



# Camas Fire Department Newsletter

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## CFD Command Staff:

### Nick Swinhart

Fire Chief

### Allen Wolk

Battalion Chief

### Larry Larimer

Battalion Chief

### Mark Ervin

Battalion Chief

### Cliff Free

EMS Captain

### Randy Miller

Deputy Fire Marshal

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## *Our Mission:*

*To provide the highest quality service to our community through the protection and preservation of life and property*



## Letter from the Chief

*By Nick Swinhart, Fire Chief, Camas Fire Department*

As many of you have read in the newspaper recently, your Camas Fire Department has begun what we hope is a longstanding relationship with the dedicated staff of Washougal Fire Department. This six month trial consolidation will involve the cross staffing of personnel from both departments in an effort to decrease overtime and provide an even more efficient service to the residents of our communities. The difference may not be noticed by most residents, but citizens who require our services may see faster response times with more personnel, or may realize that the personnel who are responding to their emergencies are wearing both Camas and Washougal Fire Department uniforms. Additionally, there will be times when Washougal Fire Department volunteer firefighters are working out of Camas Fire Department stations. We at CFD welcome this new partnership with Washougal and the benefits it will bring to both departments and, most importantly, our citizens.

Paramedic services are provided to the citizens of East County Fire and Rescue, Camas, and Washougal, through a decades old agreement between the three entities. Due to decreases in property assessments and continuous changes in insurance reimbursement, the funding mechanism for this service has undoubtedly struggled in the past few years. In response to this challenge, we are undertaking an aggressive examination of ways we can decrease expenditures while at the same time working to ensure the service level we provide to our citizens is not impacted. This partnership with Washougal represents one such method. I have spent nearly 23 years in every aspect of this business, such as wild land firefighting, volunteer firefighter, private ambulance, fire department paramedic, and now administrator. I firmly believe that the paramedic system that CFD provides to its citizens and partner agencies is the best our taxpayer's money can buy. One thing my experience has taught me is the importance of relationships. We will continue to strengthen existing relationships and forge new ones, as we explore ways to improve and sustain the service we provide to our communities.

Your Camas Fire Department is the only fire department in Clark County that offers paramedic ambulance transport services. This model of offering pre-hospital medical care to the community started nearly 40 years ago in ground breaking systems in Los Angeles and Seattle. Since fire stations and their personnel are already located throughout our communities, cross-trained paramedic/firefighters have the advantage of being closer to most medical emergencies. Since our personnel also provide ambulance transport, this has the overall effect of decreasing response and transport times in situations where seconds often count. The end result is that our citizens get the best service their tax dollars can buy, in the shortest possible period of time.



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## Frequently Asked Questions

*When I called 911, I asked for an ambulance. Why did a fire truck also respond?*

Frequently medical calls require the assistance of more than just the two personnel that arrive on the ambulance. Since all of our staff are medically trained, we frequently utilize the extra personnel from an engine to assist our paramedics. This is in line with federal standards, and allows us to provide the best possible care for the patient.

*When I called 911, I asked for a fire truck. Why did an ambulance also respond?*

All of our paramedics are also cross-trained as firefighters (they even keep their firefighting gear on the ambulance). Federal standards and state law require that we have a minimum number of personnel on scene before we enter a burning structure or other hazardous incident. If you report a fire incident, it's common for an ambulance to respond with the fire truck to provide this assistance. This provides safety in numbers and allows us to extinguish your fire more quickly.



*Top Photo: Camas Fire Chief Nick Swinhart and Washougal Fire Chief Ron Schumacher conduct the first combined command staff meeting between both departments. Bottom Photo: Camas EMS Captain Cliff Free and Firefighter/Paramedic Callie Fraser pose with the new paramedic ambulance, which was purchased by the City of Washougal as part of the trial consolidation.*

## **Trial Consolidation Underway**

On July 13, 2011, the Camas and Washougal Fire Departments embarked on an innovative and ground breaking trial consolidation. Various forms of consolidation between the two entities have been talked about for decades, but this is the first time the departments have combined staff to explore how such a partnership would work. The six month trial consolidation is designed to save overtime and other expenditures, and to increase efficiency through elimination of duplication of effort. Camas and Washougal staff will be intermixed during this study period, with Camas paramedics working out of Washougal's Station 171 and Washougal staff working out of Camas Station 41 and 42. Washougal volunteer firefighters are also able to schedule shifts out of Camas fire stations. The plan also calls for the City of Washougal to purchase a new paramedic transport unit (see photo above), a cardiac monitor, and the transfer of \$95,000 to the EMS fund to help stabilize the budget.

We are just a little over one month in to the trial consolidation and things seem to be working much better than expected. Both departments are already noticing overtime savings, and the ability to have more people available to schedule gives more flexibility to the command staff. Washougal citizens now also have a fully staffed paramedic transport unit available at their downtown station.

This is an exciting period of time in the history of both departments. If the six month trial consolidation continues to be successful, our hope is that a more permanent partnership can be explored in the future.