



Volume 18 Issue 4

April, 2025



Feature Stories

- Chief Ward
- FF Stair Climb
- Fire History

2025 STATISTICS

Mar 1 — Mar 31

District Average Response Time:

9 min. 48 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 7

EMS: 357

Other: 123

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Proudly serving the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, Custer, Laurel and the unincorporated areas of Lynden & Bellingham

"Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community"

NWFR Mourns Loss of Division Chief Shaun Ward



It is with profound sadness and heavy hearts that we mourn the passing of Division Chief Shaun Ward who served Whatcom County for over 25 years spending the last 18 years with North Whatcom Fire and Rescue.

Shaun has distinguished himself by demonstrating exceptional courage, commitment, innovation, and compassion throughout his career. He began his career in the fire service at Whatcom County Fire District #8 and joined North Whatcom Fire and Rescue as firefighter in 2007. With determination he worked his way through the ranks of Lieutenant and Captain and most recently served as Division Chief of Support Services. Shaun loved his job and always brought his best to serve his community and his coworkers.

Sadly, Shaun was diagnosed with an occupational related cancer due to hazardous expo-

sure while on the job forcing him to retire this past December due to his disease. He fought his cancer with the same heart, bravery and determination that he brought to his job everyday. His positive attitude toward fighting this battle is an inspiration to everyone that knew him.

Shaun was more than firefighter or Chief Officer; he was a hero and a great friend. Thank you Shaun for your many years of fearless and noble service. You will be missed but never forgotten. You can rest easy now, we've got it from here.

Shaun's memorial information has yet to be determined.



North Whatcom
Fire and Rescue
welcomes suggestions
for upcoming
newsletters. Please
submit your ideas or
suggestions to
info@nwfrs.com



Members Participate in LLS Firefighters Stairclimb



By Captain McDermott



On Sunday, March 9th, 2025, a team of six NWFR firefighters joined over 2,000 firefighters from across the globe to take on the challenge of the LLS Firefighter Stairclimb at Seattle's Columbia Tower. Now in its 34th year, this event is the world's largest on-air stair climb competition and a major fundraiser for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). It sells out in under 30 minutes and has raised more than \$28 million for blood cancer re-

search since its first climb in 1991.

The Columbia Tower, the second-tallest skyscraper west of the Mississippi, pushes participants with a 69-floor, 1,356-step climb—all while wearing full turnout gear weighing over 50 pounds. Every step taken helps fund critical blood cancer research, patient support programs, and advocacy for better healthcare policies. LLS plays a vital role in ensuring blood cancer patients have access to fair and affordable treatment.

This year, LLS raised an incredible \$2,216,008, with NWFR contributing over \$4,700 to the cause. Representing NWFR were Capt. Jensen, Alden Roberts, Seth Merideth, Patty McDermott, Liz Bronder, and Brandon May. Each team member completed the climb with impressive times ranging from 20:29 to 32:02.

The climb is not just physically demanding—tight stairwells, no airflow, and heat make it especially challenging. Along the way, participants pass photos of blood cancer survivors, fighters, and those who've sadly lost their battles. It's a powerful reminder of why we climb.

This event is rooted in compassion and community, and we're proud to be part of it. Look for NWFR again in 2026—hopefully with an even bigger team! Fundraising typically begins in October and continues through March leading up to the event. We climb for a great cause—LLS.

Contact Us

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society -
Attn: LLS Firefighter Stairclimb
P.O. Box 102488 Pasadena, CA
91189-2488
501(c)(3): 13-5644916



This Month in Fire History: April

FIREHOUSE

Excerpts taken from Firehouse article by Steven Shaw/Managing Editor, Firehouse.com

April 4, 1949, Effingham, IL – St. Anthony's Hospital Fire

Shortly before midnight, a massive fire broke out, spreading rapidly through the building. It was believed the fire started in a wooden laundry chute, potentially from a smoldering cigarette that was gathered up with patient bedding and tossed down the chute to the basement. The basement is where the hospital stored oxygen and ether tanks, which exploded and fueled the fire. At the time the hospital did not have fire sprinklers or fire alarms.

The Effingham Volunteer Fire Department arrived within 10 minutes of the alarm but by that time the fire had burned through the roof. With the assistance of 11 mutual aid departments, firefighters were able to keep the fire from spreading, but the hospital was destroyed. A total of 76 people tragically lost their lives.

April 4, 2008, Colerain Township, OH – Squirrelsnest Lane Dwelling Fire (30 Fires You Must Know)

On April 4, 2008, what began as a fire alarm activation, resulted in the deaths of two firefighters. Upon their arrival at the scene of a two-story wood framed, residential building, working fire conditions existed in the basement. The attack team advanced a hose line through the interior of the building for fire

control. During their attempt to evacuate the building the main-level family room floor collapsed, trapping the firefighters.

April 17, 2013, West, TX – Fertilizer Company Explosion

The West Fire Department responded to a fire call at the West Fertilizer Company. While on scene, an ammonium nitrate explosion occurred. After an investigation, it was determined that the fire was intentionally set. The explosion killed 15 people including ten firefighters battling the blaze, 160 people were injured, 150 buildings were destroyed. The blast created a 93-foot crater at the site.

April 18, 1906, San Francisco, CA – Great San Francisco Earthquake

The earth shook at 0512 hours, lasting almost 45 seconds, on today's Richter scale it would measure 8.0. In that 45 seconds 28,000 buildings were destroyed and sparked massive fires that burned for four days, leveling over 500 city blocks. The death toll was estimated at over 3,000 people, making it the deadliest earthquake in U.S. history at the time. Around 250,000 people were left homeless.

The San Francisco Fire Department responded with 584 men, 38 steam engines, 10 hook and ladders, eight chemical pumpers, 39 hose wagons and 323 horses, within the first minute after the shaking.

April 19, 1993, Waco, TX – Religious Group Complex Fire

Agents from the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) raided the compound of the Branch Davidians

religious sect in Waco, TX. This led to a shootout between the ATF and Branch Davidians, resulting in the deaths of four ATF Agents and six Branch Davidians.

After the initial raid, a 51-day standoff ensued. The FBI attempted several ways to force the Branch Davidians to surrender. On April 19, 1993, The FBI launched a tear gas attack. Shortly after a fire broke out in the compound and 76 of the 85 Branch Davidians were killed. The cause of the fire remains highly disputed, with some arguing the Branch Davidians set it themselves, while others believe the tear-gas attack started the blaze.

April 23, 1940, Natchez, MS – Rhythm Nightclub Fire

Nearly 750 people packed into a small 120-foot by 28-foot building to see a popular swing band from Chicago. A fire broke out around 11 PM. The exact cause of the fire could not be determined. The fire spread rapidly through the hanging Spanish Moss. The fire and smoke sent the patrons into a panic. The results of the investigation were all too familiar with the time, overcapacity with an improper number of exits. The exits that did exist were not designed to open outward to the outside. In all, 209 people tragically lost their lives that night.

Source URL: <https://www.firehouse.com/operations-training/article/53098102/this-month-in-fire-history-April-2024-30-Fires-You-Must-Know>, Billy Goldfeder, Frank Leeb, Fire Engineering Books, Copyright 2024



Events to Celebrate April Birthdays

- 2 – Kaleb Bruch
- 4 – Lee Lightfoot
- 6 – Jeff Bowles
- 17 – Angela Smith
- 19 – Mike Schmidt
- 20 – Patty McDermott
- 21 – Kimberly McMurray
- 22 – Scott Brown
- 26 – Kat Stewart
- 26 – Dale Rutgers

NWFR Meetings will be conducted in person

Thurs. Apr. 17
9408 Odell St 61
Blaine — 10:30 a.m.



District 4 Meetings continue to be conducted via Zoom with some in person

Mon. Apr. 14
4142 Britton Loop St 12
Bellingham — 12:00 p.m.





1507 E. Badger Rd
PO Box 286
Lynden, WA 98264

Providing quality service for
a safe community



CPR / AED Classes 2025

Class will be held at various
fire stations around the district. Check out

<https://www.nwfrs.net/cpr-course/>

for more information and to
reserve your spot.

Donations of nonperishable food
items are encouraged but not mandatory. All food donations will be
forwarded to local area food
banks.

**CPR/AED
FIRST AID**
April 25,
Odell St 61
10:30 am

Bellingham Whatcom..
@BWCFBF

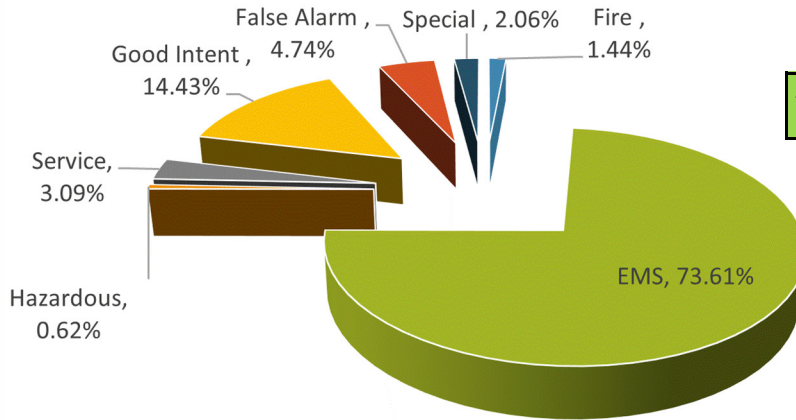


venmo

Benevolent Fund
Donation Link

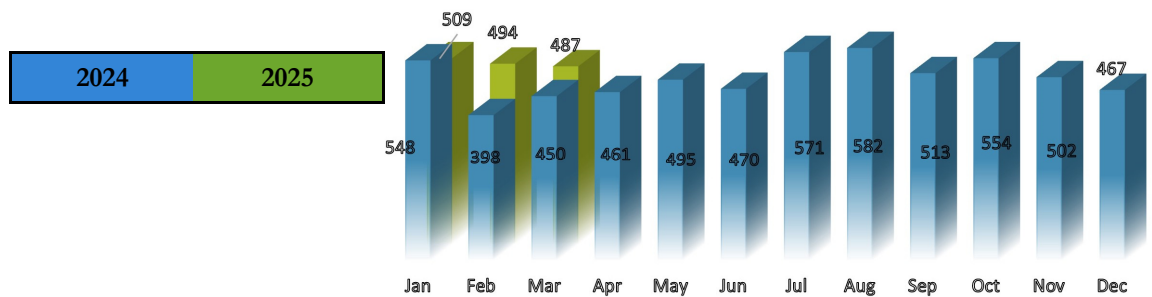
March Calls

Total Calls = 487

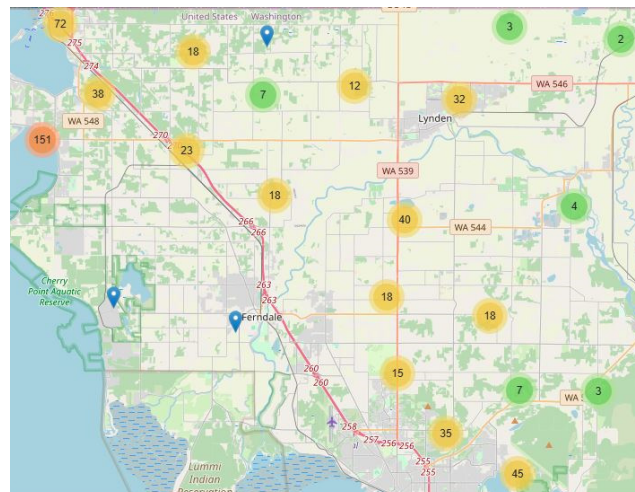


Types of Calls

False Alarms = 23

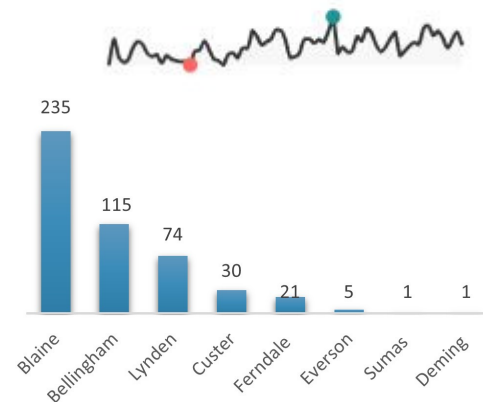


Location of Calls



Average Calls Per Day

16.23



Apparatus Responses

Dispatch Category ● EMS ● Fire



Total Overlapping Calls

160