



# Fireline

Dedicated to the Community We Serve

A Publication of King County Fire Protection District #40

Summer 2012

## Fireline Chatter

### Get Ready to Grill

It's summer and that means warm weather and backyard barbecues. Before you fire up the grill, it is important to carefully clean it and check for any damaged parts.

Everyone is reminded that propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.



To help prevent fires, keep grills away from structures and deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches. Barbeque grills get very hot; keep children and pets out of the grill area for their safety.

To properly dispose of charcoal ash, thoroughly douse the ashes with water or place the ashes in a non-combustible metal container. Do not dispose of ashes in a paper, plastic, or cardboard container.

Follow these tips to keep your family safe from grilling accidents or injuries.

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## A Note From The Chief

Dear Citizens of King County Fire District 40, since March 1, 2008, the City of Renton has contracted with the fire district to provide fire and emergency services.

As a part of the contract, fire district employees were hired by the city to ensure job security and continue to provide the high level of service to which you have become accustomed.

The contract also provides a higher level of service by accessing a larger pool of resources. The benefits include:

- Improved training through a state-of-the-art training facility at Fire Station 14.
- Efficiencies gained through economies of scale.
- Access to a larger base of fire and emergency medical resources.

During 2011, Renton Fire & Emergency Services (RF&ES) continued to provide the community with significant emergency response and training services.

Call volumes remained consistent with the previous year while firefighter/EMT competencies grew with continued training in not only emergency medical and fire suppression services but also specialized services such as technical and water rescue and hazardous material response.



We were fortunate to receive a federal grant that allowed us to hire nine firefighters. Response times to emergency incidents improved with the additional hires strategically placed in our busier stations.

2012 promises to be a year of continued growth for RF&ES in terms of training and increased efficiencies as we strive to complete 2012 work plan goals and objectives. I am committed to fostering and continuing to develop new relationships with our diverse communities. I also look forward to working collaboratively to ensure our citizens get the best service we can provide.

I would like to thank the citizens of Fire District 40 who time and again have demonstrated their support for their fire department and all public servants.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the fire commissioners and the men and women of Renton Fire & Emergency Services for their dedicated service that allowed us to achieve many of our goals throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Chief Mark Peterson  
Fire District 40/Renton Fire Dept.  
Emergency Services Administrator



Fire District 40 Commissioners are elected officials who represent the concerns and interests of you, the citizens of the community.

The Commissioners oversee finances, equipment, capital improvements, and general fire department operations.

The Commissioners meet at 5 p.m. on the second and last Thursday of each month at Station 13 located at 18002 108th Ave SE.

The Commissioners are always interested in what you have to say, so please feel free to attend the meetings to learn more about what is going on in your fire department. There is an opportunity at the end of the meeting to ask questions or share your ideas and concerns. If you are unable to attend, feel free to e-mail or write to us.

**Fire District 40**  
**18002 108 Ave SE**  
**Renton, WA 98055**  
**(425) 255-0931**  
**kcf40@hotmail.com**  
**Visit fd40.com for more information.**

# A Brief History of Fire District 40

From The Fire District of King County by Harold "Jiggs" Hoyt

In 1906, John and Elmer Benson made a \$10 down payment for some acreage on the hill south of the city of Renton. Access to the property was by way of a trail until 1912, when the County Commissioners had the route surveyed. In 1916, a dirt road was constructed to the top of the Spring Glen Hill and named Benson Road. It was passable only during the dry months, and in 1917 the road was covered with gravel by the county and extended past the top of the hill to where Petrovitsky Road is today.

Slowly, the community of Benson Hill developed into a nine-square mile area with scattered chicken houses and small family ranches. More and more people were attracted to this picturesque, rural area. There were a few fires here and there, but really no way to put them out unless one had a garden hose, or a bucket and fire barrel. After a fire in the winter of 1947, some concerned citizens gathered in the Spring Glen Community Center to discuss the matter of fire protection. A committee was formed to obtain information on starting a fire district. Petitions were signed and presented to the County Commissioners on July 24, 1948.

In April of 1949, an election was held and citizens in the area voted 126 for and 10 against the formation of King County Fire District 40. The committee had also placed a bond issue on the ballot to raise funds for a fire station and all the needed equipment, including a fire engine. That measure was also approved and the District became a reality. All the locals called it the Spring Glen Fire Department.

An order was placed with the Howard-Cooper Company and in 1952 the District took delivery of a 1951 Ford F-8 500-gallon tanker fully loaded with firefighting gear. It was dubbed Engine #2; no one has been able to explain why it was not called Engine #1. The fire station, consisting of a four-foot-tall cinder block foundation with a Quonset hut perched on top, was still being constructed at the time. It was built on a large lot at the corner of Petrovitsky Road (SE 176th Street) and what is now called the Benson Highway (or 108th Avenue SE).



In the beginning, 28 volunteer firemen were signed up and about the only one with any real firefighting experience was a man by the name of Elwin Wilkinson. Elwin became the District's first Fire Chief in 1952.

A group vital to the all-volunteer department was formed by the wives of the firefighters. Nicknamed the Firebelles, they were always on the scene with coffee and doughnuts on cold nights and lemonade on the hot days. In addition to their support activities on the fireground, they held bake sales, dances and other fundraising events. The early members managed to make enough money to furnish the station with cupboards, a refrigerator and a range.

# Meet Your Fire District 40 Commissioners



**Linda Sartnurak** — Fire Commissioner  
 Position No. 1/Chair  
**Committees/Workgroups:**  
 Capital Facilities; Finance  
**Years Served as Commissioner:** One year  
**Current Term:** 2011 - 2017

**Personal Information:** I have been a resident of Fairwood Greens for more than 30 years, and I enjoy being involved in local community affairs. I graduated with a B.S. degree in Business Administration and currently work for Proctor & Gamble in the food safety division. I also have been an airline pilot for TWA and American Airlines for 15 years.



**Charlotte Ryan** — Fire Commissioner  
 Position No. 2  
**Committees/Workgroups:**  
 Finance; Special Projects  
**Years Served as Commissioner:**  
 Five years  
**Current Term:** Term ends Dec. 31, 2013

**Personal Information:** While I have been a fire commissioner at KCFD 40 for the past five years, I have been in the fire service for over 20 years as both administrative assistant and secretary to the board at North Highline Fire District (KCFD 11). I originally went to North Highline Fire District in 1990 as a temporary “Kelly” employee, but became a permanent staff member when I realized that the fire service is actually my extended family. And thanks to my extended family’s encouragement, I went back to college where I earned a degree in Fire Service Administration and Management. I have lived in Fairwood Greens since 1987—this is my home. I am honored to live in this community and proud to serve my neighbors as a KCFD 40 fire commissioner.



**Michael R. Warfel** — Fire Commissioner  
 Position No. 3  
**Committees/Workgroups:** Capital Facilities; Special Projects  
**Years Served as Commissioner:** Four years  
**Current Term:** 2010-2015

**Personal Information:** I have been a Fairwood resident since 1989. I am a licensed hydrogeologist in the State of Washington working for private consulting firms, specializing in cleanup of soil and groundwater contamination. I am a licensed amateur radio operator, a CERT trained City of Renton emergency worker volunteer, and I assist with Renton Emergency Communications.



**Steve Parsons** — Fire Commissioner  
 Position No. 4/ Vice Chair  
**Committees/Workgroups:** Equipment; Community Relations  
**Years Served as Commissioner:** One year with Fire District 40; nine years with Fire District 38  
**Current Term:** Appointed May 2011;

elected 2012 for an unexpired term.

**Personal Information:** I was born and raised in the North Bend area where I started my career as a fire fighter in 1980, fighting forest fires for the DNR for six summers while attending college. I graduated from Central Washington with a B.S. in Construction Management. I then moved to the Parkland area and volunteered for two years as a firefighter, until I was hired by the Kent Fire Department in 1988. I then moved back to North Bend. In 2001 I was elected as a Fire Commissioner for Fire District 38 (North Bend area) where I served for just over nine years. I then had the fortunate opportunity to move to the Fairwood area in early 2011. In May of last year I was appointed to fill a vacant position with King County Fire District 40. During the summer months I volunteer with the USFS as a wilderness ranger out of the North Bend Ranger District. I enjoy hiking, camping, and spending time with friends and family.



**Ronnie Little** — Fire Commissioner  
 Position No. 5  
**Committees/Work Groups:** Equipment; Community Relations  
**Years served as Commissioner:**  
 Nine years  
**Current Term:** 2010-2015

**Personal Information:** I have lived in the area for 30 years and have been involved in the community in many ways. Currently, I serve as president of the King County Fire Commissioner Association, and Legislative representative for the Washington State Fire Commissioners Association. As my children were growing up I volunteered as team mom for CVAC baseball, Cascade Soccer Association and vice president for the PTA. In 2001, I was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Renton Technical College for 10 years. I have worked at The Boeing Company for 32 years as an inspector in Auburn. Serving the community as a Commissioner has been one of the most wonderful things I have been involved with. I appreciate knowing that during any emergency our fire district is served by the best trained and equipped fire department in the area.

# Fire District #40 Benefit Charge Information

Historically, fire protection districts in Washington have received almost all their funding through property taxes. Fire districts are “Junior” taxing districts and are allowed by law to receive property taxes at a maximum rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of the assessed valuation of real property within their boundaries.

In some instances much of the potential to levy taxes may be taken away by other taxing districts such as hospitals and roads that have priority over the available tax amount. This system seemed to work fairly well until fire districts were placed in the position of meeting the more urban needs of their citizens, as opposed to the exclusively rural operations that prevailed when the tax laws were originally written.

In recognition of the need for fire districts to have a more flexible and secure method of funding, the Washington State Legislature, under RCW 52.18.030, allows fire districts to use what is termed a “Benefit Charge” method of funding. However, the use of this funding method must be voter approved and is limited in duration for a maximum of six years, although it can be re-authorized.

There are a number of important things about this method of funding:

- A district using the benefit charge method of funding is limited to a maximum of \$1.00/\$1,000 in property taxes (a \$.50/\$1,000 reduction).
- The funds received from a benefit charge cannot exceed 60% of a district’s total operational budget.
- A benefit charge must be fairly apportioned in the district.
- A public hearing must be held annually establishing the following year’s benefit charge.
- All property owners in the district must be advised of the benefit charge and given the right to appeal the amount of their charge.

The voters of Fire District 40 authorized the use of the benefit charge in an election held in 1990. The citizens re-authorized the use of the benefit charge in 1995, 2001 and 2007 (good through 2013).

Although State law allows the benefit charge to be up to 60% of the fire district’s operational budget, the chart (above right) shows that the district’s Board of Fire Commissioners has stayed well below that amount, with an average for the past ten (10) years of 36.5 percent.

Year	Benefit Charge Amount	Percent of Operational Budget
1997	1,313,672	43.80%
1998	1,652,604	51.80%
1999	1,442,604	44.70%
2000	1,442,604	42.40%
2001	1,442,604	39.60%
2002	1,648,109	41.90%
2003	2,114,393	51.80%
2004	1,955,554	43.40%
2005	2,254,111	43.80%
2006	2,585,885	46.20%
2007	2,379,618	39.50%
2008	2,630,340	41.40%
2009	1,234,764	24.60%
2010	1,499,324	33.40%
2011	1,929,222	40.90%
2012	1,292,222	42.00%

One of the features of the benefit charge method of funding, not available when solely using property taxes, is the ability of the local district to reduce the amount of the benefit charge (credit) to property owners for having specific fire systems in place. Property owners in Fire District 40 can reduce their benefit charge amount by having either monitored fire sprinkler and/or smoke detector systems. Additionally, senior citizen’s reductions that apply to property taxes also apply to the benefit charge.

The Board of Fire Commissioners has supported the use of the benefit charge to allow the fire district to seek stable and reliable funding at the local level. As statewide taxing laws seem to change yearly, the fire district is more readily able to predictably meet the needs of the citizens. The ability to respond quickly to the loss of revenues (as demonstrated in the 1998 failed EMS levy) is one of the positive factors in this funding method. Another attribute is that the benefit charge is locally controlled and set to meet local needs.

Should you have any specific questions, please call Fire District 40 at (425) 255-0931 to arrange for someone to contact you.

# Benefit Charge Questions & Answers

## 1. What is the benefit charge?

The 1987 Washington State Legislature passed RCW 52.18.030. This statute provides that fire districts, with the approval of the voters in the district, are authorized to collect a benefit charge from residential and business property owners.

The law provides that the benefit charge shall be reasonably proportioned to the benefits received by the property resulting from the services provided by the fire district. This is referred to as a “benefit charge.”

The benefit charge is not a per call charge and is not based on property value. The benefit charge is a fee which is based on the benefit of having fire protection. The county assessor’s office sends the county treasurer’s office the data on properties, which is then collected by the county treasurer’s office along with the property tax bill.

## 2. How will a benefit charge provide a better source of funding for the Fire District?

The benefit charge is a fairer way of funding the district’s fire service. Property taxes only take into consideration the value of the property and not the benefits provided by the fire district. These benefits include lower fire insurance costs which are passed on to the homeowner. By using a benefit charge, costs will be more fairly distributed.

## 3. Who establishes the benefit charge and what does it cover?

RCW 52.18.030 provides that the Board of the Fire Commissioners may fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property. The benefit charge does not apply to land. The benefit charge would cover such property as residential buildings, commercial structures, agricultural buildings, and other structures affixed to the land.

The statute also provides for certain exemptions, which include:

- A. Personal property not used in business.
- B. Property that is the subject of a contract for services with the district, including publicly owned buildings.
- C. Any property used for religious purposes by a recognized religious organization, including educational facilities.
- D. Property that maintains its own fire department.

## 4. How much revenue will be available from the benefit charge?

The statute states that the total amount that can be raised by a benefit charge cannot exceed 60% of the operating budget. If a fire district enacts a benefit charge it must reduce its maximum regular property tax levy from \$1.50 to \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

## 5. How will a benefit charge help the average homeowner?

It provides a continued level of dependable fire service by maintaining well equipped firefighters; and because homeowners have a regular voice in the benefit charge, they will have greater control over the cost of their fire service.

## 6. How long is the benefit charge good for?

The benefit charge law provides for annual public hearings and must be put to the voters for renewal every six years. Current authorization extends through 2013.

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## Crews To Inspect Hydrants

This summer residents of Fire District 40 will see fire engines in neighborhoods inspecting fire hydrants. The purpose of these inspections is to be certain the hydrants are unobstructed, functioning properly, have clear visibility from the street, and water is available for fire suppression efforts.



If you have a fire hydrant in your yard please assist fire fighters by ensuring the following:

- Maintain a three foot clearance of all obstructions around the perimeter of any hydrant.
- Maintain an unobstructed view free from any structure or vegetation so as to be visible for a distance of 50 feet in the direction of vehicular approach to the hydrant.

# Texting & Driving Can Be Deadly Combination

Texting and driving is a deadly combination. Drivers are 23 times more likely to be in a crash if texting while driving. The distraction caused by mobile phone use while driving impacts a driver's reactions equivalent to driving under the influence.

A recent university study found "using a cell phone while driving – whether it's handheld or hands-free – delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.08, the legal limit for drivers 21 and over in all states."

Another study found that four out of every five accidents (80%) are attributed to distracted drivers. In contrast, drunk drivers account for roughly one out of three (33%) of all accidents nationally.

Mobile phone use while driving kills thousands each year. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates eight people die every day on U.S. highways. The message of the statistics is clear, Don't use a mobile phone while driving – don't text and drive.



## American Teens & Distracted Driving

- 75% of all American teens ages 12-17 own a cell phone, and 66% use their phones to send or receive text messages.
- Older teens are more likely than younger teens to have their cell phones and use text messaging; 82% of teens aged 16-17 have a cell phone and 76% of that group are texters.
- One in three (34%) texting teens ages 16-17 say they have texted while driving. That translates into 26% of all American teens ages 16-17.
- Half (52%) of cell-owning teens ages 16-17 say they have talked on a cell phone while driving. That translates into 43% of all American teens ages 16-17.
- 48% of all teens ages 12-17 say they have been in a car when the driver was texting.
- 40% say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger.

# Warm Weather Brings Increased Danger for Children

When the weather is warm it can be tempting to open windows for increased ventilation and air circulation. Accidents where children have fallen from open windows are a reminder that windows can create a dangerous situation for children.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), thousands of young children are killed or injured from falling out of windows every year. With warmer summer weather the number of children falling from windows increases dramatically. Most of these deaths and injuries occur among children who are younger than five years of age.

Window falls are not just a problem for residents of high-rise buildings. Falling from a first floor window can harm a very young child. Fortunately, most window falls can be prevented by taking the appropriate safety measures in homes where small children live or visit.

## To keep your children safe, follow these tips:

- Never depend on screens to keep children from falling out of windows.
- Install window guards or window stops. Window stops prevent windows from opening more than four inches while window guards are specially designed coverings for windows to prevent falls.
- For windows on the 6th floor and below, install window guards that adults and older children can open easily in case of fire.
- For windows on the 7th floor and above, permanent window guards can be installed.
- Whenever possible, open windows from the top, not the bottom.
- Keep furniture away from windows to discourage children from climbing near windows.
- Properly supervise children.

# Brush 17 Enters Service: A New Fire Fighting Truck

For many years King County Fire District 40 utilized an old military surplus truck (photo below) on loan from the State Department of Natural Resources equipped with wild land fire fighting tools to help fight brush fires throughout the district. In its first years of service the truck saw more action than anyone expected.



One incident was a rather large fire behind Lake Desire where the terrain was rough and steep, with significant changes in elevation. Fighting wild-land fires with standard firefighting equipment

is difficult and often ineffective, and the truck proved to be an invaluable resource in fighting the fire.

Fire District 40 Commissioners soon realized there really is quite an urban interface aspect to the district, and it would be in the community's best interest to upgrade the truck. Commissioners explored several options but quickly came to the conclusion that new equipment was cost-prohibitive and used equipment was also extremely expensive.

A rather ingenious plan was formed to convert an existing Ford F550 that the city owned into a "Swiss Army Knife" vehicle with multiple functions. This provided a win-win for both the city and the district. By using existing equipment and having the pump system custom built to the specifications of the truck, the savings to the city and the district were significant.

The new "slide in" equipment package was delivered to Fire District 40 in November 2011 and, after some minor modifications and a few finishing touches, went into service in early 2012 as "Brush 17."

Brush 17 is equipped with 250-gallon water tank, an 18-horsepower pump (the previous truck had a 6.5-horsepower pump), it's own foam injection system, a 200-foot hose reel, 600 feet of 1-inch hose, 300 feet of 1.5-inch hose, and a forest service type 6 engine.

Brush 17 has the ability to draft out of any water source, has a low center of gravity that is ideal in rough terrain and high elevation situations, and has a smaller footprint than standard equipment while maintaining a very significant firefighting capability.



Brush 17 significantly increases the wild-land and brushfire fighting capabilities of the City of Renton and Fire District 40 during the high-risk seasons. When the equipment is not needed, it can be removed from the truck and moved in and out of any fire station with its own lift system, making it portable and storable. The truck then serves other purposes such as assisting the city's dive team and towing the city's 4 wheel drive all terrain vehicle.

Brush 17 represents a true symbiotic relationship between the City of Renton and Fire District 40, displaying the forethought of the leadership of both entities and their desire to do what's best for Fire District 40 and Renton.

## Free Monthly CPR Classes

Fire District 40 offers monthly free "Friends and Family" CPR classes at Station 13 (18002 108th Ave SE). The classes are held every third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Pre-registration is required, call 425-430-7104.



Instruction includes CPR for adults, children, and infants. No first aid will be taught at this time, but an introduction to Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) awareness will be offered. Each class will last approximately two hours, with a minimum of eight students and no more than 25 students. Children under the age of 12 should not attend.

A card of completion will be issued at the end of the class. Please note that this class is not designed for healthcare providers.



King County Fire Protection District #40  
18002 108th Ave SE  
Renton, WA 98055

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# Prevent Tragedies On The Water This Summer

Swimming, boating and other forms of water recreation are popular pastimes in this area and throughout Washington. In some circumstances, these activities can prove to be dangerous or fatal.

Even on the hottest summer days, Washington waters are cold enough to cause hypothermia and weaken even the strongest swimmer. It is important for everyone to know their limits. Drowning often happens when someone tires while swimming. Water that is warm on the surface may be much colder below. Rivers may not be moving as fast as they did in the spring; however, log jams can trap swimmers and large rocks or logs can tip over rafts, canoes and kayaks.

“Drowning is a tragedy that often can be prevented,” says Mark Peterson, Renton Fire Chief/Emergency Services Administrator. “It can be as simple as putting on a life jacket, keeping a closer eye on children when they are in or near the water and learning how to perform cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).”

If a person isn't a strong swimmer they should always wear a life jacket around any body of water and on boats. Be sure it fits properly and is fastened correctly. State law says all children 12 and under must wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket or vest on all vessels 19 feet and under.

## **To keep yourself and others safe remember:**

- Learn to swim and other water safety survival skills.
- Always swim with others.
- Obey all safety signs, warning flags and adhere to the rules in public swimming pools and beaches.
- Never go in the water after drinking alcohol.
- Wear a Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- Swim in areas with lifeguards.
- Always enter shallow and unknown water feet first.
- Learn CPR and how to recognize and treat hypothermia.
- Artificial/personal floatation devices are not a substitute for adult supervision of children.

For more information visit [rentonwa.gov](http://rentonwa.gov).

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