



# Snohomish County Fire District 5

## NEWSLETTER

### CHIEF HALVERSON SET TO RETIRE AT YEAR END

#### Message from Steve Fox, Chair, Board of Commissioners

Dear fellow citizens of Snohomish County Fire Protection District No. 5,

Your Board of Fire Commissioners would like to announce an agreement with our outstanding and long-time Fire Chief, Merlin Halverson, to honor his decision to retire at the end of this year to enjoy time with friends and family.

Chief Halverson's service to our community, indeed to the State of Washington, has been extraordinary. His leadership has been the envy of many other fire districts, and his impacts will be enjoyed by us for decades to come, perhaps most visibly through the use of our new Public Safety Center on Highway 2, which he envisioned nearly twenty years ago and took steps to plan for. Watch for news about the Grand Opening of this Center in coming weeks.

We are saddened to think of District 5 without Chief Halverson at the helm daily, but we understand the draw of enjoying expanded family time. Later this fall, District 5 will be sharing more information about Chief Halverson's many contributions and sacrifices in service to all of us. We also want you to know that we have partnered with an expert search firm to help us identify new candidates for the job.



### Snohomish County Fire District 5 Public Safety Center

## Construction Update



TRICO Construction has almost completed Fire District 5's new Public Safety Center and is working on a few pick-up items before we can receive "substantial completion" and be able to move-in. The District is hopeful that TRICO will complete the required work within weeks, allowing us to start moving by early August. Moving our emergency operations and administrative offices into the new fire station will take several weeks. Once staff have had time to settle in, receive training to operate building equipment, and feel comfortable operating out of the new facility, we will be excited to host a Grand Opening, including an Open House and Tours. Watch for announcements!

In the Spring of 2018 the District selected Lawhead Architects PS to design a new Public Safety Center to replace the current fire station located at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Alder in downtown Sultan. The District purchased land 16 years ago with the expectation to build a future fire station. Our current station was built in 1978 for an all-volunteer fire department. It has no sleeping quarters, showers, laundry, kitchen, or administrative offices, and no Emergency Operations Center, and is too small to house our current vehicles. It is also concrete construction, in a flood zone, and on fill, making the building vulnerable to seismic events. The Fire District received a grant from the State of Washington for \$1.5 million to supplement the cost of building a new Public Safety Center. The Board of Commissioners presented a bond proposal to fund the station in April 2019, and voters passed it. TRICO Construction was awarded the construction contract in May 2020 and broke ground in June with an expectation to complete the project by June 2021. We came very close to meeting this date. The year 2020 turned out to be a difficult time to build anything, let alone a Public Safety Center, which must meet many stringent codes to survive in a variety of situations. COVID-19 caused supply chain delays and labor challenges for the General Contractor and subcontractors, as in construction projects throughout the nation this past year. District 5 would like to thank all of the people who have worked on the project through these difficult times. We feel your new Public Safety Center is a well-built, handsome building on a campus that will serve the community for decades to come.

Thank you all for your continued support! We look forward to seeing you at the Grand Opening this fall.

Find us on  
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# On the Ballot - Proposition 1

The Board of Commissioners has determined that it would be in the best interest of the District to increase the number of fire commissioners from three to five. The Board believes that expanding public representation would better serve the District by gaining broader input for decisions.

District 5 was established in 1945 with three commissioners, with George Startup as chairman. In the State of Washington, as fire districts grow in size, an option to increase the number citizens representing the public on the Board can be made prior to a legal requirement to do so. Many departments of our size and larger have proactively increased their board to five or even seven members. The Board has decided that following this path is best for District 5. The process requires that the people in District 5 vote on a proposition to authorize this expansion from three to five commissioners. We encourage you to vote.



**August 3, 2021**

## WATER SAFETY TIPS KEEP YOUR KIDS SAFE THIS SUMMER!

- DROWNING IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG CHILDREN BETWEEN 1 AND 4
  - ALMOST 1,000 CHILDREN IN THE U.S. DROWNED IN 2017
  - PARENTS SHOULD STAY WITHIN AN ARM'S LENGTH OF CHILDREN IN THE WATER
  - AVOID DISTRACTIONS SUCH AS CELL PHONES AND ALCOHOL
  - LEARN CPR, TEACH YOUR KIDS WATER-SAFETY SKILLS, AND USE LIFE JACKETS FOR NON-SWIMMERS
- Content source: American Academy of Pediatrics

## Skykomish River - Swift Water Rescues have doubled

2021 has been a busy year out on the Skykomish River. We have responded to multiple Swift Water Rescue Incidents, including nearly a dozen people who fell in or became trapped in the Skykomish river over the past several months. In mid-July the Fire District responded to an incident with five people in the water. Two inflatable boats overturned and got stuck in a root ball off Dyer Road. Four of the subjects had life jackets on. When fire personnel arrived, they located two children, both under 7 years old, holding onto a small tree branch in the middle of the river so they wouldn't be swept away. Tragically, two weeks earlier a 4-year-old child, also wearing a life jacket, drowned west of Skykomish because he got swept away by the strong currents. The three other subjects, two adults and a small child, were stuck on a log in the middle of the river. Please be safe out there. District 5 has life vests to loan. Just ask.

### Snohomish County Fire District 5

**Fire Chief Merlin Halverson**  
(360) 793 1179 ext 5111  
m.halverson@snofire5.org

Fire Commissioners meet  
2nd & 4th Mondays each month, 7:00p



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Classes are held on Saturday mornings 8 am—1 pm

**To:**  
Residents of  
Snohomish County Fire District 5

## Fire District purchases Hovercraft to assist in water rescue operations

District 5 has ordered a hovercraft (boat) to assist in river rescues and flood response. As Mann Road and Ben Howard areas experience growth, more people are subject to being trapped due to localized flooding. When they have life-threatening injuries or illnesses, we will be ready to help quickly. The District has also been experiencing more swiftwater rescues in recent years in the Sultan and Startup areas. The new rescue craft will be used to mitigate life-threatening emergencies.

Having a hovercraft positioned in Sultan will speed up our response markedly. We can have a watercraft launched into the river and on location in 10-15 minutes, allowing firefighters to cross both land and water to perform rescues very quickly. Hovercraft are new in the Skykomish Valley.

Nearby fire districts such as District 21 in Arlington Heights have utilized these craft for over a decade on the Stillaguamish River. Our personnel have been working with them to develop operating policies and training. The hovercraft is currently being manufactured to our specifications by Neoteric Hovercraft Inc., and we hope to take delivery in September. We encourage you to enjoy your summer safely!

