

# Other County Comparison

## Collaborative Fire & EMS Service Delivery in Snohomish County: A Feasibility Study

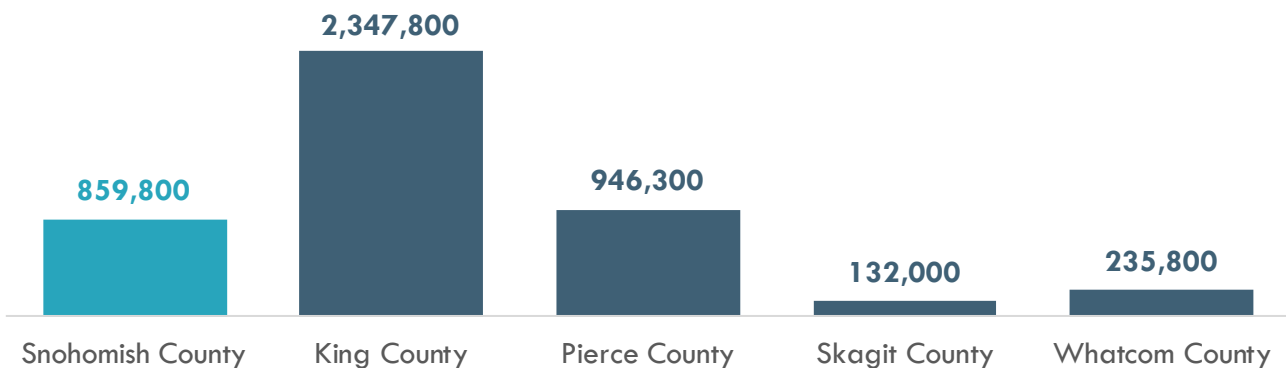
### Overview

This document summarizes key research into the fire and EMS systems in four Washington counties to compare against the fire and EMS systems in Snohomish County. The purpose of this comparative research is to identify potential lessons from other counties that could be applied to Snohomish County.

Comparison counties include King, Pierce, Skagit, and Whatcom counties.

Exhibit 1 shows the estimated populations of each of the counties. Pierce County’s population is the closest to that of Snohomish County; King County has nearly triple the population size; and Skagit and Whatcom counties respectively have approximately one-sixth and one-quarter the population of Snohomish County.

**Exhibit 1. Estimated Populations of Snohomish County and Comparison Counties, 2023**



Sources: OFM, 2023; BERK, 2023.

Most information in this document was gathered by online research and has not been confirmed via interviews or other review by the comparison counties. We conducted one interview with a fire chief in Pierce County to better understand that county’s EMS system.

### Key Findings

Of the counties reviewed, Pierce County offers the best comparison for Snohomish County due to the two counties’ similar population sizes; relative proximity to the major population center of King County; lack of a countywide EMS levy; and similar number of fire providers. We recommend that fire and EMS stakeholders in Snohomish County build relationships with their parallel stakeholders in Pierce County to support ongoing learning and information-sharing.

The following bullets summarize our key findings from this comparative review.

- **Pierce County is the only comparison county that, like Snohomish County, does not have a countywide EMS levy.** In King, Skagit, and Whatcom counties, the countywide levy positions the county to serve in a more formal role with respect to EMS functions. These counties have the following EMS offices hosted within county government:
  - **Skagit:** Skagit County Department of EMS, a standalone department .
  - **Whatcom:** Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services Division, positioned within the County Executive's office.
  - **King:** King County EMS Administration, a division of the Seattle & King County Department of Public Health.
- **All five counties have their own EMS/TC Councils.** Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties all have local EMS/TC councils and King County is the sole member-county of the Central Region EMS/TC regional council. Some Snohomish County interviewees suggested that there may not be a need for Snohomish County EMS; however, the existence of local EMS/TC councils in the comparison counties indicates that a local council is a commonly desirable feature for counties of this relative size and complexity. The alternative – participation in a multi-county regional council – is likely less desirable due to the inability to respond to county-specific circumstances.
- **Like Snohomish County, Pierce, Skagit, and Whatcom counties all have fire-based EMS systems.** King County features a countywide EMS system with dedicated ALS units.
- **Providers in some counties collaborate around programs and services that Snohomish County has considered, offering learning opportunities should Snohomish choose to pursue these options.** Notably, King County has a Center for Evaluation of EMS to conduct research and development; and Whatcom County has a countywide community paramedicine program.

## Detailed Findings

### Example Regional Partnerships

The following subsections offer examples of regional partnerships in each comparison county.

#### King County

[The Center for the Evaluation of Emergency Medical Services](#) (CEEMS) undertakes research efforts in the field of pre-hospital emergency care.

[The Community Programs Section](#) of the EMS Division provides community-based programs to enhance three critical links in the chain of survival, including Early Access to 911, Early CPR and Early Defibrillation. Includes public access AED program, communities of care program, CPR education, and Shape Up!.

## Pierce County

**Paramedic Airway Management Course:** The Pierce County Fire Chiefs Association provides funding for the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management to host an annual paramedic airway management course that paramedics can take in lieu of needing to meet a number of live intubations each year for recertification.

## Skagit County

**Ongoing Training and Evaluation Program:** Skagit County EMS provides standardized county-wide OTEP classes for EMS provider continuing education.

## Whatcom County

**The Whatcom County Opioid Response Task Force** provides education and develops strategies for responding to the Opioid epidemic.

**The Whatcom County EMS Paramedic Training Program** is a partnership between the Bellingham Fire Department, Fire District 7, Bellingham Technical College (BTC) and Whatcom County EMS (WCEMS) to provide a centralized paramedic training program for the region.

## Fire Summary

Exhibit 2 summarizes key components of fire services in Snohomish County and each of the comparison counties, including the number of fire providers and examples of training consortiums that may exist in each county.

**Exhibit 2. Summary of Key Components of Fire Service for Snohomish County and Comparison Counties**

Fire Attributes	Snohomish	King	Pierce	Skagit	Whatcom
<b># of Fire Providers</b>	19	28	18	25	15
<b>Example training consortiums</b>	<p>Snohomish County Fire Training Consortium (5 members)</p> <p>North County Joint Training Group (7 members)</p>	<p><a href="#">South King County Fire Training Consortium</a> (12 members)</p> <p><a href="#">North King County Training Consortium</a> (4 members)</p>	<p><a href="#">Pierce County Fire Training Consortium</a> (5 members)</p>	None found.	None found.

# EMS Summary

Exhibit 3 summarizes key components of EMS services in Snohomish County and each of the comparison counties, including the model of EMS provision, whether each county has a countywide EMS levy, whether each county has a local EMS/TC Council and the roles of that council, and whether each county has jurisdictionally-based or countywide community paramedicine.

**Exhibit 3. Summary of Key Components of EMS Service for Snohomish County and Comparison Counties**

EMS Attributes	Snohomish	King	Pierce	Skagit	Whatcom
<b>EMS Provision Model</b>	Fire-based	Five ALS agencies provide EMS services: King County Medic One and four others based out of fire departments: Bellevue, Redmond (serving NE King County), Seattle, and Shoreline	Fire-based	Fire-based	Fire-based
<b>Countywide EMS Levy</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Local EMS/TC Council</b>	Yes	King County is the sole member-county of the Central EMS/TC regional council	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Roles of the Local or Regional EMS/TC Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QA/QI</li> <li>▪ EMS guidance</li> <li>▪ EMS training</li> <li>▪ Certification support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QA/QI</li> <li>▪ Analyze data and identify promising practices</li> <li>▪ Maintain, assess, and increase emergency care resources and support regional system sustainability</li> <li>▪ Support emergency preparedness, response, and resilience activities</li> <li>▪ Training support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protocols</li> <li>▪ Certifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QA/QI</li> <li>▪ Facilitating a standardized countywide patient care reporting system</li> <li>▪ Providing standardized EMS OTEP</li> <li>▪ Overseeing EMS credential initial issuance and recertification</li> <li>▪ Providing administrative support to the county MPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QA/QI</li> <li>▪ Training to reduce the morbidity/mortality associated with trauma and acute illness</li> <li>▪ Educational outreach to providers</li> <li>▪ Connecting residents with trauma prevention programs in the region</li> </ul>
<b>Community paramedicine</b>	Jurisdictionally based	Jurisdictionally based	Jurisdictionally based	Jurisdictionally based	Countywide <a href="#">Community Paramedic Mobile Integrated Health program</a> offered through the Whatcom <a href="#">Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) program</a>