

Three Alarm Fire

Role of the PIO



Kelly Hawks

Public Information & Education Officer



Valley Regional Fire Authority

December 26, 2017
Heritage Building Fire
Downtown Auburn



Valley Regional Fire Authority

About the VRFA

- Established in 2007 (Algona, Auburn & Pacific)
- Provides service to 37 square miles in South King County and North Pierce County
- Resident population is over 89,000
- Five fire stations staffed with career firefighters
- Located in the Seattle media market
- 93 Line Firefighters
- Two Civilian PIOs, Four shift PIOs



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VRFA PIO Background and Experience

•Kimberly Terhune – BA from Western Washington University in Communications (Journalism), 26 years at the VRFA (legacy Auburn Fire Department), Basic PIO, Advanced PIO, NIOA Member

•Kelly Hawks – BA from University of Washington in Communications (Public Relations), 9 years at the VRFA, Basic PIO, Advanced PIO, NIOA Member, Government Social Media Member



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Programs Managed by PIOs

- Scout Night
- Fire Extinguisher Classes
- Fire Safety Classes
- Fire Evacuation
- Disaster Preparedness Classes
- Bike Helmet Program
- Car Seat Inspection Sites
- Smoke Alarm Program
- School Safety Programs
- Life Jacket Program
- Station Tours
- Juvenile Fire Setters
- Fire Watch Newsletter
- Social Media
- Annual Report
- Community Events



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VRFA PIO Procedures

- Twitter
- On Scene
- On Camera
- Responds to Tweets and Email
- Press Release
- Off-duty response to larger fires
- Off-duty smaller fires handled by Shift PIOs



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Back to December 26, 2017



Photo Credit: KOMO News



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Photo Credit: KOMO News

Response Challenges

- Rush hour
- Weather
- Traffic near and around scene



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Photo Credit: KOMO News

Finally On Scene

•PIO Terhune tweets that PIO Hawks is on scene



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On Scene

- Checked in with Battalion Chief
- Gathered information
- Sent out first Tweet and gave the event a hashtag (#)



Valley Regional Fire Authority

On Scene

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On Scene



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On Scene

- Continued to send out updates via Twitter
- Continued to check in with the media



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On Scene

- Continued to send out updates via Twitter
- Continued to check in with the media



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Can you spot the error?

On Scene



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Can you spot the error?

Should be "uninjured"

Responding to an Error



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On Scene

- American Red Cross
 - Command assigned Puget Sound Fire PIO to Red Cross
 - Tweeted location of Red Cross for displaced residents and media



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On Scene

- Continued Tweeting updates, checking in with media and returning media phone calls.



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Leaving the Scene

- Left scene around 11 p.m.
- Checked in with all media on site
 - Did they need anything else
 - Let them know I would be back in the morning
- Final Tweet of the night

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The Next Morning

Photo Credit: KOMO News

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The Next Morning

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Days Following the Fire



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Questions?



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