



Key Peninsula Fire Department
8911 Key Peninsula Highway KPN
Lakebay, WA 98349
(253) 884-2222
www.keypeninsulafire.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 18, 2012
CONTACT: Chief Tom Lique (tlique@piercefir.org) (253) 884-2222 Office (253) 255-4028 Cell

Lack of emergency personnel delays Key Peninsula response time to home fire

The Key Peninsula Fire Department took 16 minutes to reach a home fire this morning. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 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. Fire Chief Tom Lique says the response time was delayed because fire fighters were staffing one of the district's stations miles away from the fire.

"We cover 65 square miles, and only have enough fire fighters to staff one station full-time," said Chief Lique. "We rotate crews between stations, but it's impossible to predict where the calls will come from. Sometimes we get lucky. This morning was not one of those times."

It took almost two hours and eight additional fire fighters from neighboring Gig Harbor before the fire was contained. Two occupants were in the home. Both escaped and one, an elderly female, was transported to the hospital due to smoke inhalation. The home is considered a total loss.

"We shouldn't have to play 'public safety roulette,'" said Chief Lique. "People need to know what we are up against to provide our community with an adequate emergency response."

The average response times for the Key Peninsula Fire Department are 11 minutes 39 seconds for fires and 10 minutes 44 seconds for emergency medical calls – double that of the NFPA standard. Because of staffing shortages, the Key Peninsula Fire Department failed to meet NFPA's 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 long response times. In addition, homeowners pay higher insurance premiums because too few stations are staffed.

The Board of Fire Commissioners is asking voters to approve a four-year levy on the upcoming November General Election ballot to fund eight full-time fire fighters. If approved by a supermajority (60%) of voters, the levy would cost the owner of a \$175,000 home an additional \$6.42 per month (approximately 44 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property values for 2013). All levy funds would go toward salaries, training, and safety equipment for the fire fighters– not for overhead or administration. Chief Lique says that 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. ###