



## Chimney Safety Tips for the Season

Fireplaces and chimneys are common sources of home heating fires during winter, but a few precautions can help keep your home safe:

- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned yearly by a certified professional.
- Open the damper fully before lighting a fire for proper ventilation.
- Burn only dry, seasoned wood—never trash or wrapping paper.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms regularly.
- Keep decorations and furniture at least three feet away from a fireplace.
- Use a protective screen or glass doors to contain sparks.
- Place ashes in a metal container outdoors—embers can stay hot for days.
- If you see heavy smoke or hear a roaring sound, evacuate and call 911.



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## When Seconds Matter: Building SETFA's Water Rescue Program

In 2023, Southeast Thurston Fire Authority took an important step toward improving public safety with the launch of its Water Rescue Program. Before that, the district relied on standard response procedures for water emergencies. Today, it has a dedicated team of trained Rescue Swimmers and Swiftwater Technicians ready to respond when every second counts.



Thanks to the leadership of Firefighter Josh Burkhardt, Water Rescue Program Coordinator, the effort has grown from an idea on paper to a fully developed program built on training, teamwork, and preparedness. SETFA worked closely with Lacey Fire Department and the Thurston County Sheriff's Office to create shared procedures, equipment programs, and joint training opportunities that strengthen water rescue capabilities throughout the region.

To date, nine firefighters are certified as Rescue Swimmers through an intensive, performance-based program aligned with national standards, and eleven are trained as Swiftwater Technicians—eight of whom hold both certifications. Training combines classroom construction with open-water components that emphasize victim approach, recovery, and self-rescue in challenging conditions.

From classroom to current, these firefighters are building the confidence, endurance, and skill needed to respond safely and effectively. Every hour of training brings SETFA closer to one goal: being ready to serve when seconds matter.

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# S.E. THURSTON FIRE AUTHORITY



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WINTER 2025



## A Message from Fire Chief Mark King

The holidays are a time to reflect on what I'm grateful for—friends, family, and our community. We couldn't save lives and protect property without your ongoing support.

I'm pleased to share that S.E. Thurston Fire Authority once again passed its most recent financial audit. It's important for you to know that we are responsible stewards of your tax dollars.

We are also exploring funding options to remodel fire stations and replace aging apparatus. Our fire stations have served us for more than 30 years. We take excellent care of them, but our community has grown—and they haven't kept pace. Here is what the remodels will accomplish:



**FASTER RESPONSE TIMES.** Some stations need additional space for more firefighters, while others require staffing quarters to provide 24-hour emergency response. These projects will add units and help us reach you faster.



**ROOM FOR MODERN APPARATUS.** Fire engines and other vehicles are much larger than they were 30 years ago. Enlarged station bays will protect these investments from weather and vandalism.



**HEALTHIER, SAFER FIREFIGHTERS.** Funding from the bond will upgrade or add diesel exhaust removal systems and decontamination units to help prevent work-related illnesses such as cancer.



**LOWER INSURANCE PREMIUMS.** Adding staffing at some stations, such as Lake Lawrence and McIntosh Ridge, will help improve the community's risk rating and reduce costs for homeowners.

Remodel projects are planned for Stations 21 (City of Yelm), 22 (Lake Lawrence), 24 (Rainier), and 25 (McIntosh Ridge). We can remodel four stations with this bond for less than the cost of building just one new facility from the ground up—a gift that benefits all of us this holiday season.



## IN MEMORIAM: **Jeremy McClellan**

SE Thurston Fire Authority honors the life and legacy of Firefighter/EMT Jeremy McClellan, who passed away on September 25, 2025, after a courageous battle with cancer. For more than a decade, Jeremy served his community with skill, faith, and compassion—qualities that defined every role he held and every life he touched. He will remain an enduring part of our department's heart and history.