

FIRE WATCH



THE VRFA PREPARES FOR WILDFIRE SEASON

WILDFIRE MITIGATION EFFORTS

Wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense in Western Washington, underscoring the urgent need for communities in King County to prepare for potential wildland fires.

The VRFA recognizes this significant risk and is proactively engaged in various preparation and prevention initiatives, and key wildfire mitigation efforts, including the following:

- **King County Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy**
This strategy includes a set of 12 recommended actions to improve preparedness, response, and recovery. One of those actions calls for all operations personnel to complete Red Card training. The VRFA is on track to accomplish this by the end of 2025.
- **King County Wildfire Mitigation Working Group**
The purpose of this group is to reduce the prevalence and intensity of wildland fires through mitigation and coordination practices.

- **King County Community Wildfire Protection Plan [CWPP] Core Planning Team**
The CWPP is a strategic plan that guides community wildfire mitigation, addressing issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, and community preparedness.
- **Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network**
This network brings diverse collaborators together to generate new ideas for addressing wildfire mitigation in Washington.



Be sure to follow our website and social media channels for updates on these initiatives and for valuable wildfire prevention tips that can help you minimize your risk.

CALIFORNIA FIRE DEPLOYMENT



On January 9th, the VRFA answered the call for assistance in battling the Palisades Fire, a significant wildfire that erupted in Los Angeles, California. With strong Santa Ana winds and dry conditions fueling its rapid spread, this early season blaze threatened homes and critical infrastructure in the region.

To bolster firefighting efforts, we deployed a Type 1 engine – a “structural” fire engine that you commonly see in urban and suburban areas – with a dedicated crew of four firefighters as part of a coordinated strike team. Captain Ryan Chadwick also deployed with the team as a Strike Team Leader Trainee. They teamed up with personnel from Seattle Fire, Puget Sound Fire, Eastside Fire, and South King Fire to combat the fires in Los Angeles County.

Upon arrival, VRFA's team was assigned crucial



structure protection and perimeter control tasks. Working alongside fellow firefighters from across the nation, they focused on containing the fire and safeguarding local communities. Firefighter Robert Foppiano emphasized the unique challenges of fighting wildfires in urban-wildland interfaces, highlighting steep terrain, unpredictable wind shifts, and the proximity of homes and businesses to the

[Article continued on page 4...](#)

NEW BRUSH TRUCK ARRIVES IN TIME FOR WILDLAND FIRE SEASON

We are excited to announce the arrival of a new brush truck to the VRFA fleet! Approved for purchase in 2023 and delivered in late 2024, this state-of-the-art vehicle—a Ram 5500 diesel with a robust 4x4 chassis—features cutting-edge technology designed to elevate our wildland firefighting capabilities.

This impressive new truck has a 400-gallon water tank and conveniently located pump controls inside the cab, enabling our crews to respond quickly

and efficiently during emergencies. Furthermore, its 360-degree scene lighting ensures that our personnel can operate safely and effectively, even in low-visibility conditions.

The new brush truck is housed at Station 34 on Lea Hill to be used for wildland fire deployments in our

[Article continued on page 2...](#)



SELFLESS SERVICE

INTEGRITY

GRIT

IN THIS ISSUE >>

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| Pg. 2 | EMS Spotlight | Pg. 3 | Wildfire Home Preparedness Checklist |
| Pg. 2 | Summer Safety Tips | Pg. 4 | The VRFA Gives Back |
| Pg. 3 | Fire Chief's Message | Pg. 4 | Where Do I Dispose of Items |
| Pg. 3 | New VRFA Team Members | Pg. 4 | Fire Station Construction Update |

EMS SPOTLIGHT CALLING 911

What is a medical emergency, and when should you call 911?

Determining when to call 911 can be challenging due to the diverse nature of emergencies and individual perceptions of urgency. In January 2025, VRFA handled nearly 38 medical calls daily, accounting for approximately 85% of all daily emergency calls. With approximately 100,000 community members in our service area, almost 1% utilize the 911 system monthly. Interestingly, most people only call 911 once or twice in their entire lives, making it difficult to decide when to reach out for help in times of need.

What if you aren't sure you should call 911?

If you find yourself in a situation where you are unsure whether to call 911, the immediate answer is yes—go ahead and call. If a situation feels severe enough for you to consider dialing 911, don't hesitate. Trained call operators can assess your circumstances and determine the best course of action. Firefighters, who are cross trained as emergency medical technicians, prefer to arrive early at the scene rather than wait until a situation escalates to a point where the consequences could be more severe.

We encourage residents to feel confident in calling 911 for emergencies. However, a minor injury or illness may not require an emergency response. If unsure, you can try your medical office's nurse line or an urgent care facility, if available. If that is not an option for you, call 911. If the call taker determines an emergency response is not the proper response for your situation, they may transfer you to a Nurse Triage Line, where a nurse will further evaluate your situation to determine the appropriate level of care, which could include self-treatment, transportation

to an alternative destination partner, mobile urgent care, or virtual care. If a nurse is unavailable, the call taker will dispatch first responders.

How can you prepare for emergency responders?

Having information related to your medical history, current medication, allergies, and the events leading up to your emergency readily available can significantly speed up the process and ensure you receive the best possible care once firefighter/EMTs arrive.

What can you expect after first responders arrive?

Typically, first responders will suggest that you be transported to a hospital after a 911 call. While firefighters train to evaluate the severity of emergencies and stabilize patients, they are not trained or equipped to make definitive diagnosis outside of a hospital setting. It's important to remember that hospitals have the equipment and expertise to diagnose and treat various medical conditions accurately. If you decline their recommendation to go to a hospital, it may limit their ability to assist you effectively.

What If you don't have an emergency but just need transportation to an appointment?

For help with transportation to a doctor's appointment, consider alternative options such as taxi services, asking family and friends for assistance, or utilizing the resources listed in this newsletter.

At the Valley Regional Fire Authority, our mission is to safeguard the community by delivering reliable emergency services and promoting preparedness. We proudly serve the Algona, Auburn, and Pacific residents and remain committed to ensuring that the 911 system is reserved for those in urgent need.

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

As summer arrives and many of us are eager to enjoy the warmer weather, we want to remind community members that fire and life safety are top priorities for the VRFA.

Grill Safety

- Position your grill away from your home, deck railings, and overhanging branches.
- Never leave your grill unattended while it's in use.
- Keep your grill clean by regularly removing any grease buildup.
- Always check the gas tank hose for leaks before using your gas grill.

Cigarette Safety

Carelessly discarded cigarettes, tossed from car windows or dropped on the sidewalk, start many fires each summer. This behavior can be especially dangerous during dry weather. Please dispose of cigarettes safely in ashtrays.

Fireworks Safety

- Follow local regulations and only discharge fireworks where permitted.

Algona
The discharge of all fireworks is illegal.

Auburn & Pacific
Discharge of legal fireworks is allowed only on July 4th, between 9 a.m. and 11 p.m.



- Never allow young children to handle fireworks and always supervise older children when they use them.
- Only use fireworks outdoors and away from people, houses, and flammable materials and light on a flat surface.
- Keep pets indoors during fireworks displays.
- Have a bucket of water or hose nearby to fully extinguish any fireworks that don't ignite or in case of a fire.
- Never try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks; instead, soak them in water and dispose of them safely.
- Never use fireworks if impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Hot Weather Safety

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, especially during outdoor activities.
- Take breaks in shaded or cool areas to avoid heat exhaustion or heatstroke.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothing to stay cool.

Water Safety

- Always supervise children when they are in or around water. Designate a responsible adult to watch over them.
- Ensure everyone knows how to swim well. Consider signing up for swimming lessons.
- Use life jackets for young children and inexperienced swimmers. Ensure that the jackets are Coast Guard-approved and properly fitted.
- Stick to swimming areas supervised by lifeguards. Never swim alone.
- Learn CPR and basic first aid. Keep a phone handy in case of emergencies.

Sun Safety

- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 every two hours and after swimming or sweating.
- Wear wide-brimmed hats, UV-protective sunglasses, and lightweight long-sleeved shirts and pants.

Following these guidelines can help ensure a safe and enjoyable summer for everyone.

RESOURCE GUIDE

Are you in need of transportation to a medical appointment but lack a ride?

There are various options available to help you get to your destination at little or no cost. Below, you will find a list of agencies that offer transportation services, each with its own specific guidelines. We encourage you to visit findaride.org/provider-list#/providers for a full list of ride options.

RIDE UNITED TRANSPORTATION ACCESS 2-1-1 | LYFT

"Just Show Up" Service: 2-1-1
Monday-Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES - VOLUNTEER SERVICES OF KING COUNTY

Prescheduled Service: (206) 328-5787
Sunday-Saturday with the flexibility of volunteer drivers, rides can be filled in the mornings, midday, evenings, and on weekends.

VA-VETERAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

Prescheduled Service: (206) 764-2120 or (206) 764-2810 [Evenings and Weekends]
Monday - Friday

SOUND GENERATIONS' VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Prescheduled Service: (206) 448-5740 or (800) 282-5815
Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

SOUND GENERATIONS' HYDE SHUTTLE PROGRAM

Prescheduled Service: (206) 727-6262
Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

KING COUNTY METRO COMMUNITY VAN - ALGONA-PACIFIC

Prescheduled Service: (253) 833-2742
Sunday - Saturday | Available 24/7 depending on volunteer driver availability
\$2.75 flat-rate, round-trip for adults

MUCKLESHOOT TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION

"Just Show Up" Service: (253) 876-3326
Monday - Friday: 7:00 am - 11:00 pm
Saturday - Sunday: 10:00 am - 6:30 pm

FREE for adults

HOPELINK MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

Prescheduled Service: (800) 923-7433 or TDD/TTY Line (800) 246-1646
Sunday - Saturday

Medicaid transportation:
Monday - Friday: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Urgent care transport: 24/7
Medicaid clients free for adults

NEW BRUSH TRUCK Article continued from cover story.

service area, state, and region as needed. Our previous brush truck has been designated as a reserve vehicle and is ready for deployment when required.

This strategic decision allows us to maintain a readily available brush truck in our service area throughout the wildfire season, reinforcing our commitment to community safety during critical times.

Before the new truck was put into service, crews completed specialized training to maximize its capabilities.

We take pride in enhancing our fleet and continually improving our response efforts as part of our dedication to protecting our community.

FIRE CHIEF’S MESSAGE



BRAD THOMPSON

Thank you for taking the time to stay informed about what’s happening at the Valley Regional Fire Authority. Our mission remains steadfast: to serve our community with safe, effective, and efficient public safety programs. As we move into the spring, I am excited to share some significant updates reflecting our progress and commitment to service.

In May, we will break ground on Fire Station 36, a milestone achievement for the VRFA and the communities we serve. This additional fire station will enhance response times and improve the distribution of emergency resources, ensuring that we continue to meet the growing needs of our residents. This project is possible because of your unwavering support and our staff’s dedication to following a clear strategic plan.

Wildland fire season is approaching, and while we cannot predict when or where fires may occur, we are fully prepared.

Speaking of planning for the future, we will also be updating our strategic plan this summer. This process allows us to evaluate where we are, identify opportunities for improvement, and ensure we remain aligned with the needs of those we serve. Our goal is to continue providing the highest level of emergency services while being responsible stewards of the resources you have entrusted to us.

Wildland fire season is approaching, and while we cannot predict when or where fires may occur, we are fully prepared. Our firefighters have dedicated extensive time to specialized training and equipping

themselves with the necessary tools to respond effectively. We are also actively engaged in regional efforts, such as the King County Wildland Fire Committee, to enhance preparedness and coordination. Additionally, we have placed our new brush truck into service, further strengthening our ability to respond to wildland fires.

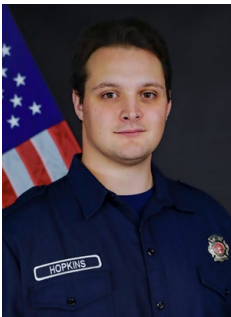
We encourage our community members to take proactive steps to protect their homes by reviewing our Wildfire Home Preparedness Checklist. This resource provides essential information on reducing fire risks and improving safety for your property and loved ones.

As always, the VRFA is committed to keeping our community safe and informed. Whether through our emergency response, prevention efforts, or public education, we strive to serve with excellence. Thank you for your continued trust and support.

Take care and be safe.

Brad Thompson
Fire Chief

THE VRFA WELCOMES SIX NEW MEMBERS TO THE TEAM



JOHN HOPKINS
FIREFIGHTER

Hopkins holds an Associate of Arts degree in Fire Science and has worked as a wildland contractor for four seasons. He also served as an EMT with a local ambulance company. In his free time, he enjoys fishing, hunting, skiing, and playing golf.



MAXWELL SHERROW
FIREFIGHTER

Sherrow holds a biology degree from the University of Utah. He worked in biotechnological research focusing on corneal endothelial cell therapy for treating corneal blindness. He enjoys motorcycle touring, photography, and camping in his free time.



TYLER FOLKES
FIREFIGHTER

Folkes studied Civil Engineering and played football at Montana Tech in Butte, Montana. He was a coach for Olympic weightlifting and enjoys skiing, cold plunges, campfires, and Harry Potter in his free time.



LINDSEY EDINGER
FIREFIGHTER

Before joining the VRFA, Edinger worked as a surgical technician at Seattle Children’s Hospital. She is originally from Mukilteo and attended college in Missoula, Montana, where she was a cheerleader and a competitive gymnast. In her free time, Edinger enjoys spending time with her spouse and their two dogs.



MICAH CARROLL
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Micah was born in Seattle and raised in West Tacoma. After dedicating five years to teaching preschool, she transitioned to a new career and has spent the past three years working as a Payroll Administrator at the Port of Seattle Fire Department. Outside of work, Micah cherishes family time, enjoys adventure, and has a strong passion for cooking and baking.

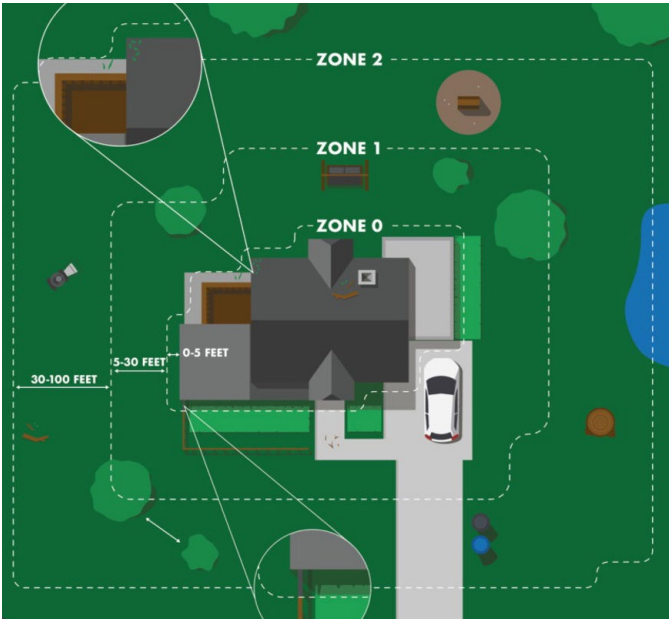


CARLY PALMER
PROJECT MANAGER

Carly was born and raised in Washington and has 15 years of experience in the construction industry, including five years with a heavy civil subcontractor and ten years with general contractors. She will oversee the construction of Station 36 and the relocation and construction of Stations 31 and 38, as well as improvements to our training, maintenance, and logistics spaces. Outside of work, Carly enjoys hiking, biking, and riding quads.

WILDFIRE HOME PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AROUND YOUR HOME



- Zone 0** Extends 0- 5 feet from your home, focusing on intense fuel reduction to protect against ember attacks.
- Zones 1 and 2** These zones cover up to 100 feet around your home and involve varying levels of vegetation management.
- Roof and Gutters**
 - Remove leaves, pine needles, and debris from your roof and gutters.
- Vents**
 - Cover attic and soffit vents with metal mesh to prevent embers from entering.
- Windows**
 - Install double-pane or tempered glass windows for extra protection.
- Yard Maintenance**
 - Regularly mow the lawn and remove dead plants and trees.
 - Store firewood at least 30 feet away from the house.

- Home Exterior**
 - Use fire-resistant building materials for your roof, siding, and decks.
 - Seal any gaps or cracks in exterior walls.
- Water Supply**
 - Have an accessible water supply, such as a garden hose, for fire emergencies.
- Emergency Go Kit**
 - Prepare a kit with essentials: water, non-perishable food, first-aid supplies, medications, and important documents.
 - Include masks to filter out smoke particles.
- Emergency Evacuation Plan**
 - Develop and practice an evacuation plan with all family members.
 - Identify multiple evacuation routes from your home.
- Communication Plan**
 - Establish an emergency communication plan with family and neighbors.

THE VRFA GIVES BACK

Toys for Kids

The VRFA and the Valley Professional Firefighters Union [Local 1352] are dedicated to serving our community beyond just responding to 911 calls. Our commitment to meeting the community's needs is always our top priority.

This past holiday season, we proudly continued the Toys for Kids program tradition, initially launched by the legacy Auburn Fire Department in 1986. In partnership with the Auburn Food Bank, we provided gifts to 781 children in our community. The generous donations came from community members who dropped off gifts at our fire stations and local businesses. Off-duty firefighters collected a significant portion of the toys during fundraising efforts outside our local Fred Meyer store. The support we received from the community was truly inspiring.

On behalf of Local 1352 Valley Professional Firefighters and the VRFA administration, we sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of this event. We would also like to acknowledge the businesses that generously supported our cause, including:

Hops n Drops	Dave and Busters
Fred Meyer	Pretty Pets
Haggen	Tiki Tails
CK Worldwide	Bright Beginnings Day Care
Seoul Trading	Glacier Northwest



If you or someone you know needs assistance during the holidays next year, please contact the Auburn Food Bank at [253] 833-8925. Thank you for your continued support in bringing joy to our community!

WHERE DO I DISPOSE OF MY OLD SMOKE ALARM, FIRE EXTINGUISHER, FIREWORKS AND OTHER ITEMS?

We often receive questions about how to dispose of household items such as smoke alarms, old fireworks, and fire extinguishers. To help with this, we have created a list of the most common items we get asked about and provided guidance on their proper disposal.

Disposal Guidelines

- Smoke Alarms:** Photoelectric smoke alarms can be disposed of in regular household waste after removing the batteries. Ionization alarms, which contain a small amount of radiation, may not be accepted in some waste streams. Some manufacturers offer recycling programs.
- Carbon Monoxide Alarms:** These can be disposed of in regular household waste after removing the batteries.
- Fire Extinguishers:** Full or partially full extinguishers are accepted at hazardous waste

collection sites. Empty extinguishers can go in the garbage, but are not recyclable.

- Ammo/Fireworks:** The VRFA accepts certain consumer fireworks and small arms ammunition for disposal. Items not accepted include explosives, sparkler or pipe bombs, IEDs, blasting caps, and military ammo. Call 253-288-5800 to arrange drop-off.
- Flares:** Take marine or road flares to any King County Hazardous Waste Collection site.
- Medications:** Dispose of expired or unwanted medicines through a drug take-back program with over 100 drop-box locations in King County.



< To find one near you, scan the QR code

FIRE STATION CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction on the first of VRFA's new fire stations, Station 36, is set to begin in May. When complete, Station 36, on 30th Street Northeast between Auburn Way North and I Street Northeast, will house one fire engine and three firefighters. With a 12-month build schedule, we anticipate opening the station in June 2026. Meanwhile, design work for Station 38 at its new location on Ellingson and for a new Station 31 at its current location continues. We expect to break ground for both projects in the first half of 2026.

Please follow our progress at www.vrfa.org.



CALIFORNIA FIRE DEPLOYMENT

Article continued from cover story.

flames. "Our firefighters worked tirelessly to create defensible space, extinguish spot fires, and reinforce fire lines to prevent further spread," he noted.

This deployment underscores the vital role of interagency cooperation and the importance of preparedness in firefighting. While VRFA's primary

mission remains to serve and protect our local community, we take pride in extending our resources and expertise to larger-scale incidents where we can make a real difference. These experiences assist those in immediate danger and enhance our department's readiness to tackle large-scale emergencies back at home.



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

Members

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

Follow us on Nextdoor, Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, & YouTube



VRFA HEADQUARTERS

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1101 D Street NE, Auburn, WA 98002
253-288-5800
Business Hours 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
www.vrfa.org



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