



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION



## FDCARES — Helping the Most Vulnerable in Our Community

It might surprise you to know that approximately 10% of the 9-1-1 calls we respond to are low acuity. A low acuity call is simply one that is important, but not truly an emergency. They typically are calls from patients who need our help to solve a problem they cannot solve on their own. An example of this is a patient who falls down and does not sustain any serious injuries, but needs our help to get back up. In 2019, this type of call accounted for nearly 2,400 calls for service.

In the past, we would send an aid unit or a fire engine, staffed by EMT certified firefighters, to assist the patient with their immediate need and be on our way. But what we began to realize is that it did not solve the root cause of the patient's problem, and as a result, they would typically utilize the 9-1-1 system repeatedly for the same non-emergent issue over time. This is concerning not only for the ongoing health and well-being of our patients, but also for our community, as responding to these calls tied up valuable resources that could be allocated to true, critical emergencies.

Recognizing this gap in service, we set out to find a way to provide a better level of care to those

patients with ongoing needs, while keeping our traditional staff and apparatus available for more severe emergency calls.

In 2019, we partnered with Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority to adopt the FDCARES Program. FDCARES stands for Fire Department Community Assistance Resources Education Services. It is a program designed to help vulnerable community members get connected to the social resources and healthcare they need, so that they can live a safer, healthier life without reliance on the 9-1-1 system.

Our FDCARES program is currently run out of fire station 14. There are several things that make this program a unique part of our core services. For starters, it is staffed not only by an EMT certified firefighter; it is also staffed by a registered nurse. This combination allows us to best aid our patients and enables us to provide a deeper level of healthcare services than our firefighters alone typically provide. It is also supported by a specialized apparatus. This vehicle is smaller and more lightweight than an aid unit, making it very efficient to run and is stocked full of all the specialized equipment typically needed when responding to low acuity calls (for example, lift



## Farewell to Fire Chief Rick Marshall

After 36 years of dedicated service to the Renton community, Fire Chief Rick Marshall has retired.

Chief Marshall joined Renton RFA in February 1984 as an aspiring career firefighter in his early 20s. Over the years, Rick won the admiration of the community and the respect of his peers through hard work, dedication, and commitment to Renton.

His success as fire chief did not happen overnight. Rick climbed the ranks of the fire service over three decades, working on every crew type and ascending every rank. He was instrumental in the development of Renton RFA's water rescue team and went on to run the program for many years.

In 2015, he was charged with leading a team to develop and propose the fire benefit charge, which was later voted on by the Renton community and ultimately led to the creation of Renton RFA as we know it today.

After accepting the position of Fire Chief in 2016, Rick went on to expand services throughout the community, which improved the overall Fire Protection Class rating throughout Renton. The imprint he has left on our community is undeniable, and we wish him well in his next chapter.





equipment, safety rails or handles, and more).

In addition to having a great team, apparatus, and tools, this program is unique in that it allows our staff to put patients in contact with a social worker and schedule follow-up visits to help them be successful. By providing a deeper level of initial care and supplying patients with the tools they need to live safer and healthier lives, as well as connecting them with a social worker who can help them gain access to the programs and healthcare needed to address the root cause for their emergency calls, we can help ensure

long-term success for the patient while relieving their reliance on the 9-1-1 system.

One of the best aspects of this program is that it is proactive. Not only can the FDCARES team be dispatched to callers in need, but they work in a system designed to track and report repeat, low-acuity call behavior, giving them the opportunity to work on a proactive basis with community members who show potential to be frequent utilizers of the 9-1-1 system. This type of forthright intervention puts patients on the right path early, giving them a better quality of

life, while saving fire and life safety resources for others in need throughout the community.

The launch of the FDCARES program in 2019 proved to be extremely timely. While we could not have predicted that the world would be rocked by a global pandemic in 2020, our organization was more prepared than ever with the addition of this team and the strength that it brings to our core services. Having already experienced successful outcomes in just the first year, we are extremely excited about the future of this program and its continued benefit to those most vulnerable in the Renton community.

### FDCARES SUCCESS IN ACTION

*After the passing of his late wife, patient "John Smith" was struggling to maintain his independence at home and maintain his dialysis treatments due to increasing functional decline. Neighbors would often see John on the ground outside his home and call 9-1-1. This resulted in 32 emergency service calls in just 14 months.*

*The FDCARES team was dispatched to work with John in September 2019. Over the next six months, they worked alongside social workers and John's family to help him get meaningful support, including the tools necessary to be safer in his own home, caregiver services, and physical and occupational therapy.*

*In March 2020, after taking a serious fall, John was admitted to the hospital. The FDCARES team was there for John and worked with his family and hospital team to make sure he could be safely discharged to an adult family home, where he could receive the highest level of ongoing support. Since moving in, he has had no further 9-1-1 calls or emergency room admissions.*



## Holiday Safety Tips for Your Home

Ensuring our community has a safe holiday season is at the top of our wish list. Winter accounts for the highest occurrence of residential fires in Renton, but most fires and injuries are preventable by taking precautions. Here are some helpful tips to keep you and your loved ones safe this season.

The holidays are a time for celebration, and that means more cooking! Cooking fires remain the leading cause of home fires and fire injuries. The most common is when the cook becomes distracted and leaves the kitchen. In order to drastically reduce your risk of a cooking fire, follow this recipe for safety:

- Stay in the kitchen while cooking.
- Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves.
- Keep the area around the stove clear of towels, papers, potholders, or anything that can burn.
- Cook at indicated temperature settings, rather than higher settings.
- Keep a pot lid handy to smother a pan fire.

If you do experience a pan fire, remember — do NOT attempt to pick up the pot or pan. **NEVER USE WATER to douse the fire!** It will cause splashing and spread the fire. Shut off the heat and cover the fire with a lid.

During the months of December, January, and February, home heating equipment (central heating units, portable and fixed space heaters, and fireplaces) is the second leading cause of home fires. This is typically due to poorly maintained systems, placing space heaters too close to combustible items, and flaws in installation of the heating units.

**Candle fires have tripled in the past 10 years.** In fact, candle fires peak on Christmas day, followed by New Year's, and Christmas Eve. If you burn candles for decorative or ritual purposes, make your home safer by:

- Using a sturdy candle holder.

- Placing candles at least four feet away from curtains, decorations, and bedding.
- Placing candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Never leaving burning candles unattended.
- Always extinguishing your candles before going to bed.

Holiday trees are enjoyed in many homes throughout the winter season. However, both real and artificial trees pose a risk of fire. Defective lighting, including electrical cords and plugs, causes almost half of all holiday tree fires. Protect your family with the following fire prevention tips:

- When choosing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant. When choosing a real tree, select the freshest tree available. Place the tree away (at least three feet) from heat sources.
- Try to position the tree near an electrical outlet to minimize use of extension cords.
- Unplug the tree lights when out of the room and before going to sleep.
- Even if you keep your tree properly watered, it will naturally start to dry out. Discard the tree immediately after the holiday.

This last one rings true year-round, but especially during the holidays...

A smoke alarm is the **single most valuable device you can have in your home**. An operable smoke alarm reduces your chances of dying in a fire by half. HALF!! Such an easy and necessary addition to your home to keep your family safe during the holidays and all year long. Enjoy a safe and happy winter!





## Renton RFA COVID-19 Response and Free Testing Facility Participation

COVID-19 took the entire world by surprise. No one could have anticipated the devastating virus and its toll on the community. But, while we weren't expecting it, we were prepared.

When COVID-19 hit earlier this year, our team jumped into action to define clear procedures for the safety of our firefighters and our community members. Renton RFA Lieutenant Chris Gerke, who serves as a Haz-Mat technician, was a huge help in keeping our team and patients safe by guiding our firefighters through personal protective equipment (PPE) procedures and helping to define and train our team in equipment and apparatus decontamination procedures. He also kept our teams up-to-date on the latest developments as our knowledge of the virus evolved. He was recognized by the Seattle Seahawks for his stellar contributions that helped positively impact our community

during this difficult time.

Thanks to the support of our community, and the hard work of our IT team, we were able to give our day staff the flexibility to work efficiently from home. This ensured less contact between staff members, keeping our firefighters and our day staff safe, while allowing our organization to continue to run full steam ahead.

We have been fortunate all year to work alongside several generous organizations to help distribute masks to those in need throughout the community. Over the summer, our partners in public service — the City of Renton — invited us to join them at the Renton Community Center, where we were able to help distribute

20,000 masks to community members.

While PPE was in short supply around the world, our Support Service division ensured we were well prepared. We did not suffer from the same shortages as other healthcare organizations during this trying time. Still, so many of our community members reached out to us offering donations of PPE to keep our firefighters safe on the front lines. For that, we just want to thank you so much for your concern and generosity. All of those offers were directed to organizations and agencies with a greater need than our own.

Most recently, our organization has dedicated firefighters to help with local COVID-19 testing facilities. We have partnered with King County, UW Medicine, and numerous local fire and life safety agencies to expand convenient, free testing to everyone in our community. Our organization recognizes that access to early testing is key to stopping the spread of the virus and keeping our community safe and healthy.

You can find more information about free testing sites throughout King County at:

[www.rentonrfa.com/covidtest](http://www.rentonrfa.com/covidtest)

We are committed to keeping our community safe, healthy, and strong. Our resolve in the wake of this pandemic is unwavering. We are here for the Renton community, and we are all in this together.



## Community Heroes Receive Minutes Matter Award

In our line of work, every minute matters. That is why we have a special award dedicated to recognizing individuals outside of our organization who go above and beyond to help us in our mission to keep the Renton community safer, healthier, and stronger. The following community members received our coveted Minutes Matter award for their heroic acts in the face of adversity.



**Mark Predki** received the Minutes Matter award for his quick and decisive action during a residential fire at his home in June. A fire broke out in the garage and went undetected for several minutes. Mark and his mother Margaret noticed smoke coming from the heating vents and began to evacuate the home while calling 9-1-1. Mark went to grab the fire extinguisher from the garage — locating the source of the smoke. Without a second thought, he extinguished the blaze and helped ensure the fire did not spread to the remainder of the home or neighboring structures. Mark was nominated for this award by Renton RFA Firefighter Sowards, who was impressed with his heroic action.

**Ray Thompson** received the Minutes Matter award for his leadership at Renton Rehab Center during the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak that rocked our community.

Ray's facility was hit with approximately 63 confirmed cases of the virus between staff and patients. Ray immediately went to work quarantining staff and working closely with our EMS division to coordinate patient transport and care during this critical time. He worked with King County Public Health to facilitate virtual doctor appointments for patients to help guide them and drastically reduce exposure. For weeks, while short staffed, Ray ensured the needs of patients were met without compromising the safety of those in the care of his facility. He was instrumental in getting the virus under control for his organization and minimizing the number of critical responses. There is no question that his quick thinking and effort made a huge difference.



## In Memoriam of Bill Larson

(1936 — 2020)

The Renton RFA family lost a member with the passing of Bill Larson.

Bill started his Renton firefighting career in 1966 and served the Renton community faithfully for 31 years.

He continued his service to the community through volunteer work, such as serving on the Renton RFA Civil Service Commission.

We are forever grateful for Bill's unending love for Renton RFA and the Renton community.



# Captain Josh Brown's Daring Rescue Earns the Medal of Valor



Captain Josh Brown was honored with the Medal of Valor at our recent Promotion and Awards Ceremony event for heroic acts he displayed earlier this year.

Josh received the honor from Fire Chief Rick Marshall who sang his praises while recounting the incident. "Water rescue is one of the most dangerous things that we do. Anytime you go into the water, you are entering an environment that we refer to as immediately dangerous to your life and health," stated Chief Marshall, who ran the water rescue program for Renton for several years during his career.

The chief went on to describe the events that transpired that day. Josh was part of a water rescue training as an instructor. An event occurred, and he acted quickly to save a fellow firefighter — an action that Chief Marshall confirmed was absolutely lifesaving for that member. But what impressed Chief Marshall more than anything was Josh's reflection of the incident.

In a conversation that occurred after the incident, Josh confided in the chief that he had gotten a weird feeling about that training and looking back, he would have stopped the training before the incident occurred. Chief Marshall was impressed with Josh's hindsight.

"From a fire chief standpoint, what you want every one of your firefighters to do is to learn... and trust your gut," Chief Marshall reflected. "He could not have told me anything better.... At every step, whether it's with his crew, or whether it's with his battalion, or whether it's with his department, he is going to work to make sure everyone goes home at the end of the day."

Chief Marshall closed out the ceremony by stating that when it comes to courage, sometimes courage is being able to look at situations and learn from them, then use that knowledge to better serve your community and the people you work with. We could not agree more!

We are exceptionally proud of Josh's heroism and congratulate him on both his medal and his recent promotion to captain!

## The Renton RFA Strategic Plan

We are proud to announce the completion of our five-year strategic plan!

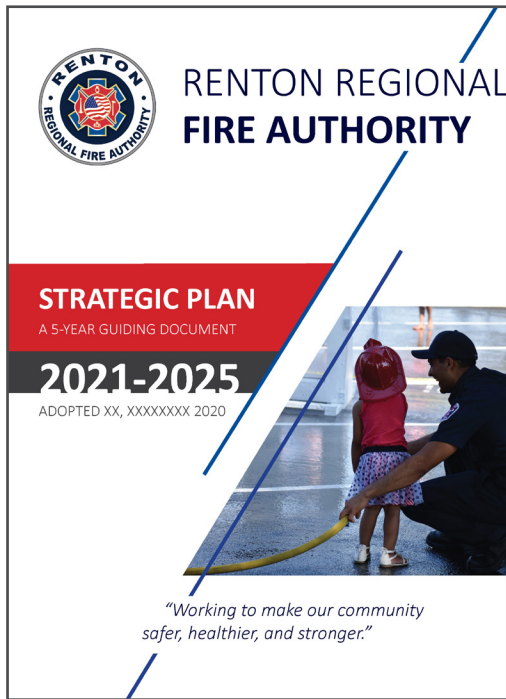
At the beginning of the year, we identified a need for greater structure around the direction of our organization. A clear road map to our future.

Having never previously created a formal strategic plan, our organization joined forces with Berk Consulting to facilitate the process, identify our goals, and define the strategies we'll employ to get there.

Part of that process included identifying our stakeholders and getting their feedback about what they'd like to see from our organization. Those stakeholders included our members, partner divisions with the city, neighboring emergency response agencies, county agencies, and of course — YOU. We asked you, our community, what you would like to see more (or less) of from your local fire department, and you answered.

Together, we were able to create a decisive, guiding document for the future of fire and life safety in Renton; a guide that includes goals for every focus area in our organization: our services, our community, our members, and our resources. We extend a huge thank you to every community member who took the time to contribute your thoughts, as well as to all of our partners in public service who contributed.

To read the full strategic plan, visit: [www.rentonrfa.com/strategic-plan](http://www.rentonrfa.com/strategic-plan)



## ABOUT RENTON RFA

Renton Regional Fire Authority was formed in 2016 after voters elected to create a special purpose district to provide critical fire and life safety services to the Renton community.

Our members include firefighter personnel, fire marshal personnel, and civilian personnel who work together to ensure the best possible service is delivered to the City of Renton, as well as King County Fire District 25 and 40.

Our jurisdiction includes over 130,000 community members across 33.29 square miles. In 2019, we performed 21,954 emergency responses for fire and life safety services throughout the Renton community.

## RENTON RFA GOVERNANCE BOARD

**KERRY ABERCROMBIE**  
Board Chair

**RUTH PÉREZ**  
Vice Chair

**RANDY CORMAN**  
Board Member

**RYAN MCIRVIN**  
Board Member

**MYRON MEIKLE**  
Board Member

**MARCUS MORRELL**  
Board Member

**LINDA SARTNURAK**  
Board Member (non-voting)

## RENTON RFA LEADERSHIP TEAM

**ROY GUNSOLUS**  
Interim Fire Chief

**SAMANTHA BABICH**  
Chief Administration Officer

**MARK WEAVER**  
Deputy Chief of Support Services

**ANJELA BARTON**  
Fire Marshal

**CHARLES DESMITH**  
Deputy Chief of Emergency Medical Services

