

# Our Broadband Story: Stevens County Firefighters and EMS



Training increasingly relies on broadband.

There are 13 fire districts in Stevens County with approximately 325 firefighters and 75 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, **mostly volunteer**. These are the first responders in our rural community.

## SAVING LIVES, SAVING PROPERTY

Our volunteer fire districts provide the lifesaving benefit and security of delivering a faster response time than Stevens County emergency services. District firefighters are the first responders to grass, field, or wildland fires and the only responders to structure fires. EMS personnel may be 30-45 minutes faster on the scene than an ambulance; in the case of a heart attack or stroke, minutes can mean the difference between life and death.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

We must be prepared for our most common disaster – wildfires. Our roads could be impassable or, more likely, disaster emergency response would be committed “anywhere else” in our 2,541-square mile rural county. It is essential that districts maintain the level of training and equipment necessary to stand on their own.

## TRAINING IS CRITICAL

By law, firefighters are required to complete about **240 hours of annual training**. By law, EMS personnel are required to complete a minimum number of education hours per certification period:

- Emergency Responder (EMR) = **15 hours**
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) = **30 hours**
- Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) = **60 hours**
- Paramedic = **150 hours**

Improving the access to online training is a priority! Much of this training is *available only online* and the trend is *continuing upward*. And many of our volunteer first-responders are not able to access this vital training at home.

## Training challenges

Some fire stations do not have internet connectivity and some do not get cell service. Many of the volunteers do not have the capability of accessing online resources at home. Their solution is to travel to the ambulance facility in Colville to watch the training videos which could be a 50-60 mile one-way trip for some volunteers.

*"Training that is not available locally requires an online livestream, videoconference, or travel to Spokane. Most of the stations in the 13 fire districts do not have internet connections. Issues are availability, speed, affordability, and bandwidth caps."*

Dave Klimas  
EMT and Firefighter  
Stevens County FPD #12  
Stevens County/Spokane Tribe  
Broadband Action Team  
[dave.k@hughes.net](mailto:dave.k@hughes.net)  
(509) 675-8843

## Contact Information

### Debra Hansen, Director

WSU Stevens County Extension  
(509) 684-2588  
[debra.hansen@wsu.edu](mailto:debra.hansen@wsu.edu)

### Bert Klimas, Coordinator

SC/ST Broadband Action Team  
(509) 738-6876  
[bertinrice@hughes.net](mailto:bertinrice@hughes.net)

[extension.wsu.edu/stevens/broadband-action-team](http://extension.wsu.edu/stevens/broadband-action-team)

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