

Chapter 15

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health Care

Existing Health Care Facilities

Today, there is only one health care facility located at Birch Bay. The facility is a clinic located at the intersection of the Birch Bay-Lynden Road and Harborview Road. It is open during the business hours, during the work week.

Emergency medical services are accessed through the enhanced 911 system and provided by three fire departments. Both Fire District #7 and #13 operate emergency medical aid services. District #7 serves from the Bay Road south and District #13 serves from the Bay Road north. Each District provides Certified Emergency Medical Technicians and First Responders. Whatcom Medic One Ambulance Service provides paramedic ambulance transport. This service is provided by the Bellingham Fire Department. St. Joseph's hospital provides a licensed and verified level II Trauma Center and is listed in the top 100 facilities in the United States for Cardiac Care services.

Adequacy of Existing Health Care Facilities

The existing health clinic seems to serve its customers well. With the increased population, additional clinics or doctor's offices need to be located in the area. The elderly population makes up a significant part of the total area population. The health care needs of the elderly become more important every day. A nursing home or a long-term elderly care facility probably could succeed in the area. With the growth of a community with increasing numbers of retired citizens comes an increasing number of medical emergencies, and need for preventative health care.

Proposed Improvements in the Health Care System

Since most health care services are provided by for-profit organizations, the marketplace will determine what type of health care facilities are to be located in the Birch Bay area. If the market for a nursing home or long-term care facility exists, a facility will be built.

Due to the increasing number of requests for emergency medical services the fire departments serving Birch Bay have placed increased emphasis on improving the level of service provided. A key element to the success of these programs is funding. Special attention to property tax reduction legislation should be considered, as a loss of funding would have a negative impact to the level of service provided.

Fire Protection Services

In order to protect life and property, and to provide the best fire protection possible in the neighborhoods, fire districts carefully plan the location of fire stations. In accordance with standard fire protection practices, fire stations are generally located with respect to existing and anticipated land uses and densities, the physical environment, fire flow requirements and desired minimum response time. As a result, the dwellings in the Birch Bay community are within two to five miles of district fire stations. Figure 15-1 shows the boundaries of Fire District 7 and the Consolidated Fire District 13.

Fire protection services are coordinated within the jurisdiction of each fire district. The districts plan fire station locations, purchase firefighting apparatus and recruit and train volunteer firefighters from within the Birch Bay area. Volunteer firefighters reside within fire district boundaries and attend monthly meetings. In addition, each firefighter has the opportunity to receive emergency medical training (EMT) and Basic Life Support Training (BLS). Fire District #7, and #13 also have career firefighters. The provisions of emergency aid protection in each district are provided oversight by the Washington State Department of Health Office or Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Prevention. Each fire district provides program management and follows the Patient Care Procedures and Protocols, developed locally.

Figure 15-1
Fire District Boundaries

Fire District 7

Existing Facilities and Services. Fire District 7 serves a 75 square mile area in Whatcom County including the city of Ferndale and the southern part of the Birch Bay Community Planning Area. Fire District 7 serves the area south of the Bay Road.

The District is a combination paid and volunteer fire department. There are currently 18 paid employees which include a fire chief, Administrative Assistant, Office Assistant, Training Officer Lieutenant, Maintenance Officer Captain, three Company Officer Lieutenants, and nine fire fighters. The District also has 78 volunteer officer/fire fighters posted to six stations.

The District owns and operates three staff vehicles, seven engines, three rescue/pumpers, two aid ambulances, two water tenders, one utility Re-Hab, one utility service and three utility units to support requests for fire and aid services from the general public.

The District operates six stations. The two fire stations serving the Birch Bay community are Station 4 at Point Whitehorn and Station 2 at the Kickerville and Brown Road intersection. The Whitehorn Station is equipped with one Rescue/Aid pumper and one pumper. The Kickerville/Brown Road Station is equipped with one Rescue/Aid pumper, one water tender, and one pumper.

In the year 2000, the District responded to 1252 alarms. Of the total, 313 alarms were for fire, 813 for emergency medical services, 88 for hazardous conditions, and 38 for other purpose. The average District wide response time was 6.19 minutes.

Within the Birch Bay Community Planning Area, the District responded to 23 alarms with an average response time of 7.19 minutes.

Standards. The gold standard for successful emergency medical services is four to six minute response times for aid services and 15 to 20 minutes for ambulance services. EMS system response times within this time period have been proven to lead to an increased number of lives being saved in incidents in which time is critical. Response for fire emergencies is also time dependent and require larger numbers of personnel and fire suppression equipment. Fire District 7 responds between seven to eight minutes. Considering the voluntary nature of the district operation and the

location of fire stations these response times are not likely to improve. To shorten the response time requires the manning of the fire station at Point Whitehorn on a round the clock basis. The cost of such an operation is significant.

Consolidated Fire District No. 13

Existing Facilities and Services. Fire District 13 serves all of the Birch Bay community planning area north of Bay Road. They also serve the City of Blaine, as well as the Custer, and Haynie areas. The Fire District provides fire protection, emergency medical, and hazardous materials response services. Fire District #13 has entered into a Cooperative Interlocal Agreement with Fire District #3, and #5 that has resulted in the formation of the North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Services (NWFRS) organization. The NWFRS organization serves a 165 square mile total area. This agreement allows enhanced training programs and more depth in staffing, volunteers, and resources than would otherwise be possible.

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Services organization is a combination paid and volunteer fire department. There are currently 28 paid employees, which include a fire chief, Assistant Fire Chief, 3 Division Chiefs, Training Captain, Volunteer Resource Coordinator, Finance Manger, 2 Administrative Assistants, two apparatus maintenance technicians, 1 Emergency Medicine Physician, five Career Company Officer Lieutenants, and nine Career Firefighters. The NWFRS organization also has 165 volunteer officer/fire fighters posted to 10 fire stations.

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue operates 7 staff vehicles, 14 engines, 12 aid ambulances, 5 water tenders, 1 Re-Habilitation unit, one Breathing Air response unit and 5 utility units to support requests for fire and aid services from the general public.

Fire District 13 operates 5 stations. The 3 fire stations serving the Birch Bay community are Station 1 at 4581 Birch Bay-Lynden Road, Station 2 located in Custer, and Station 4 located in Blaine. The Birch Bay Station is staffed 24 hours a day with career Firefighters/EMTS and is also served by 30 volunteer members participating in a sleeper program. The Birch Bay Station is equipped with 2 Rescue/Aid pumpers, 1 ladder truck, and 1 BLS Ambulance Aid vehicle. The Custer Station is equipped with one Rescue/Aid pumper, 1 water tender, and 1 BLS Ambulance Aid vehicle; the Blaine station has 2 Rescue/Aid pumpers and 1 BLS Ambulance.

In the year 2002, the District responded to 1038 alarms. Of the total, 178 alarms were for fire, 686 for emergency medical services, 27 for hazardous conditions, and 147 for other purposes.

Within the Birch Bay Community Planning Area, the District responded to 403 alarms with a Fractal response time utilizing a 90% standard of 6 minutes or less. In the Semiahmoo area the Fire District responded to 40 alarms with a Fractal response time utilizing a 90% standard of 7 minutes and 30 seconds or less.

Standards. The gold standard for successful emergency medical services is four to six minute response times for aid services and 15 to 20 minutes for ambulance services. EMS system response times within this time period have been proven to lead to an increased number of lives being saved during medical emergencies in which time is critical. Response for fire emergencies is also time dependent and require larger numbers of personnel and fire suppression equipment. Fire District #13 responds between five to six minutes. To shorten the response time the fire District has career and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians manning the fire station in Birch Bay 24 hours a day.

Proposed Expansions and Improvements. Increased population, particularly in the Birch Point area will necessitate the manning the fire station at Semiahmoo on a 24-hour basis. Additional equipment will also need to be brought to the station to maximize its effectiveness. These costs will be born by taxes paid by the growing population. The Birch Bay station now being utilized as a manned fire station must under go substantial remodeling in the future to house firefighters and EMTs.

Police Services

Police services to the residents and business of the Birch Bay area are provided by the Whatcom County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department headquarters are located in the Whatcom County courthouse in Bellingham. Table 15-2 presents overall Sheriff's Department calls in Whatcom County from 1996 through 2000. The statistics in the table indicate that the incidents calls have decreased slightly over the last five year period.

**Table 15-1
Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Calls for Service**

Year	Total Calls
2000	24411
1999	24759
1998	26738
1997	25702
1996	25957

Table 15-3 presents the incidence statistics for Birch Bay area from 1996 through 2000. The incidence statistics in the table show that the number of incidences is decreasing.

Standards

Standards for police services are measured in terms of number of uniformed police officers per 1,000 population, the response time to an emergency call, and the number of incidences per 1,000 population. To increase the standards beyond what exists today, the Whatcom County Sheriff's office would have to establish a police precinct office in the Birch Bay area and man it around the clock with five uniformed officers. This level of service would approach the level of municipal police services.

**Table 15-2
Birch Bay Police Incident Reports 1996 - 2000**

Year	High Crimes	Traffic	Domestic	Misc.	Total
2000	126	128	141	1050	1445
1999	147	154	150	1092	1543
1998	200	187	141	1289	1817
1997	142	150	116	1112	1520
1996	180	180	121	1046	1527

Source: Whatcom County Sheriff's Office

Proposed Improvements

To greatly improve police presence in the area.

Industrial Safety

Living near or next to industrial areas poses some potential safety problems. Often hazardous chemicals and other hazardous chemicals are transferred to industrial sites to be manufactured into consumer products, such as crude oil to gasoline, etc. Other hazardous materials are used in manufacturing process, such as butane for heating purposes. Industrial operators, over the years, have developed safety procedures that minimize potential accidents leading to hazardous conditions for both the workers at the site and to those living and working in the near-by area. Most hazardous industrial operations are regulated and monitored by the federal, state and local governments.

Desired Health and Safety Future

Vision Statement - Public Health and Safety

Crime that periodically raises its ugly head in all communities has subsided considerably in the Birch Bay Community as a result of crime prevention education and increased police presence. Further, the Community has matured, neighbors know their neighbors and neighborhood crime watch programs have caught on. Fire service has also improved. Fire and emergency medical response time has decreased considerably due to having constructed additional fire stations and staffing them with full-time fire and emergency medical service personnel. As a result of improved fire services, the fire insurance rates on residential structures have decreased significantly. Fire and police safety seminars are being conducted throughout the community on a regular basis.

Goals - Public Health and Safety

- Goal PS 1: To achieve and maintain a community feeling of living in a safe and secure environment.
- Goal PS 2: To reduce fire and police response times.
- Goal PS 3: To promote and encourage citizen involvement in such things as neighborhood watch programs and emergency awareness.
- Goal PS 4: To achieve and maintain high standards in providing normal and emergency medical treatment.
- Goal EH 1: To work cooperatively with other agencies, especially the City of Blaine, the Blaine School District and Fire Districts 7 and 13 in providing facilities and programs relating to both community education and health.

Action Strategies

1. Amend the zoning code to allow (outright) medical service facilities to be located in Resort Commercial district.

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2. Promote the development of a nursing home or long-term care facility in the Birch Bay area.
3. Continue to work with Fire Districts No. 7 and 13 and assist them in making improvements when warranted by increased population growth and increased commercial development.
4. Assure adequate fire flow in the water system for fire-fighting purposes.
5. Work with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Department to bring more uniformed patrol officers to the area during critical periods.
6. Promote the County Sheriff's enforcement of speed limits on Birch Bay Drive and the provision of safety measures such as pedestrian crossings and safety warning signs.
7. Identify a site and local funding source for a future police station.