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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lake Stevens Fire Implements Rapid Entry Rescue Swimmer Program

Lake Stevens Fire is pleased to announce the implementation of their Rapid Entry Rescue Swimmer Program. Rapid Entry Rescue Swimmers respond to potential drowning situations, entering the water and swimming to the aid of a patient.

Their training focused on learning procedures and techniques to save people, and recognizing the personal hazards associated with that of the rescue swimmer. Training included proper use of personal and water rescue equipment; various types of surface, subsurface, entanglement, and confined environment procedures; as well as search patterns. As rescue swimmers, they are trained to perform free dives up to 40 feet on one breath-hold.

Fire Chief Kevin O'Brien commented, "We have the largest lake in the county and many smaller lakes and waterways. It is our responsibility to provide the best service we can to the people of the Lake Stevens area, our surrounding partners, and each other. Congratulations and thank you to the following Lake Stevens Fire members who have recently graduated from Rapid Entry Rescue Swimmer Training: Paramedic Joe Virnig, Firefighter Chris Harrott, Firefighter Chris Robertson, Firefighter Adam Blue, Paramedic Shaun Kelly, and Firefighter Joe Mulligan."

Lake Stevens water temperatures range from 44.9 – 57 degrees fahrenheit, and anything less than 70 degrees fahrenheit is considered cold water. Cold water drownings are known to be viable 45 minutes to an hour after submersion. And having a rescue swimmer on-duty in Lake Stevens increases the likelihood of a quicker response to the water emergency.

Our District has multiple beaches and parks on the water that see heavy traffic, especially during the summer months, and many of our roads parallel the shoreline. In 2017 alone, Lake Stevens Fire responded to 10 water rescue calls. This is a much higher frequency than any other technical rescue type service.

Paramedic Joe Virnig commented, "We look forward adding a new service to the Lake Stevens community, as well as providing increased awareness on swimmer exhaustion and personal flotation device usage. Our LSF rescue swimmers are training hard year round, and we are ready to provide emergency service as needed."

The Lake Stevens Fire rescue swimmers will be response ready as of July 15. The ultimate goal is to have a quick deployment and rapid response to safely perform a successful surface and subsurface rescue with confidence.

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**LAKE STEVENS
FIRE**

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