The Best Christmas Present Ever

For Christmas 2014, White Center couple Lisa and Don were preparing for Christmas with their children and grandchildren. Christmas day needed to be an early start this year so Lisa could go into work at 5:00am. The entire family got up at 4:30am to open presents, everyone but Don that is. Don was already up since he didn’t really sleep at all Christmas Eve which was uncharacteristic of him. While the children and grandchildren ripped open their presents, Don was a bit aloof and off by himself, also uncharacteristic of him. After the presents were opened and Lisa went to work, the rest of the family took a nap before heading out to grandma’s house at noon, everyone but Don that is, he was having heartburn and couldn’t sleep, again not usual for him but not causing alarm.

At noon, Don along with his daughter Kaitlin and son Brentt were in the car on their way to grandma’s house for the rest of their Christmas celebration. Kaitlin was driving when she noticed that Don had become unresponsive and wasn’t breathing. Scared and panic stricken, Brentt told Kaitlin to drive to the fire station, within 2-3 minutes they were there. Kaitlin and Brentt were ringing the bell and pounding on the doors desperate to get help. Luckily at North Highline’s fire station 18 there were three firefighters ready to answer the call.

On duty that day were Lieutenant Scott Thorsteinson, Firefighter Eric Boutwell and Firefighter Jeff Meagher. They heard Kaitlin and Brentt’s calls for help and ran to the door. Jeff was the first to the car, he immediately assessed Don’s condition, pulled him out of the car to the ground and started CPR. Simultaneously Scott called for more help from Station 19 and Medic one while Eric got the aid kits and defibrillator. As Kaitlin and Brentt watched, Jeff, Scott and Eric worked hard to save Don’s life. While performing CPR, they cut off Don’s sweatshirt and shocked him twice. Miraculously, Don regained consciousness (also uncharacteristic of someone having a heart attack but you know Don).

Don spent 11 Days at Highline Hospital and received two stints. Today he is back home with his family.

Now everyone in Don’s family may not have received everything they asked for from Santa but as it turns out, they got the best Christmas present ever.

(Pictured right: Lisa, Don, two of their children and three of their grandchildren along with the three firefighters who saved don’s life, Scott, Eric and Jeff.)
On August 5, 2014, the citizens of North Highline Fire District voted to enact a fire benefit charge beginning January 1, 2015.

1. What is a benefit charge?

The 1987 Washington State Legislature passed RCW 52.18.030 authorizing fire districts the option to collect a benefit charge from residential and business property owners if the voters of the district approve it. The benefit charge is not a per call charge and is not based on property value. The benefit charge is a fee which is based on the benefit of having fire protection. This is referred to as a "benefit charge." The county assessor's office sends the county treasurer's office the data on properties, which is then collected by the county treasurer's office along with the property tax bill.

2. How will a benefit charge provide a better source of funding for the fire district?

The benefit charge is a fairer way of funding the district's fire service. Property taxes only take into consideration the value of the property and not the benefits provided by the fire district. These benefits include lower fire insurance costs, which are passed on to the homeowner. By using a benefit charge, costs are more fairly distributed.

3. How much revenue will be available from the benefit charge?

The benefit charge law provides for annual public hearings and must be put to the voters for renewal every six years and must not exceed 60% of the district's annual operating budget. The 2015 benefit charge is approximately 22% of the budget.

4. How much revenue will be available from the benefit charge?

The statute states that the total amount that can be raised by a benefit charge cannot exceed 60% of the operating budget. If a fire district enacts a benefit charge it must reduce its maximum regular property tax levy from $1.50 to $1.00 of assessed valuation.

5. How will a benefit charge help the average homeowner?

The benefit charge provides a continued level of dependable fire service by maintaining well equipped firefighters; and because homeowners have a regular voice in the benefit charge, they will have a greater control over the cost of their fire service.

6. Who establishes the benefit charge and what does it cover?

RCW 52.18.030 states that the Board of Fire Commissioners may fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property. The benefit charge does not apply to land. The benefit charge covers such property as residential buildings, commercial structures, agricultural buildings, and other structures affixed to the land.

The statute also provides for certain exemptions, which include:

- Personal property not used in business.
- Property that is the subject of a contract for services with the district, including publicly owned buildings.
- Any property used for religious purposes by a recognized religious organization, including educational facilities.
- Property that maintains its own fire department.

The benefit charge will go into effect for the residents of North Highline Fire District in January of 2015. If you have any questions about the benefit charge please go to our website at www.NorthHighlineFD.org for more information and FAQs.
Your North Highline Fire District

In this first edition of the North Highline Fire District newsletter, we wanted to give you a bit of history and information about us. The North Highline Fire District (originally named King County Fire District #11) was founded in 1942. We are a combination district with 24 career personnel and 10 (±) volunteer personnel operating out of two stations. We service about 19,000 citizens in a three-and-a-half square mile unincorporated area. We are bordered by Seattle to the North and West, Burien to the South and Tukwila to the Southeast. We serve the citizens of Beverly Park, Boulevard Park, Mt. View, North Shorewood, South Park, Top Hat and White Center.

Over the years our district has been shrinking. In 1942, our service area covered over 9.2 square miles. Today it is only 3.5. (see map to the right for the current service area). This has been due to the many city annexations by Burien, Tukwila and SeaTac.

As our district became smaller, our revenues became smaller too. In order to continue to provide the best possible service to our citizens, The North Highline Fire District and The Burien Fire District found a way to help each other. In 2011 they created an agreement to share the cost of their chief, administrative personnel and service area. With this agreement, North Highline was able to continue to provide service from station 19 and receive revenues for those served in Burien. This also helps Burien since they don’t have the expense of building a new station in North Burien. See the map to the left, the green area is North Highline and the area in yellow outlined in red is the area of Burien that North Highline services.

Today, with the agreement with The Burien Fire District and the Benefit Charge in place for the rest of North Highline, our fire district is in a very stable position for our future, something we haven’t felt for quite some time.

The Case of the Missing Smoke Alarms

Sparky the Fire Dog® and his friends set out to solve a mystery in The Case of the Missing Smoke Alarms, a new free app that teaches kids fire-safety skills in a way that’s both educational and fun. With a compelling new story, standards-aligned materials for math and English Language Arts, loads of tappable animations and even a high-flying game, this app will bring laughter and learning to your classroom or home.
Chief’s Report

On behalf of everyone at the North Highline Fire District, I’d like to welcome you to the first edition of our District Newsletter. Hopefully you will find this information helpful and interesting; the more knowledgeable you are about your fire district the better prepared you will be if there is a fire, but better yet, you may be able to help prevent one.

It is our mission to protect our citizens and their property. To this end we go on many aid and fire calls to help after danger strikes but this is just part of our job. We also work on preventing the fire or emergency before it begins. As new editions to the newsletter come out, you will see many preventative measures and suggestions that your family can use to be better prepared for emergencies.

For more information or to see how you can help, visit our website www.northhighlinefd.org or find us on facebook at www.facebook.com/NorthHighlineFD

Chief Mike Marrs
Chief of Burien/Normandy Park and North Highline Fire Districts

Run Report for 2014

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You are Invited to the North Highline Fire District Board Meetings

Your elected fire commissioners: Ray Austin, Liz Giba and Julie Hiatt, invite you to attend our monthly Board Meetings. They are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm in the fire station. Not only are these meetings open to the public but we encourage everyone to come and give your input, learn what challenges our district faces and what we are doing about them. If you would like to attend, you don’t need to RSVP, just show up. For more information go to our website at www.NorthHighlineFD.org or give us a call at 206-243-0330.

How old are your smoke alarms?

All smoke alarms need to be replaced when they are 10 years old.

Sparky.org

Learn all about fire trucks