



# **Cowlitz 2**

## **FIRE & RESCUE**

701 Vine Street \* Kelso WA 98626 \* 360-578-5218 \* [www.c2fr.org](http://www.c2fr.org)

**Dave LaFave**  
Fire Chief

**Alan Headley**  
Assistant Chief

Station 21  
Headquarters  
701 Vine Street  
Kelso WA 98626

Station 22  
Bakers Corner  
5299 Ocean Beach  
Longview WA 98632

Station 23  
Columbia Heights  
922 Nevada Drive  
Longview WA 98632

Station 24  
Rose Valley  
1436 Rose Valley Rd  
Kelso WA 98626

Station 25  
Lexington  
1796 West Side Hwy  
Kelso WA 98626

Station 26  
Bunker Hill  
202 Bunker Hill Rd  
Longview WA 98632

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 7, 2010

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### **Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue saves more than lives today**

**Kelso-** Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue employees and its management have collectively made the decision to reduce their wages and benefit options resulting in over \$223,000. in savings for the department. These team commitments aid in maintaining response capability and the ability to serve their public. The International Firefighters Union Local 3828 along with the administrative staff opted to reduce both wages and medical benefit options to prevent further layoffs in the department. Recently, in addition to other budget cuts, the District was forced to terminate their part-time firefighter program resulting in laying off 12 individuals and not filling 3 vacant positions. This reduction in staffing forced the Fire District to no longer provide full time staffing at the Columbia Heights station. This will then increase response times to emergencies in the Lexington and Columbia Heights areas.

Reducing health benefit options by the union saved the District over \$65,000 which offsets its recent 20 percent cutback in contract fees with the City of Kelso. The District will also be laying off a clerical support position at the end of the year. This, in conjunction with the wage reductions, allows the remaining career and volunteer staff to effectively continue to respond to emergencies. Chief LaFave believes that the sacrifices made will balance the District's budget at least until the end of 2011 and hopefully until the economy turns around. "This was an opportunity for our people to come together as a team. We've left no stone unturned and we're continuing to scrape the corners to find every savings we can. We can maintain full staffing at our headquarters station and maintain a viable response to our community. This is the first time since 1997 that we haven't staffed 2 fire stations and it is only because of the continuing economic situation that we are all faced with. We have a dedicated group of volunteer responders that we will have to rely on now more than ever."

Kelso City manager Denny Richards supports the decision, "This is encouraging to hear that public safety employees are willing to collaborate to maintain service levels and efficiencies. Hopefully this is a trend that other agencies will embrace."

County Commissioner George Raiter adds, "It's great that firefighters are willing to put service to the community as a priority. It's commendable that this is an organization built on trust and teamwork".

We want to take this opportunity to find out what's most important to our community. We have developed a survey on our website at [www.c2fr.org](http://www.c2fr.org) and our Face book key words *Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue* to gather information about the level of service that our taxpayers desire and how we can better serve them."

International Association of Firefighters Local 3828 president Jeff Fix comments on the recent events too, "This was a tough decision, but it was the right decision. Our commitment is to protect our community and we are here to do just that. Part of our commitment is to educate the people we serve. Management and our executive board team continue to struggle with staffing lows, but we're coming up with alternatives to keep our eye on why we're all here. Our team will continue to work together, support each other, and we can all get through this."

Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue is currently administering their annual fire prevention week please visit their open house this Saturday at their Lexington station located at 1796 West Side Hwy. from 10am to 2pm for fire safety tips, food, and fun activities.

