



San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1
San Juan Island Emergency Medical Services
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Hospital District Reorganization

In July 2020 the District engaged in important strategic planning to work out its mission, vision, values, and goals. It has become increasingly evident that to accomplish our goals we must function as one District rather than two. This is true whether we speak of our goal to provide long-term care for our community, expand community paramedicine, resolve whether and how to integrate EMS with Fire, or any of our other goals.

Following the retirement of EMS Chief Jerry Martin in 2018, the District promoted staff EMT and Director of Operations Karl Kuetzing to serve as a temporary, Interim EMS Chief while the District resolved the integration of EMS and Fire. After nearly 1.5 years it is evident this is not a quick process, therefore the District has offered Kuetzing a permanent position as the Chief Logistics and Operations Officer for San Juan Island EMS.

Associated with this change and effective immediately, current hospital district CEO and Superintendent Pamela Hutchins will directly administer San Juan Island EMS instead of through an EMS Chief. “These changes will allow us to function as one district rather than two siloed agencies,” said Hutchins, “It enables us to better leverage our resources to accomplish more by removing the EMS/non-EMS staff distinction. It simplifies the chain of command. We will be talking it through with the staff and volunteers as we figure this out.”

As a District we are concerned that the integration of EMS and Fire has taken too much of the District’s time, delaying other projects such as long-term care to an unacceptable degree. We recently announced a grant in collaboration with our partners that will take us to the next stage of working towards long-term care, and the district plans to expand its Community Paramedicine programs as an essential component of long-term care that we can accomplish right now.

“Most importantly,” said Chair Anna Lisa Lindstrum, “We want to convey to the public that we intend to be the best Agency that we can right now – not next year or down the line depending on the integration of EMS and Fire. We’re not putting things on hold anymore. The public needs us to be our best right now.”