



Chief's Report

May 28, 2025

Mission

Save Lives, Protect Property, Safeguard the Environment, and Take Care of People

Vision

We will be a proactive regional emergency services leader by partnering to provide safe communities for people to live, work, and explore.

Guiding Values

Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Teamwork, Service

MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 26, 2025

On Memorial Day, May 26, and beyond, we honor and remember the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service of our nation. Their courage, dedication, and selflessness have secured the freedom we cherish every day.

OPERATIONS

Significant Alarms

Hazmat First Alarm

On April 30 in the late afternoon, crews from the East Battalion of Snohomish Regional Fire & Rescue (SRFR) and Snohomish County Fire District 5 (SCFD 5) responded to a hazardous propane leak caused by a vehicle collision near Bubba's Roadhouse in Sultan.

Upon arrival, crews found two large propane tanks leaking significant amounts of gas. SCFD 5 began using ventilation tools to help disperse the gas cloud. SRFR assumed command and expanded the evacuation to include all buildings within 300 feet of the tanks. Air quality monitoring revealed concerning gas levels at nearby structures. Due to the severity of the leak, additional resources were requested, including SRFR's Hazardous Materials Response Team. A unified command was formed with the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office, and the response was moved to a dedicated radio channel for joint operations.

Firefighters worked quickly to control the situation. SCFD 5 secured a water supply and used a fog stream to help dissipate the gas. Inside Bubba's Roadhouse, responders found measurable gas levels and took





additional safety steps, including cutting power and using positive pressure ventilation. Once the evacuation zone was secure, SRFR and SCFD 5 advanced on the propane tanks. The tanks had tipped over and suffered damage, but responders were able to manually shut off the valves and stop the leak. Crews continued to monitor the scene and nearby buildings until it was safe to reoccupy the area.

Thanks to the rapid response and teamwork of all involved, no injuries occurred, and Bubba's Roadhouse was able to reopen later that evening, just in time for Taco Tuesday. We commend all involved for their professionalism and quick action in protecting public safety.

Residential Fire

On the afternoon of May 4, SRFR's East Battalion and Snohomish County Fire District 4 (SCFD 4) responded to the report of smoke coming from a garage following an explosion at a two-story home. A 15-year-old babysitter, who was watching several young children at the time, acted heroically by quickly evacuating everyone from the home and calling 911.

SRFR arrived to find no visible fire from the front, but a walk-around inspection quickly confirmed a working garage fire. Crews acted fast and cut open the garage door, revealing thick smoke and flames fueled by lithium-ion batteries. An offensive strategy was utilized to prevent the fire from spreading to the living areas of the home.

Additional crews from SRFR and SCFD 4 secured the gas line, checked for fire extension into the attic and roof, and performed search and ventilation operations. The scene remained active until the Fire Marshal arrived to investigate the fire's origin, particularly due to the involvement of lithium-ion batteries. Thanks to the quick thinking by the babysitter and coordinated teamwork, the fire was contained to the garage, and all occupants remained safe.

Residential Fire

Following a report of visible flames on the exterior of a home and smoke throughout the interior, SRFR's East and West Battalions responded to a confirmed residential structure fire. West Battalion was first on scene and discovered a fire burning in the front exterior wall of a two-story house with a daylight basement. The flames had begun to spread into both the exterior and interior walls, and light smoke was visible on both floors. Fortunately, the residents had safely evacuated and were attempting to slow the fire with a garden hose.

A full 360-degree assessment of the home was conducted, and the fire was attacked from the outside. Ventilation, overhaul, search, and salvage were then performed, with searches confirming that no one remained inside the home. Utilities were safely shut off by Snohomish County PUD and Puget Sound Energy to reduce risk.

Firefighters remained on scene to assist the Fire Marshal with the investigation and to help the homeowner secure the property. The homeowner was advised not to restore electricity until a



licensed electrician could inspect the system. The well-coordinated response helped stop the fire from spreading further and kept the damage contained to one section of the home. We commend the residents for their quick evacuation and all responding crews for their efficient, thorough work.

Special Operations

HazMat Training

SRFR members serving on the Snohomish County Hazardous Materials Team recently completed specialized training to become Radiological Primary Screeners. This advanced training exceeds standard Hazmat requirements and enhances regional preparedness for large-scale public events.

The class, hosted by South County Fire and supported by a SAFER Grant organized by the Seattle Fire Department Hazmat Team, focused on the use of Personal Radiation Detectors (PRDs). These devices help identify dangerous levels or types of radiation and track the source of the exposure. The hands-on training emphasized distinguishing between safe and unsafe radiation levels and using PRDs to pinpoint the location of a radiological source.

Completion of the Radiological Primary Screener course is the minimum requirement for supporting the Seattle Fire Hazmat Team at major upcoming events, including the World Cup next year. There are ongoing conversations within the Snohomish County Hazmat Team about the possibility of expanding the team's role in radiological screening at high-attendance gatherings across the region. Potential future deployments could include events at Angel of the Winds Arena in Everett and the Evergreen State Fairgrounds in Monroe.

Technical Rescue Training

On April 14, nine SRFR team members began a month-long journey to become certified members of the Snohomish County Technical Rescue Team. Over approximately 160 hours, participants are trained in Rope Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).

This specialized training is far from routine. From rappelling off cranes at the Port of Everett to crawling through confined spaces at the Brightwater Treatment Plant, securing live trenches, and breaking up concrete in simulated USAR scenarios, team members gain critical hands-on experience in high-risk, high-skill environments. Adding to the intensity, Technical Rescue 31 (TR31) was pulled from the course twice to assist with rescues at Index Town Wall, a well-known and challenging rock climbing site.

In addition to the new trainees, instructors include SRFR team members Chad Squire, Kevin Gleason, and Logan Harding. Their support plays a key role in preparing the next generation of rescue specialists.



Water Rescue

Members of SRFR's Water Rescue Team have been hard at work expanding their skills this spring. Recently, 11 team members completed the first phase of a free diving course, held in a pool setting to introduce foundational breath-holding techniques. Impressively, all participants were able to hold their breath for at least three minutes, with two team members exceeding four minutes. The course was taught by former Canadian champion free diver, Jana Strain, and set the stage for the open water portion.

SRFR hosted its annual Water Rescue Academy May 5-9. This 40-hour course is designed to certify new team members in Swiftwater Rescue, gradually building their comfort and capability through pool drills and navigating the Class III rapids near Index. A total of 10 SRFR team members participated alongside personnel from neighboring jurisdictions. SRFR instructors, each having completed a 40-hour instructor training course within the past year, led the academy and shared their expertise with the next generation of water rescue responders.

Spartan Race

On May 3 and 4, SRFR provided support for a busy weekend of events at the Meadow Wood Equestrian Center just outside of Monroe. With thousands of participants attending the Spartan Race, SRFR staffed an Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit onsite and upstaffed additional resources to prepare for the large influx of visitors.

The Saturday events drew approximately 3,500 athletes competing in multiple race distances and categories. The "Sprint" event on Sunday brought another 700 participants to the venue. SRFR collaborated closely with Spartan Race staff throughout the weekend, provided care for a range of race-related injuries, and was proud to support the community during this high-energy, physically demanding competition.

Training

Driver/Operator Academy

The Driver Operator Committee organized another successful 5-day Driver/Operator Academy to help future DOs learn water pumping, driving, engine placement on a fire scene, hydraulics, drafting, and using portable water tanks. Thank you to our dedicated instructors Todd Epler, Adam Perron, Jessie Abercrombie, Tony Gleason, Steve Johnson, Erik Emerson, Jerem Rhoades, Ross Ruman, and Joseph Strong.

SCFTA Graduation

Lt. Scott Rybar completed the Snohomish County Fire Training Academy Class 25-01 as a Company Officer. Congratulations and welcome back, Scott!



SUPPORT SERVICES

Community Relations

Chamber of Commerce Membership Meetings

On May 7, Assistant Chief Messer and Deputy Fire Marshal Fisher attended the Sky Valley Chamber Membership Luncheon, where Katy Woods, Vice President and Branch Manager of Coastal Community Bank, presented on effective time management strategies.

On May 13, Commissioner Elmore, Commissioner Schaub, and Assistant Fire Marshal Bowen participated in the Monroe Chamber Membership Luncheon. The session featured Benjamin Brittingham from Bedrock Branding, LLC, who shared insights on social media marketing fundamentals.

On May 14, Commissioner Elmore, Deputy Chief Rasmussen, and Program Specialist Larson attended the Lake Stevens Chamber Membership Breakfast. David Passeur from the Maxwell Leadership Team delivered an inspiring presentation on the story of leadership.

Logistics

Electrical Issue Resolved on Engine 83

Engine 83 (E2001) experienced intermittent throttle loss and a check engine light triggered during hard left turns. Initial diagnostic scans showed fault code 1696, indicating a 5V sensor supply voltage issue. Despite replacing the throttle position sensor and following the manufacturer's troubleshooting steps, the fault persisted, only appearing under specific driving conditions.

A deeper investigation involving OEM wiring diagrams, multimeter testing, and detailed "wiggle tests" uncovered a chafed wire at connector P281 grounding against the engine block during left turns. This caused the voltage drop and throttle issues. The damaged wire was repaired and insulated, clearing the fault code. Subsequent testing confirmed full throttle function under all conditions.



This repair was exceptionally challenging, requiring over 116 man-hours and the collaboration of multiple technicians, including Mike Camerer, Brandon Watkins, Daniel Kindig, Kerry Pray, and the reporting technician. This repair was truly a team effort and reflects the highest level of professionalism and perseverance. Thank you to everyone involved!



Station Design Conference

A group of SRFR team members attended the Station Design Conference in Glendale, Arizona, held May 19-22. This event brought together public safety leaders, fire chiefs, project managers, and municipal officials focused on fire and law enforcement station design. The conference offered valuable insights into the latest trends and best practices for designing and constructing effective, long-lasting facilities. Attendees engaged in interactive sessions to exchange ideas and knowledge that will help SRFR continue to improve its station infrastructure.

Take care and stay safe,

Kevin O'Brien, Fire Chief

