

# Save Our Firefighters

Hundreds of Firefighters in King County who had medical or religious exemptions from the State's Vaccine Mandate were universally not given accommodations to stay working as firefighters. Many were separated from their fire departments where they honorably and heroically served the local communities. We are about to lose all of these brave men and women. This is your chance to Save-A-Firefighter. As of April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Eastside Fire and Rescue, who covers most of East King County East of Bellevue, will be fully terminating all unvaccinated members who did not get accommodations. These members all have natural immunity and have approved exemptions, but the agency will not honor their religious beliefs. It's time for you the community member to stand against discrimination and support those that sacrifice for others. Save-A-Firefighter NOW!

Here's How:

- We need to keep it positive; it's about correcting the wrong and not about who's fault. We need the Board of Directors to understand the public is upset and wants change...bring the Firefighters back.
- Take a few moments and contact your local fire board of commissioners or city council. Contact the Eastside Fire Board of Directors and the fire chief. Let your voices be heard. They think no one cares.
- **Join affected Firefighters** at the next Eastside Fire and Rescue Board of Directors meeting in Issaquah on **April 14th at 4pm at Eastside Fire Headquarters – 175 Newport Way NW, Issaquah, WA 98027.**
- Remember this doesn't end with one attempt, these firefighters need our help. Advocate for them continuously.

Talking Points:

The State of Washington's vaccine mandate and the Department of Health's guidelines clearly state healthcare workers and firefighters can continue to work as normal with accommodations. Just like they have with any other type of outbreak, healthcare workers take precautions. It's what they do, they train for it, and the agencies plan for it. If a public agency does not know how to handle covid at this point safely, then they are not doing their jobs. There has been no known transmissions of covid between patients and firefighters going in either direction when PPE is in use. One in Hundreds of Thousands of patient contacts has caused a firefighter to get sick and that was because of the lack of PPE. This is supported by a University of Washington study with Dr. Rea (King County Medical Director) and published by the CDC. At this point what are we doing? There is no justifiable reason to discriminate against unvaccinated firefighters.

King County fire departments universally denied accommodations to firefighter to remain in patient care settings. Some departments kept their members working in other capacities. Eastside Fire & Rescue announced they would not give accommodations then secretly gave to people they wanted to keep special accommodations. This process was done unfairly. Glad that a couple of people got to stay but this needed to be done across the board.

Conversely, Fire Departments across the state kept their firefighters working as firefighters. Places like Pierce County kept all their firefighters working which is the exact opposite of King County. Pierce County fire chiefs worked with their unions and made sure they did not lose valued firefighters. In Snohomish County, Marysville, Snohomish Regional Fire & Rescue, and Everett did not give accommodations but now that covid has declined and we know how to deal with the virus, Marysville has brought their firefighters back and Snohomish Regional is working towards that goal. The remaining Snohomish County Fire departments kept their members just the rest of the state except for the City of Bellingham and Spokane.



Separated un-vaccinated members, like the vaccinated members that remained, contracted covid. All virus spread was from outside interactions and not while providing care to patients. PPE works. The separated members now have proven long lasting and a multi-antibody natural immunity. Those vaccinated members that did not get covid have known waning immunity with only one type of anti-body that last only a few months, does not stop a person from getting sick, and does not prevent the person from spreading covid. These members were not required to get boosted and are now out of compliance of "fully vaccinated." A vast majority of remaining staff does not want to get the booster covid shot and thus, the separated members with natural immunity are no different and should be allowed to return to work.

Eastside Fire & Rescue will be firing almost 10% of their line staff workforce. Approximately 167 years of combined experience. Before the mandate, 40% of the firefighters did not want to take the vaccine but many were forced to in-lieu of losing their jobs as it was announced that no one would receive accommodations to stay working on fire trucks and ambulances.

It was projected to cost approximately \$140,000 per lost firefighter to backfill their positions with overtime. Plus to hire a new person to replace them with wages, training, and firefighting equipment at approximately \$100,000. That is approximately \$240,000 per firefighter lost and that is to get an in-experienced person working. Eastside Fire announced hiring 25 to replace the un-vaccinated immediately after October 18<sup>th</sup> separation.

Eastside Fire & Rescue would not re-assign exempt un-vaccinated firefighters to day shift positions where they could help train new recruits, provide non-patient care services, or the various other positions. Many other King County fire departments at least did that so they would not lose these specially trained members.

But instead of back-filling with overtime, Eastside Fire decided to cut staffing by reducing available medical units. This put the community at risk by lowering service levels and increasing response times. Eastside Board of Commissioners were told by firing the un-vaccinated, the Agency would save \$1.8 million. January 1<sup>st</sup> thru March alone, Eastside has spent \$1.2 million in overtime. Add this to the overtime that was caused by the separation of firefighter post October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 thru December and that the remaining vaccinated firefighters all got sick with covid over the winter months, Eastside Fire's overtime expenses are through the roof and the staffing crisis still remains with what has been said as up to 40 open positions.

The staffing crisis is unsustainable. Firefighters are being over-worked with multiple mandatory 24 hour shifts. Bring back the separated firefighters now and this will help to reduce fatigue and the overtime crisis.

This has caused Firefighter moral to be at an all-time low. Remaining members want their lost firefighter family members back.

This time of post-covid is about healing the fire departments, about healing the community. We can do better than discriminating against people with known and acknowledged religious beliefs. We can reduce the staffing crisis at fire stations, we can reduce the overtime caused by the crisis, and we can do this together...Safely.

Sincerely,

King County Firefighters United

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**Eastside Fire & Rescue – East King County**

Contact [Board of Directors Here](#)  
[Public Comment Sign-Up](#)

Fire Chief Jeff Clark – [jclark@esf-r.org](mailto:jclark@esf-r.org)  
[Community Survey – comment here](#)  
Or [website link here](#)

April 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm at Eastside HQ  
[Click the Calendar Event](#)  
[Public Comment Sign-Up](#)

**Sammamish City Council**

Contact City Council at  
[Citycouncil@sammamish.us](mailto:Citycouncil@sammamish.us)

Sammamish City Council Meetings  
March 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm virtual  
<https://zoom.us/j/97743476957>

April 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm virtual  
[Click the Calendar Event](#)

April 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm virtual  
[Click the Calendar Event](#)

**Issaquah City Council**

Contact City Council at  
[Citycouncil@issaquahwa.gov](mailto:Citycouncil@issaquahwa.gov)

April 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm  
[Sign up to speak](#)

**King County Fire District 10**

Contact Board of Commissioners  
[Publiccomment@esf-r.org](mailto:Publiccomment@esf-r.org)

April 11<sup>th</sup> at 4pm virtual  
[Details Here](#)  
May be in-person [details here](#)

**North Bend City Council**

Contact City Council at  
[council@northbendwa.gov](mailto:council@northbendwa.gov)



March 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am Meet the Mayor event

[Details Here](#)

April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at City Hall

[Details Here](#)

April 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm at City Hall

[Details Here](#)

### **Fire District 38 – Outside of North Bend**

Contact Board of Commissioners at

[Kcfiredistrict38@comcast.net](mailto:Kcfiredistrict38@comcast.net)

March 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm virtual

Join the meeting by clicking the

link: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77032452759?pwd=SHhYVE5udmhZZWJtajRRbVZTYUJ0QT09>

Meeting ID: 770 3245 2759

Password: KCFD38

### **Carnation City Council**

Contact City Council at

[Kim.lisk@carnationwa.gov](mailto:Kim.lisk@carnationwa.gov)

[Tim.harris@carnationwa.gov](mailto:Tim.harris@carnationwa.gov)

[Jim.ribail@carnationwa.gov](mailto:Jim.ribail@carnationwa.gov)

[Adair.hawkins@carnationwa.gov](mailto:Adair.hawkins@carnationwa.gov)

[Dustin.green@carnationwa.gov](mailto:Dustin.green@carnationwa.gov)

April 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm virtual

[Click the Calendar Event](#)

Woodinville Fire & Rescue

Contact the Board of Directors

[rcollins@wf-r.org](mailto:rcollins@wf-r.org)

[mmillman@wf-r.org](mailto:mmillman@wf-r.org)

[dhalbert@wf-r.org](mailto:dhalbert@wf-r.org)

[tosgood@wf-r.org](mailto:tosgood@wf-r.org)

[dvanveen@wf-r.org](mailto:dvanveen@wf-r.org)

[Public Feedback portal](#)