast custodians of your dedication to our community, illustrating the strength of a thriving community. Please refer

to the Prop 1 Passes article on the front page of this issue for details on our capital facilities plan. Though groundbreaking is yet to come, our team is diligently engaged in planning and designing these vital public safety facilities.

We recently bid farewell to two esteemed firefighters with extensive careers at the Auburn Fire Department and VRFA. Captain Austin and Firefighter Fisher epitomized our core values through their unwavering dedication, passion, and expertise. They embody the essence of firefighting and were incredible individuals who brought joy to our workplace. Their absence will be deeply felt.

Fire department promotions signify new leadership, injecting fresh perspectives and vision. Allow me to introduce our recently promoted officers, who dedicated substantial effort in preparation for their new responsibilities. Additionally, we warmly welcome new team members, contributing diverse backgrounds and skills that align with our mission to serve. Their presence injects new vigor into the VRFA.

Our team is diligently engaged in planning and designing these vital public safety facilities.

Our firefighters are committed to delivering top-notch care for all emergencies. Collaborating with King County Public Health and UW Medicine for emergency medical support and training enables us to provide world-class EMS services. Refer to the section about the FACT study, which evaluates CPR and rescue breathing techniques, aiming to enhance outcomes for cardiac arrest patients outside of hospitals by determining the most effective therapies.

The intent behind sharing this information is to showcase our staff's exceptional talent and dedication. We are immensely proud and grateful to serve. Thank you for your continued support. Stay safe.

VRFA MEMBERS ON THE MOVE



Andrew O'Donnell was promoted to Captain on December 16, 2023. O'Donnell was hired by the VRFA nearly 15 years ago.



On January 1, 2024, Firefighter Jim Franklin joined the Fire Marshal's office as the newest Deputy Fire Marshal. Franklin joined the Auburn Fire Department, now VRFA, 28 years ago.



Kimberly Terhune, who served in the Public Information & Education Officer role for over 32 years, transitioned into the Emergency Management Coordinator position on January 1, 2024.



Systems Analyst Thomas Downs moved to Support Services on January 1, 2024, joining the analytics team in his new role, Application Engineer.



On January 1, 2024, Evan Zierath accepted the Systems Analyst position left vacant with Downs transition to Application Engineer.

PROP 1 PASSES

Article continued from cover story.

Work is underway to make these projects a reality. The architectural firm TCA, which assisted VRFA in costing the CFP in advance of Proposition 1, is developing a detailed schedule that will lead to breaking ground on Stations 36 and 38 in the Fall of 2024. As a first step, TCA will facilitate a series of meetings with VRFA's Station Design Committee in January and February. This committee is comprised of representatives from all workgroups within the VRFA. The collective goal of TCA, the design committee, and VRFA leadership is to build cost-effective, contemporary, and functional buildings and spaces that support the delivery of VRFA services.

Work is underway to make these projects a reality.

To find out more about the projects funded by Prop 1 and to check their status, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, and LinkedIn and visit our website, www.vrfa.org.

THREE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON INTERNS JOIN THE CARES TEAM



Mandy Fified, Nora Hull, and Stephanie Hawney

Late last year, the CARES team welcomed three interns from the University of Washington. Mandy Fified is in her final year of the Bachelor of Social Work (BASW) program at UW Tacoma. Nora Hull is a senior in the BASW program at UW Seattle. Stephanie Hawney is in her final year at the UW Master of Social Work program. They are working 16-24 hours per week with the CARES team to develop clinical and practical social work skills and are expected to complete their internships in June.



THE VRFA GIVES BACK

Toys for Kids

Since 1986 local families have benefited from the generosity of our community through the Toys for Kids program. This effort is organized by the VRFA Professional Firefighters Union – IAFF Local 1352 – VRFA administration, and the Auburn Food Bank.

Each year, Local 1352 firefighters, their families, and the VRFA administration organize various fundraising activities to help supply gifts for families in need during the holiday season. The largest fundraiser takes place at the Auburn Fred Meyer, where firefighters stand outside and collect toys and cash donations from shoppers. This raises money for the cause and allows firefighters to interact with the public and share good wishes for the holiday season. In addition, local businesses hold their own fundraisers and toy drives to support Toys for Kids. All funds raised go towards this event, which helps families exclusively in Auburn, Algona, and Pacific.

Over 1,100 children were registered with the Auburn Food Bank to receive toys in 2023. When the 2024 holiday season draws near, please refer those who need help to the Auburn Food Bank at [253] 833-8925.



+1,100 kids
registered to receive
toys in 2023



Return of the Turkey Bowl

The Saturday after Thanksgiving, Local 1352 Firefighters and Auburn Police Officers met on the gridiron at Auburn Memorial Stadium for a friendly flag football game. The last time Auburn Police and Local 1352 Firefighters faced off for this charitable event was in 2015. The game was free for the public to watch, with donations going towards Local 1352's Toys for Kids or Auburn Police's charity choice of purchasing sports equipment for youth.

"This gives us an opportunity to get together, have fun, and be competitive with our fellow first responders. We see each other on emergency calls,

This gives us an opportunity to get together, have fun, and be competitive with our fellow first responders.

but this way, we get to see each other without the badges and in a more relaxed atmosphere," said Cory Wallace, a Local 1352 Firefighter.

Auburn Police came away with the victory this time, raising \$300 for charity. Look for the same event next year and a win from Local 1352 Firefighters.



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

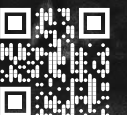
- Nancy Backus**
Chair, City of Algona Mayor
- Troy Linnell**
Vice-Chair, City of Auburn Mayor

Members

- Larry Brown**
Auburn Deputy Mayor
- Kerry Garberding**
Pacific City Council
- Vic Kave**
City of Pacific Mayor
- Lynda Osborn**
Algona City Council
- Tracy Taylor**
Auburn City Council
- Bill Thomas**
Algona City Council
- Jack Stutler**
Pacific City Council

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