

Orcas Island Fire and Rescue

<https://orcasfire.org/>

Madrona Voices attended the OICF Roundtable Meeting on March 29, 2018 and noted the questions directed to Orcas Island Fire and Rescue and their answers. We asked Scott Williams, Fire Chief, to review our notes and to also answer some questions that were not asked at the meeting. The following has been reviewed and edited by Fire Chief Williams.

Services: FIRE, EMS, RESCUE, WILDLAND, Marine rescue and transport.

Hours of operation: 24/7 via 4 shifts. Each shift has 1 paramedic, 1 EMT, and several volunteers on call.

Personnel abilities:

- Paramedic can provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) measures. These are medical interventions which include IV's, administering a specific range of prehospital/emergency medications, and performing invasive procedures (e.g. intubation – a procedure to insert a tube into the trachea to assist with patient's ability to breathe/ ventilate).
- EMT can do basic life-support and stabilization; cannot start IVs or perform invasive procedures; can administer only a few medications.
- It is not currently in the paramedic's scope of practice to provide sutures. Therefore, lacerations which require stitches need a higher level of medical care.
- Volunteers are trained to provide stabilization.
- Chief Williams mentioned that emergency services across the nation are designed to stabilize the patient then arrange transport to a higher care facility or personnel, if necessary.

What is the impact on you if the PHD fails to pass?

- Chief Williams said, "Well, we're not going away. We'd have to figure out how to handle the extra burden on the department." He mentioned that they are trying to start up a community paramedicine program, regardless of how the election turns out. Please note that a community paramedicine program is not a substitute for primary care from a physician/PA/Nurse practitioner.

We have airlift services off the island. Why do we need the Public Hospital District?

- Chief Williams: "Weather." He mentioned that storms and fog could keep aircraft grounded. He also said that the Coast Guard could come, but they don't always have medical personnel with them. In those cases, OI Fire and Rescue would need to provide the medical support on the transport.

- Insurance companies and CMS (Center for Medicare Services) have guidelines for what they consider a reimbursable medical condition for AirMedical transport. Minor medical conditions/injuries may not qualify and would, therefore, require ground transport services off the island to get someone to a hospital. OIFR has limited ability to provide off-island ambulance services.
 - Emergency: Will it threaten an individual's life, limb, or ability for them to maintain their current quality of life, physically and/or mentally. If so, then airlift services may be justified.

Regarding fundraising efforts:

Chief Williams has confirmed that OIFR has looked into getting additional funding for Ground Emergency Medical Transport (GEMT) and getting reimbursement, but they won't get the full reimbursement because they are Fire and EMS services. So, it won't bring in a lot more money.

Scott asked for the audience "show of hands" on whether or not they have airlift insurance with Airlift Northwest. Some raised their hands. Asked if they have it with Island Air Ambulance. Some raised their hands. He mentioned it was a good idea to have both.

More information here: <https://orcasfire.org/about/fag/>

Questions asked of Orcas Island Fire and Rescue

What is the allowed mill levy for the Orcas Island Fire and Rescue? What levy is currently in place on Orcas Island?

A: The mill levy allowed for a Fire District in the State of Washington is \$1.50/1000. Orcas Island Fire and Rescue is currently at 98.8 cents (basically 99 cents/\$1,000).

Does the Orcas Island Fire and Rescue take a position on the proposed public hospital district? Support, Neutral, Oppose?

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Orcas Island Fire and Rescue currently uses an off-island physician for medical responsibility when out on a call. Is this correct? Does the department see a need for on-island primary care?

A: Orcas Island Fire and Rescue has access to the San Juan County Medical Program Director (MPD) for "on-line" medical direction during a medical response. Our MPD is a Board Certified Emergency Room Physician and assists the paramedics and EMT's with a 'shared decision making process' of determining appropriate medical treatment based on our medical protocols. Our medical protocols are meant to stabilize the patient's condition prior to transport to a higher level of care. This is very important to explain. EMT's, Paramedics, and our Medical Direction (which is provided as written protocols and/or "on-line" support) provide care to stabilize emergent medical/traumatic injury conditions with the intent to transport to a higher level of medical care. This is the structure of EMS nationwide per the DOT (Department of

Transportation) education and standards. WE ARE NOT BY ANY MEANS A SUBSTITUTE FOR PRIMARY CARE SERVICES. This is a critical misunderstanding by some individuals.

So, yes, we do need primary care services on the island. Unless, our residents want to make regular trips to Anacortes, Lopez, or San Juan Island in order to receive regular medical care, diagnosis for medical conditions, prescriptions, and other services which EMS does not provide. Primary care identifies and treats medical conditions in a non-emergency care setting, and, if successful, helps to prevent medical conditions from becoming emergencies.