Chief’s Corner

It is an honor to serve as the Fire Chief of Spokane County Fire District 4.

In this newsletter, I hope to give you, as a Fire District 4 resident, a picture of how we use the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) levy funds you provide. I would also like to give you a snapshot of what we see every day – our firefighters helping people, impacting lives, and doing their best work.

Our district area and population are diverse and dynamic. On average, medical emergencies account for more than 75 percent of all calls for Fire District 4. In 2016 the District had 2,334 EMS calls out of its total 3,109. To prepare for this, our members collectively completed 13,635 hours of EMS training in 2016.

Fire District 4 is licensed to provide Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) services. We put forth considerable effort to train our EMT’s. Our Firefighter-EMT’s are busy and love their rewarding work.

Additionally we provide Advanced Life Support through the use of paramedics. In 2011, we started a program housing a paramedic at Station 42, which is centrally located in Chattaroy. The paramedic responds in a cost-effective, quick-response vehicle that offers functionality and mobility in difficult to reach areas. Our paramedics respond throughout our district to medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents and fire incidents. We cannot overstate the value of these qualified professionals.

Our partnership with American Medical Response, Deer Park Ambulance, and LifeFlight, provides mutual aid to our District residents, providing the best chance of a good outcome when experiencing a medical emergency.

Renewing the sales and use option for public safety

On April 25, 2017 voters will have the option to renew Spokane County’s Proposition 1. Proposition 1 continues the existing 1/10th of 1% of local sales and use tax that allows Spokane County law and fire agencies to maintain the emergency communications system that integrates 911, Fire, EMS and Crime Check.

How will Proposition 1 be funded? For every ten-dollar retail purchase, Spokane County would continue to receive one cent in sales tax. This is not a new tax. An average Spokane County household would see an impact of approximately $1 a month, or $12 a year.

This communication system is vital to all emergency responders in Spokane County.
Each and every day, as firefighters work their shifts, they know that anything can happen. That is the essence of the job – to be prepared for anything.

On September 30, first responders at Stations 42 and 49 were attending to their duties and trainings when the alarm sounded for a possible cardiac arrest.

Gearing up they left their stations prepared for the worst, but hoping for the best. When they arrived on scene they found Terri Ann Chott in cardiac arrest, meaning her heart was no longer beating.

The responders immediately began CPR and with the help of Deer Park Ambulance and LifeFlight they were able to bring Terri Ann back to life. She was then airlifted to Sacred Heart Hospital and is alive and well today.

To make this event even more special, Terri Ann reached out to the responders who saved her life and they were able to meet this past December (see above). It is always a rewarding experience for our firefighters and paramedics to meet the people they have saved and we thank Terri Ann for the opportunity.

Meet our Newest Addition:
Captain Johnnie Sylvester

Captain Sylvester has worked at Fire District 4 since 2011. He began as a part-time firefighter and studied during his off time to become a paramedic, which is an advanced level of Emergency Medical Technician. Captain Sylvester brings many talents to the district in addition to his medical savvy – he is also an Engine Boss who fights wildfires across the state. He is qualified as a Structural Firefighter 2(IFSAC), and is part of the command staff.

Captain Sylvester says he appreciates the diversity of District 4’s staffing model as well as the landscape. He values being a critical part of the team that can bring the Emergency Room to the field, and knowing that we are doing everything we can in the best interest of the patient.
Medic 42 Program

Fire District 4’s one-of-a-kind program, called ‘Medic 42,’ greatly benefits the community. Medic 42 is a quick response vehicle equipped specifically for medical emergencies. Staged in Chattaroy, the center of the District, it is staffed 24/7 with volunteer and part-time paramedics—the most advanced level of EMT. Response times to medical calls have been reduced as much as 15 minutes depending on the location of the emergency. Plus, this unique staffing model saves taxpayers approximately $300,000 per year.

Becoming an EMT

Becoming an Emergency Medical Technician (simply called an “EMT”) is a rewarding experience—it is a unique chance to really impact lives in a positive way. Finding and attending an EMT class, however, can be a daunting task!

Every fully qualified firefighter at District 4 must be certified at the EMT-Basic level. An EMT is trained to stabilize patients until they can reach the definitive care they need at a hospital (or in a firefighter’s case, until the ambulance can transport).

As an agency who depends on EMT’s, Spokane County Fire District 4 offers its own nationally approved class on site to meet that need. Our classes are held in the evenings and weekends to accommodate our volunteer’s working schedules. Our EMT classes are held every fall, and are filled to capacity. We accept students from our neighboring fire districts and ambulance partners whenever possible.

Captain Vince Speziale, who runs the program, states that in the 160 hours of classroom time, the students are able to build great working relationships with their fellow responders. These relationships enable the responders to work more effectively together when they are out in the field. It also helps responders work well with other agencies on mutual aid calls.

District 4 draws from the considerable experience of our long-time EMT’s and paramedics to instruct the class. Newer EMT’s also have a chance to be assistant instructors to help cement their skills by helping teach. They all get considerable hands on experience.

All told, Fire District 4’s EMT class is a win – win, for the District, the instructors, the students, and our citizens!

What does it take to become a Paramedic?

- 600 hours of intense classroom training
- 292 hours of hospital clinical time
- Minimum of 360 hours of field internship
- Pass a national 80 to 150 written question exam
- Pass a national psychomotor practical exam

EMT students receiving hands on experience.
Our Partnerships at Work

LifeFlight and Deer Park Ambulance respond with Spokane County Fire District 4 on a Motor Vehicle Accident. We rely on these partnerships to offer the best service possible.