



**ORCAS ISLAND
FIRE & RESCUE**



February 18th, 2025

Statement concerning Immigration enforcement and County emergency services

Fellow Islanders,

Due to recent federal government changes in immigration enforcement, the emergency services agencies of San Juan County feel that it is necessary to make this statement. Fire and Police agencies in Washington State do not report to federal immigration agencies, in fact, Washington State Laws, local ordinances and federal privacy laws prohibit the sharing of personal information with any federal agency.

Your Fire, Emergency Medical, and Police agencies want to make sure that there are no barriers to you being provided with emergency services. Please remember:

- All entities that provide medical care adhere to privacy laws known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). This law requires that personal information only be shared with those who are involved in your care. This includes all air ambulance services utilized for emergency transport in San Juan County and receiving hospitals.
- Fire and EMS agencies do not interact with, have any reason to interact with, or have any requirement to interact with immigration enforcement. Involving immigration agencies in any fire or EMS actions would be unethical and counteractive to the purpose of fire and EMS departments.
- Washington State Law (RCW 10.93.160) states that it is not the primary purpose of state and local law enforcement agencies or school resource officers to enforce civil federal immigration law. The immigration status of an individual is not a matter for police action. The purpose of the San Juan County Sheriff's Office (SJCSO) is to protect all members of the community, regardless of their immigration status. SJCSO is committed to fostering an environment where everyone feels safe reporting crimes or concerns without fear of deportation or immigration-related actions. Furthermore, Individuals cannot be detained

solely for the purpose of determining their immigration status, nor can they be held for a civil immigration warrant or hold request.

- To alleviate stress on patients while in the hospital, it is important to remember that Immigration officers cannot demand to see patients or gain access to private hospital areas. Every patient in Washington hospitals can choose to “opt out” of the hospital directory (RCW 70.02.010). This means their name will not be listed at the front desk, and staff won’t confirm if they are there. We encourage people who value their privacy, or those advocating for them, to ask for this option.

Each individual response agency may be taking their own actions to safeguard residents. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your emergency response provider listed below.

Sincerely,

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