

# Skagit County Chiefs and Sheriff Executive Board

May 22, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
Health  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Secretary John Wiesman  
Washington State Department of  
101 Israel Road; MS: 47890  
Tumwater, WA 98504-7890

Chief John Small  
*Anacortes PD*

Chief Michael Luvera  
*Burlington PD*

Chief Chris Cammock  
*Mount Vernon PD*

Chief Lin Tucker  
*Sedro-Woolley PD*

Sheriff Don McDermott  
*Skagit County S.O.*

Chief Sherm Pruitt  
*Sauk-Suiattle PD*

Chief Lou D'Amelio  
*Swinomish PD*

Chief Rance Suttan  
*Upper Skagit PD*

Captain Scott McCoy  
*WA State Patrol*

## Re: Variance Criteria for counties with populations over 75,000

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary Wiesman:

We write today in support of the letter sent by the Skagit County Board of Health on May 22, 2020 asking you to allow Skagit County to move forward to Phase 2 of the Safe Start plan as soon as an application can be reviewed and authorized.

In our effort to follow your Statewide Stay at Home Proclamation Skagit County first responder agencies continue to focus on education and engagement. For more than two months, fire/EMS personnel and law enforcement officers have worked diligently with our communities. We are concerned that there has been a shift in the level of cooperation with the citizens we serve. As this pandemic continues we are experiencing the diminishment of the support and trust we have worked so hard to establish.

Remaining in Phase 1 will have the effect of increased calls of service regarding medical/mental health, drug overdose, domestic violence and fraudulent activities as a direct result of the pandemic. Business owner's fear and anxiety will increase, manifesting itself when we have contact with them. They are frustrated they cannot restart their business as soon as they want and that becomes a strain for local law enforcement to meet all of the service needs in the community. Others are frustrated that violators do not face more severe consequences. It is our belief that remaining in phase 1 will exacerbate these issues and have a direct impact on the overall well-being of the communities we serve.

Your first responders in Skagit County are prepared for phase 2 and are capable of meeting the health concerns for the community with the next phase. As an example of the collaboration of our first responders within Skagit County to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic:

- All of the first responder agencies within the County have worked in conjunction with each other to ensure adequate PPE including processes for single purchases to avoid competing orders with vendors, supply cache and distribution for all first responders in the County, and a regional concept for tracking and dissemination.



- The impact to our first responder personnel that was of concern in the beginning of this pandemic has not been realized. This is due to the approach we have taken within the county to protect our members. We are confident that this will remain true in later phases of the re-opening as well.
- The call volumes did not rise as was feared in the early stages of the pandemic, this has provided opportunities for first responder agencies to put policies in place for response, gather needed equipment, work with the local health department for testing availability, and secured isolation/quarantine facilities should responders need it.
- We have routinely been the recipient of harsh words from the public about the stay at home order and this has put some of our fire personnel at a greater risk. Law Enforcement is beginning to experience more confrontations directly related to the pandemic. It is our belief that the move to phase 2 will help decrease this sentiment and provide a safer environment for our personnel

We continue to observe all the protocols to address the very real public health threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, as parts of our economy work to safely reopen. We understand the serious nature of this public health crisis. We must trust our residents, our businesses, and each other and allow local elected officials, in consultation with the Skagit County Public Health Department, to assist in managing our gradual return to open more of our economy. Skagit County's first responders are a ready partner as we move into the second phase of the Safe Start Plan.

We ask that you give full and fair consideration to the Skagit Board of Health's request, and allow Skagit County to move to Phase 2 as soon as an application can be processed and authorized.

Sincerely,



David Skrinde  
Skagit County District 14 Fire Chief  
Association President



Mike Luvera  
Burlington Police Chief  
Skagit County Chiefs and Sheriff E-Board

