



COMMUNITY CONNECTION



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RENTON RFA ROLLS OUT COVID-19 MOBILE VACCINATION UNITS

In the last edition of Community Connection, we talked about our participation in the county-wide effort to help our community members get tested for COVID-19 by providing staff at several testing facilities. We are happy to report that our efforts to help reduce COVID-19 in our community have not stopped there.

Earlier this year, we were invited to participate in a mobile vaccination effort run by King County Public Health to help distribute the COVID-19 vaccine to those most vulnerable in our community. We jumped at the opportunity and have since vaccinated hundreds of local, high-risk patients throughout the area.

The mobile vaccination effort happening throughout King County is an intricate and collaborative program. Countless local agencies have come together to make it possible and we are proud to be working alongside them. A few of our agency partners include the City of

Renton, King County Fire District 20, and King County Medic One.

Our part in this program is impactful for the Renton community, but just a small piece of the hard work making this program possible. We do not determine who receives a vaccine or where the mobile vaccination units deploy, nor do we keep an inventory of the vaccine at our organization or register individuals to receive it.

We understand that our community members are eager to receive their vaccine, and we have received a number of calls from those worried about their high-risk family and friends as well. To those community members, we strongly encourage you to check the King County website for the most up-to-date vaccine information, how to register, and where to go for vaccination.

Please visit the King County website at:

kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19



OTHER WAYS WE'RE HELPING THE COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19:

Helped the City of Renton distribute over 20,000 masks to community members

Waived certain fees to help alleviate the financial burden for individuals and businesses:

- Tent Permit & Inspection Fees
- False Alarm Fees
- Public Assembly and Open Flame Permit Fees

Offered a number of fire code variances and services to assist the business community:

- Provided a variance for tent usage
- Extended the use of tents
- Provided same-day or next-day inspections for all tent permit applications



INTRODUCING FIRE CHIEF STEVE HEITMAN

On February 1, 2021, Renton RFA welcomed a brand new member to our fire family — Fire Chief Steve Heitman.

With the announcement of former Fire Chief Rick Marshall's retirement in October 2020, you may be wondering why several months passed before a new chief was named. The

answer is that the path to becoming a fire chief for Renton RFA is not an easy one!

On his journey to becoming our new fire chief, Chief Heitman went through several rounds of interviews against other candidates, fielding questions from the Renton RFA Governance Board, the Local 864 Firefighter's Union, partner agencies, and even community members. At the end of the day, he was identified as the best candidate to lead the organization moving forward, and his excitement for serving the Renton community is evident.

One of the many reasons Chief Heitman was a perfect fit for Renton RFA is his longevity in the fire service. This year marks his 20th anniversary of becoming a firefighter. He began his career in 2001 with the Mercer Island Fire Department. During his years serving the City of Mercer Island, he honed his craft, including serving as their fire chief from 2014 to 2020.

Outside of his professional experience, Chief Heitman also carries an extensive educational background. He has earned three associates degrees, a Bachelor of Science in Public Safety Administration, and a Master of Arts in Security Studies. Throughout his schooling, his studies focused around one subject in particular — the health and well-being of firefighters, a subject matter that is also near and dear to our hearts.

Before joining the fire service, Chief Heitman served in the United States military. He served with the 2nd Ranger Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and was honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant.

Chief Heitman's first day with Renton RFA kicked off with a traditional pinning ceremony. During the ceremony, Chief Heitman shared his thoughts on his newest role, stating, "I'm both honored and humbled to be the fire chief of Renton RFA. This is a fantastic department that holds itself to the highest level of professionalism. I want to thank the Governance Board for giving me the opportunity and providing that trust in me to be the fire chief. I want to thank the Renton RFA and all of its personnel for the warm welcome I have received; my family and I are very excited to be here. I am very honored to be here, and we are going to do great things, so thank you very much."

Renton RFA upholds the values of professionalism, integrity, leadership, accountability, and respect. These are the same values that Chief Heitman has held dear in his professional career. We are so excited to welcome him as part of the Renton RFA team and look forward to the future of our organization under his leadership.



SUMMER SAFETY — OUTDOOR GRILLING FIRE SAFETY TIPS



With the warmer months approaching us, many of us will turn our attention to the outdoors.

Outdoor grilling is a fun and sociable way to cook food. However, essential to a good time is the safe use and operation of a barbecue device. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), May and July are the peak months for outdoor grill fires.

Over half of the injuries involving outdoor grills are thermal burns. Renton Regional Fire Authority would like to remind community members to be cognizant of several important grilling safety tips when cooking outdoors.

- 1. Grill outside and away from any structures.** Charcoal and gas grills are designed for outdoor use only. However, NFPA reports that more than one-quarter (27%) of home fires started by outdoor grills began in a courtyard, terrace, or patio. Pay attention to overhanging tree branches when you set up your grill.
- 2. Make sure your grill is stable.** Only set up your grill on a flat surface and make sure the grill cannot be tipped over.
- 3. Keep your grill clean.** Remove grease or fat buildup from both the grill and the tray below the grill. If you are using a charcoal grill, allow the coals to completely cool off before disposing of them in a metal container.
- 4. Check for propane leaks on your gas grill.** Before the season's first barbecue, check the gas tank hose for leaks by applying a light

soap and water solution to the hose and then turning on the gas. If there is a propane leak, the solution will bubble. Other signs of a propane leak include the smell of gas near the barbecue or a flame that won't light.

- 5. Take care around the grill.** Never leave a lit grill unattended. Don't allow kids or pets to play near the grill. Never try to move a lit or hot grill.
- 6. Wear the right clothing.** Clothing can easily catch fire, so be sure your shirttails, sleeves or apron strings don't dangle over the grill.

Remember, summer is an enjoyable time of year allowing many to be outside more. If grilling is one of your summer trends or activities, practice good grilling habits and be safe. Have a safe and enjoyable outdoor grilling season!

For more grilling fire safety information, including printable handouts and videos, visit the National Fire Protection Agency online at:

[nfpa.org/GRILLING](https://www.nfpa.org/GRILLING)



to receive a grant through this program and were able to promptly purchase new, state-of-the-art burn props and have them installed at our Station 14 training facility.

"But why are specialized burn props so important?", you ask. This is a great question!

The specialized burn props we were able to purchase through this much-needed funding allows our members to practice different scenarios and techniques using the burn props' unique functionality and features. It is also a safer means of exposing our firefighters to scenarios that are as close to real emergencies as possible. Specialized burn props are also better for the environment than using discarded vehicles or debris.

The benefits to our community are two-fold. Specialized burn props and firefighter training equipment are costly. By writing a compelling grant proposal and securing the funds through this federal program, the cost of this expense is not passed on to our community members, while the direct benefits are. By exposing our firefighters to training that is as close to real-life emergencies as possible, our community members are safer because our firefighters are better prepared.

We are grateful for our Support Services team and their ability to seek out and harness opportunities that have a direct, positive impact on our community members, their homes, and their businesses. We look forward to putting these new props to work, ensuring the Renton community is safer, healthier, and stronger than ever before.

RENTON RFA SECURES GRANT TO IMPROVE TRAINING EQUIPMENT

Fiscal responsibility is a value we are proud to uphold as an organization. Grants are a means for us to practice fiscal sustainability, which has been key to our organization throughout the current global pandemic, when funding has decreased but the needs of our community continue to rise.

To that end, our Support Services team has sought opportunities to improve our facilities,

apparatus, and equipment without any additional burden of cost to our community members.

In 2020, our Support Services team threw our hat in the ring for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program through FEMA to procure funding that would help replace aging training equipment and burn props. We were honored to have been selected as one of the agencies

REVOLUTIONIZING THE FIREFIGHTER EXAM

As a fire and life safety organization, the firefighter exam is a fairly straight-forward process, but we recognize that to the public it can be hard to really know where to start.

Up until recently, the process of taking the written exam was done through an outside organization. Applicants would pay a fee to take the exam itself and then pay additional fees for every agency that they wanted their exam scores submitted to. These proctored exams were done in person, on specific days, at specific times. As an agency, we would then pull scores that were submitted to us and begin the review process. That is how it has been done by most fire agencies for a very long time. Even so, we have always felt there are certain downsides to this process.

As an organization that is proud to serve one of the most diverse communities in the state, it is highly important to us that our members reflect our community. The drawbacks that we identified in the exam process created barriers for skilled and qualified individuals to enter the fire service, especially for those individuals belonging to underserved or marginalized groups within our community and beyond. Barriers that we have made our mission to break down or remove

completely from the firefighter exam process.

Last year, we teamed up with Eastside Fire & Rescue, Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority, South King Fire & Rescue, Tukwila Fire Department, and Valley Regional Fire Authority to devise a plan for tackling those barriers and improving the firefighter exam and hiring process for applicants throughout King County and beyond. This year, we launched the result of that collaboration:

WAFireCareers.org

WA Fire Careers is a collaborative group that we developed to provide the firefighter exam in a way that is far more accessible and inclusive than ever before.

One of the major barriers of the previous exam process was cost. Applicants paid a hefty price to take the exam, as well as an additional fee to send their scores to participating agencies in hopes of getting an interview whenever the agencies decided to open up hiring. With WA Fire Careers, applicants pay just \$33 to take their exam, and their scores are automatically submitted to every participating agency. In addition, applicants may only register for an exam when agencies within the organization

are actively hiring. Otherwise, applicants can join a mailing list to receive direct notification when the next exam opens up.

Another significant barrier was the requirement to take the exam in person, on a specific day, at a specific time. This requirement creates a disparity for applicants who are out of state, who cannot take time off during specific exam times, or who struggle with factors such as transportation or childcare. WA Fire Career's exam is done 100% online and is expertly proctored by both intelligent AI, using a state-of-the-art exam platform, as well as through human audit. Applicants may take their exam anytime during a 48-hour exam window, making the exam itself far more accessible and far easier to work into any schedule.

This new program is also a great benefit to our community. In addition to promoting a workforce that is more representative of the community itself, by collaborating with several other agencies to tie the exam and hiring process together, we have created efficiencies that reduce the cost of bringing on new firefighters for all of the agencies involved.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining Renton RFA, be sure to visit WAFireCareers.org!



WA FIRE CAREERS

RENTON RFA RECEIVES THIRD PERFECT FINANCIAL AUDIT

While financial audits are not the *most* exciting thing we do here at Renton RFA, they make us pretty excited and they are essential.

When we became a regional fire authority in 2016, we promised our community that we would provide exceptional services with our budget and that we would remain fiscally responsible with the funds that our community entrusts us with. For that reason,

making sure we comply with routine audits is at the top of our to-do list. Not only does it help us know we're on track, it embodies our core value of accountability.

For the third year in a row, we received a perfect audit. Our hats off to the Finance team and our members for living by our values and always making sure that everything we do is in the best interest of our amazing community.

MEET OUR NEWEST FIREFIGHTER RECRUITS

The individuals below are our most recent round of firefighter recruits. They are currently undergoing fire academy training through the South King County Fire Training Consortium, a collaborative organization designed to administer standardized training to agencies throughout the region.

They will soon join our team as apprentice firefighters, armed with the knowledge and training necessary to save lives and make a difference in the community. They are all eager to start their careers serving Renton.



Alex Lind



Claire O'Brien



Emilie Poffenroth



Jessica Clearman



Joseph Mack



Joseph Munden



Lexi McGinnis



Michaela Wallace



Mickey Bergsma



Ryan Northrup



ABOUT RENTON RFA

Renton RFA proudly serves over 130,000 community members throughout Renton, KCFD 25, and KCFD 40. We cover just over 33 square miles of territory and provide over 20,000 emergency responses every year.

RENTON RFA GOVERNANCE BOARD

RUTH PÉREZ
Board Chair

MARCUS MORRELL
Vice Chair

KERRY ABERCROMBIE
Board Member

RANDY CORMAN
Board Member

RYAN MCIRVIN
Board Member

MYRON MEIKLE
Board Member

LINDA SARTNURAK
Board Member (non-voting)



RENTON RFA LEADERSHIP TEAM

STEVE HEITMAN
Fire Chief

ROY GUNSOLUS
Assistant Fire Chief

SAMANTHA BABICH
Chief Administration Officer

MARK SEAVER
Deputy Chief of Support Services

ANJELA BARTON
Fire Marshal

CHARLES DESMITH
Deputy Chief of Emergency Medical Services

