



Lopez Island Fire & EMS

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024



Lopez Fire & EMS: By the Numbers

Lopez Fire & EMS responds to many incidents all over the island, from helping the sick and injured to fighting grassfires. The District partners with the Lopez Island Clinic, the San Juan County Sheriff's office, the Island Oil Spills Association and many other agencies across the island and the county.

In 2023, Lopez Fire and EMS responded to:

- 14 fires
- 17 fire alarms
- 423 medical calls (including car accidents)
- 5 search and rescue calls
- 3 hazardous condition calls
- 16 burn complaints
- 37 public assistance or non-life-threatening events

As of the time of this publication, the **2024 call volume is over 160**. Last year at this time, the call count was 125.



Photo credit: Dr. Joshua Corsa

Chief's Corner

One of the biggest **challenges** for a small, combination agency like ours is recruitment and retention of **volunteers**. Lopez Fire and EMS has a paid captain fire medic on duty 24-hours a day seven-days-a-week, but we rely heavily on volunteers from our island community to respond to incidents. Without these volunteers, **EMS and fire response would not be possible** on Lopez Island. The need for new volunteers is a never-ending cycle and, with that, I ask that you to consider reaching out to see if emergency services would be **a good fit for you**. Although it isn't for everyone, being a volunteer EMT and/or Firefighter is a rewarding and active experience, a great place to give back and to grow.

As we rotate our Fire and EMS trainings, our next **EMT class** will begin early November and continue into March of 2025. The class will be held on Island at the village fire station and will be taught by Captain Nicole O'Bryant. Nicole will be assisted by our dedicated EMT's. Our next **Fire Academy** will take place in 2026 and will be expertly run by Captain Michelle McDarmont.

Consider joining our agency to make new connections and to learn some new skills. Join with a family member or friend as an exciting and fulfilling outlet that can pay dividends for years. With the variety of incident types and services provided, Lopez Fire and EMS is the perfect place to prepare for a career in EMS and/or fire fighting.

If you are interested, stop by the village station, or visit lopezfire.org and click on the contact link.

—Adam Bigby, Fire Chief



Are you Wildfire Ready?

Significant wildfire in the San Juan Islands is rare, but that doesn't mean there aren't risks. Now is a great time to take action to prepare yourself and your property for wildfire by taking simple steps to **harden your home**.

The most common way that wildfire spreads to homes is through embers. If you take steps to lessen the chance of those embers igniting your buildings, they stand a much higher chance of surviving the event.

Getting together with neighbors to assist each other in preparing your properties can make quick work of hardening your home. Helping your neighbors will help you as well, as structure fires will burn hotter and spread more embers than a wildfire alone.

Fire Ready Neighbors

Lopez Fire and EMS has partnered with neighboring agencies and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources in a new initiative, **Fire Ready Neighbors**. This cooperative program provides information and guidance on preparing your home for the possibility of wildfire.

Sign up for Wildfire Ready Neighbors this Spring at <https://wildfireready.dnr.wa.gov/> to get a free action plan to help you prepare for wildfire. Then, if you live on Lopez Island, you can also have a fire expert come to your home to provide input on specific actions you can take. Request a visit by contacting Lopez Fire and EMS at (360) 468-2991 or at lopezfire.org by clicking on the contact link.

Lopez Fire and EMS has funding to provide **20** site visits between now and **June 30th 2024**.

Do you have an E-bike?

While convenient, an **e-bike** can also pose a risk of fire. Many people may not realize that fires started by batteries have become a **leading cause of fatal fires**.

In a recent NYTimes article, *How E-Bike Battery Fires Became a Deadly Crisis in New York City*, New York City's Fire Commissioner Laura Kavanagh warned, "These fires are uniquely dangerous. With little or no warning, the batteries can ignite, leaving seconds for people to escape. In just three years, lithium battery fires have tied electrical fires and have surpassed blazes started by cooking and smoking for major causes of fatal fires in the city."

Remember never charge your e-bike in an exit pathway of your home. **Charging stations** should be set up outside and, preferably, in a **building separate from where you sleep**.

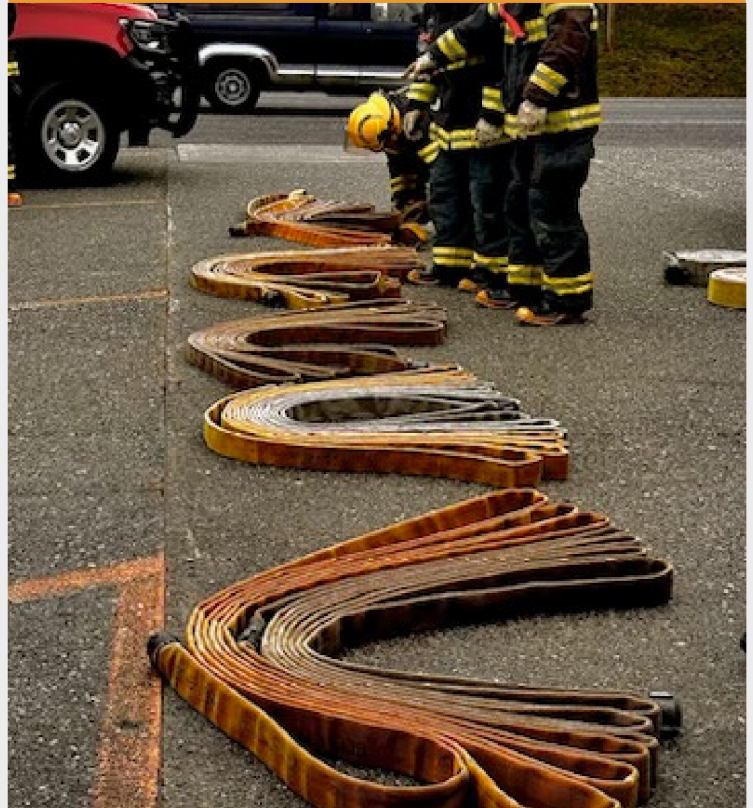


Photo Credit: Monico Mackinnon

Facilities

Lopez Fire and EMS is still in the feasibility and needs assessment phase of our much-needed facility repair and upgrade project. We have been working with TCA Architects to further narrow down ideas to fit within a reasonable budget before we figure out the best way to proceed with the endeavor.

Apparatus

Simple Green



Photo Credit: Monico Mackinnon

Lopez Fire and EMS is excited to announce the addition of a wildland urban interface engine to our fleet. This type 3 fire engine comes to us from the Shasta Trinity National Forest in California, through an equipment grant with the USDA Forest Service. This 2004 engine was retired after serving in the park service for 19 years and is a welcome addition to our fleet. We have named this unit "Simple Green" because of its color and all the Simple Green™ cleaning product used to get it ready and back into service. Yes, we are keeping it green; the Chief likes the color and doesn't want to hear another word about it!

New Engine

Lopez Fire and EMS ordered a new fire engine, the first in 28 years for our island. After an extensive review of qualifications that involved 5 different fire engine manufacturers, the contract was awarded to Spartan Emergency Response. The engine build will take well over a year but will be a welcome addition to our ageing fleet.

Rescue Remount

You will soon see Rescue 41 return to the Island as it has been remounted onto a new chassis. This unit is the first line of defense for all Fire and Rescue calls. It was removed from service last July due to pump failure and has been sorely missed this past year. Grants both from Washington State DNR and the Department of Ecology have partially funded this project.

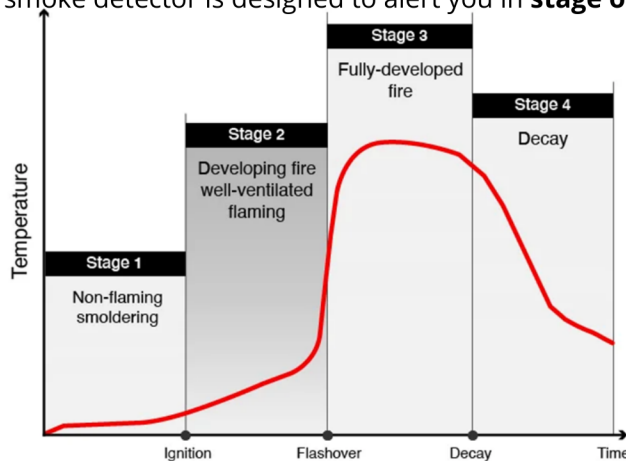
Is Your House Fire-Safe?

According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 2022, fires damaged 358,000 homes and resulted in 3,700 deaths in the United States.

Working smoke detectors save lives. When was the last time you changed your smoke detector batteries or even tested your smoke alarms?

These simple tools are an early warning system that alerts you **before that smoke becomes fire**. The earlier that 911 is called, the quicker we get on the road and the less damage your home may sustain.

The chart below shows the fire growth stages; your smoke detector is designed to alert you in **stage one**.



Learn CPR. Save a Life.

You never know when you may need to help save a life.

Schedule or sign-up for an American Heart Association First Aid and/or CPR class at the Lopez Fire Station by contacting Summer at (360) 468-2991 or lopezfire@lopezfire.com

When a fire hits the rapid growth shown in **stage 2**, and flashes, that means all of the contents have hit their full ignition temperature.

Putting out a fire this hot requires a lot of water and often it is so hot that it can only be put out when it gets well into **stage 4**.

Lopez Fire and EMS will come to your home and perform a **fire risk and safety assessment**. A home safety assessment can help **reduce fire risk**.

If you would like a visit for a home assessment, contact Lopez Fire and EMS (360) 468-2991 or use the contact link at lopezfire.org

2024 Lopez Fire Academy

On April 21, 2024, Lopez Fire and EMS completed the first full, in-house Fire Academy since 2019. Nine recruits graduated, including two students from Lopez High School. As part of their training, the class attended Live Fire exercises at the Washington State Fire training facility in North Bend. During this trip, Captain Michelle McDarmont, our training officer, and Sam Fowler, the academy's lead instructor, put the recruits' training to the test. Everyone performed well and learned a lot!



Photos: Andrea Huss Photography

Contact Lopez Fire & EMS:

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