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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recent fire shows problem with Key Peninsula emergency response

Property loss estimated at \$500,000

The Key Peninsula Fire Department was dispatched to a fire at 4:29 am, Sunday, April 22, 2012 at the Glen Cove Hotel. The three-alarm blaze required assistance from neighboring districts because the local fire department was unable to raise enough fire fighters to respond.

“We’ve been warning our community about this situation for a while,” said Fire Chief Tom Lique. “We simply don’t have enough full-time fire fighters to provide an adequate emergency response.”

Five full-time Key Peninsula fire fighters arrived on scene at 4:41 a.m. One volunteer from the fire department was able to respond by 4:49 a.m. In the meantime, Gig Harbor Fire and Medic One arrived with two units and 10 personnel at 4:53 a.m. and 4:54 a.m. South Kitsap Fire and Rescue arrived with five additional personnel at 5:53 a.m. to provide relief to personnel already on scene.

“Relying on mutual aid and volunteers can add 20 minutes or more to our response times,” said Chief Lique. “We are grateful for the help, but fires don’t wait. Our response times are a serious safety issue for this community.”

The National Fire Protection Association says that fire districts with similar populations should be able to respond to a fire or emergency medical call within five minutes 90% of the time. Because of staffing shortages, the Key Peninsula Fire Department failed to meet this basic standard 85% of the time for fires and almost 92% of the time for medical calls in 2011. To understand just how serious this is, the fire department reported an average response time of 11 minutes 39 seconds for fires and 10 minutes 44 seconds for medical calls.

While no injuries or loss of life occurred, the Glen Cove Hotel, a historic landmark structure from the 1800s, sustained significant damage estimated at \$500,000. The Key Peninsula Fire Department has the fifth highest property loss record for fires in Pierce County because of its lack of emergency personnel and long response times.

The Key Peninsula Fire Department serves 17,000 people over 65 square miles. The department is considering asking voters to approve a four-year levy to provide a full-time response to fires, and reduce response times for medical calls. The levy would cost the owner of a \$225,000 home an additional \$ 7.70 per month. Better response times are the key to saving lives and property, as well as reducing homeowner insurance premiums, medical and ambulance fees. For more information about the department, visit www.keypeninsulafire.org.

