

SNURE LAW OFFICE

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November 15, 2006

Skagit County Administrative Services
Attention: Gary Rowe, County Administrator
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Re: Ferry *Guemes* Emergency Response

Dear Mr. Rowe:

I am writing this letter on behalf of our client, Skagit County Fire Protection District No. 17. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the untenable situation existing with the ferry *Guemes* emergency response times outside of normal operating hours and during times of ferry and/or ferry dock repairs.

The ferry *Guemes* is an integral link in the emergency response system for Guemes Island. During normal operating hours when the ferry and its two docks are in operating condition the system works excellently. The ferry swiftly transports Advanced Life Support personnel in their ambulance to medical emergencies, fire personnel and their trucks to Guemes Island to provide mutual aid, and District emergency personnel to Fidalgo Island to provide mutual aid.

The problem exists outside normal operating hours when the ferry *Guemes* and/or the ferry dock is out of service for scheduled maintenance or due to breakdown. I am attaching several documents attesting to the District's attempts to resolve these issue since June 9, 2001 with no success (see Attachments 1 through 14).

The people of Guemes Island should be able to rely on a ferry and crew responding to an emergency situation in a timely manner at all times barring a disaster or extremes in weather. This is not the case with the system as it now exists. There is no assurance of a prompt ferry response due to the crew not being on call and their availability being uncertain.

The best solution, which has been discussed in the past, is that the ferry manager should (1) work out the details on the availability of crew members who can report to the ferry within 10 minutes of a call-out, (2) create an on-call roster, and (3) assure that on-call personnel carry pagers. With such a plan in place, the 911 Center can page the ferry crew at the same time as they page the Guemes Island Fire Dept., Anacortes Fire Dept., ALS ambulance and other resources necessary for an emergency response.

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During ferry or ferry dock outages Skagit County Government should have arrangements in place for helicopter transport of medical emergencies and ferry, barge or landing craft transportation in the case the need arises for trucks to be transported to and from the island. In the case of weather extremes grounding helicopter services, arrangements should be in place for launch or landing craft backup.

If those procedures were implemented, the District would at long last be able to assure the citizens of Guemes Island that comprehensive procedures are in place towards meeting current emergency response standards

With this letter you are on notice that the District has made reasonable efforts to address and resolve these problems. In the event of any claim arising out of the failure of the County to provide appropriate transportation to and from Guemes Island in order to accomplish the most expeditious response to a 911 emergency, the County has assumed liability and responsibility for such claims. In the event that you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Chief Carl Meinzingler at the address or phone number as noted in Attachment 15.

Very Truly Yours,

SNURE LAW OFFICE, PSC

Brian K. Snure

cc: Client w/o enclosures
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