

Regionalization of Fire Districts

Outcomes of Small Departments Joining Larger Organizations

Questions for Small Fire Departments that have merged or used a “Contract for Services” model.

AGENCY: Mike Messer, Dep Chief Fire and Life Safety, started with Snohomish County Fire District 7. He has been with the agency through both mergers. (425.486.1217)

1. Did you merge with another Fire Department or contract for services?

Merged: Twice.

- In 2016 Snohomish County Fire District (FD) #7 merged with the Monroe FD.
- In January 2020 that combined FD merged with Lake Stevens FD.
- In 2021 the name was changed to Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue (SR FR)

Contract for Services:

- The SR FR provides contract for services to Mill Creek and Sultan.

2. When did that happen?

Year: 2016 and 2020

3. What were some of the reasons you chose that action?

- Operational efficiency. They had to close stations at times due to lack of FF.
- They lacked Fire Administration personnel including Fire Marshall and Education Services.
- They were understaffed in administrative support.

4. Did you get the services you needed? Why or why not?

Yes:

- They could back-fill operational holes. They got more fire fighters (FF), going from 70 to 230. They no longer had to close stations due to understaffing.
- Able to add more Fire Administration for logistics and infrastructure. They gained a Fire Marshall when they joined Monroe and Education Services when they joined Lake Stevens.
- They could get administrative support positions such as an Administrative Secretary.
- The larger size allowed them to apply for the Commission on Fire International Accreditation. They are moving that direction. Their FD can use those national standards. It is raising the standard for their organization.

5. What were some of the challenges?

- The biggest difference was in the Fire Administration. It took time for retirements to occur to get the right match between what they needed and the Fire Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs that they started with. Battalion Chiefs and below don't see much difference.

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- They needed to reorganize to get the right staff in the right functions.
- They needed to focus on building one team instead of having 3 teams side-by-side.

6. Are you satisfied with the input your agency has regarding the provision of services?

Yes: They like the merger rather than contract for services. They have input to all meetings and decisions. They interact with City Councils. They initially had 10 commissioners when the Boards combined. They are hoping to eventually get to 7 Members of the Board.

7. Are you satisfied with the cost of the services you are receiving?

Yes: They didn't save a lot of money, but they were able to provide better service and fill all the gaps with the same amount of money.

8. Would you take the same action again?

Yes: 100%. It's worth the effort.

Submitted by Milton Curtis, Board Commissioner