



**Key Peninsula Fire Department**  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: June 20, 2012  
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### **Key Peninsula Fire Department down two fire fighter positions**

The Key Peninsula Fire Department is short two fire fighters as of last week. The fire department has already raised the alarm about the challenges it is having responding with enough emergency personnel to fires. Losing two active fire fighters is a significant concern, says Fire Chief Tom Lique.

Lique should know; he's one of the fire fighters out on medical leave. Lique had shoulder replacement surgery in late May. While he was cleared to perform administrative work as of this week, doctors say he can't do any physical labor, such as fighting fires, for another X weeks.

Lique had postponed the surgery for the past year because the fire department was so short-handed. Eventually, the pain was so intense that he couldn't sleep at night, so he scheduled the procedure.

"There was no good time to get this done," he said. "But I was starting to get sleep deprived and that's dangerous in this line of work."

Unfortunately, while Lique was recovering, another fire fighter with the department was injured in a vehicle collision during an emergency call. The individual suffered a fractured sternum, and Lique says he will be out for a couple of months at least.

The fire department has spent the last few months making sure the public is aware of the challenges it faces in providing an adequate emergency response. The National Fire Protection Association says that fire districts the size of the Key Peninsula Fire Department should be able to respond to a fire or emergency medical call within five minutes 90% of the time. Because of staffing shortages, the department failed to meet this basic standard 85% of the time for fires and almost 92% of the time for medical calls in 2011. The Key Peninsula Fire Department has the fifth highest property loss record for fires in Pierce County because of its inability to provide an adequate response.

At its June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board of Fire Commissioners will vote on a resolution to place a levy on the November ballot to fund eight full-time fire fighter positions 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 (approximately 41 cents per \$1,000 based on 2012 assessed valuations) and raise \$800,000. All funds would pay for salaries, training, and safety equipment for eight fire fighter/EMTs positions— not for overhead or administration. Better response times are the key to saving lives and property, as well as reducing homeowner insurance premiums, medical and ambulance fees.

The Key Peninsula Fire Department serves 17,000 people over 65 square miles. For more information about the department, visit [www.keypeninsulafire.org](http://www.keypeninsulafire.org).

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