



Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities

2021 WSABRB Conference



Discussion Points:

- Regional Fire Authorities
- RFA Implementation Guide

Current RFA's:

- **Valley Regional** (*Auburn, Pacific, Algona*)
- **Riverside** (*Centralia & Lewis #12*)
- **West Thurston** (*Thurston #1 & Littlerock*)
- **SE Thurston** (*Yelm, Thurston #2 & #4*)
- **Puget Sound** (*Kent, SeaTac, King #43, Maple Valley, & Covington*)
- **South Beach** (*Westport, S. Beach Amb., Grays #2, #11, #14, & Pacific #5*)
- **South County** (*Lynwood, Brier, Mountlake Terrace, Edmonds, & Snohomish #1*)
- **North Mason** (*Mason #3 & #8*)
- **Renton** (*Renton & King #25*)
- **South Whatcom** (*Whatcom #2, #6, #9, & 10*)
- **West Benton** (*Prosser & Benton #3*)
- **North County** (*North County Fire and Stanwood*)
- **Marysville** (*Marysville & Snohomish #12*)



Regional Fire Authorities (RFA's)

- An option for the provision of fire services since 2004.
- Pursuant to RCW 52.26.
- Creates a vehicle for any number of fire districts, municipalities, fire districts and municipalities, port districts or Indian tribes, or any combination thereof to combine and form a new “fire department”.



Regional Fire Authorities

- They are driven by the “Plan”, which is developed by the “Planning Committee”.
- The Planning Committee, under RCW 52.26.030 sets up the design of the fire department; the financing of the fire department; and develops fire protection and emergency service projects.



What is a Regional Fire Authority (RFA)

- Municipal Corporation
- Separate taxing district (junior taxing district)
- Boundaries have reasonable proximity with two or more fire jurisdictions
- Created by a vote of the people (citizens)
- Operates pursuant to a PLAN
- The PLAN is created by the Planning Committee
- Operates functionally like a fire district under Title 52
- Funding is determined by the PLAN



Planning Committee

- Any two or more fire protection jurisdictions within reasonable proximity may create a regional fire authority.
- Each governing body of the fire protection jurisdictions participating in the RFA shall appoint three (3) elected officials to serve.
- May elect officers and adopt rules and procedures (typically at the first meeting)
- May dissolve itself at any time by a majority vote of the Planning Committee.
- Any participating entity may withdraw upon thirty (30) calendar days notice to the other jurisdictions.



The Plan (RCW 52.26.040)

- May authorize the authority to establish a system of ambulance service to be operated by the RFA, or to be operated contract after a call for bids.
- Shall recommend sources of revenue authorized by RCW 52.26.050.
- Shall have input from the public during the development process
- Shall provide for the design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency services.
- May include land use planning and input from surrounding cities and districts



RFA Funding

- Benefit charges under RCW 52.26.180 through RCW 52.26.270.
- Property taxes under RCW 52.26.140 through 52.26.170.
- Emergency Medical Services Levies.
- Bonds...excess levies....all funding methodologies available to a fire district.




Development:

- Each Governing Body interested must make the decision to research the possibility of an RFA with neighboring fire agencies within reasonable proximity. This can be a full fire organization RFA, or a functional sub-set (i.e. Training RFA, Special Operations RFA, etc.).



Development:

- The Governing Bodies send letters to each other indicating their desire to study the possibility of forming an RFA.
- The Governing Bodies must appoint three (3) members each to form a “Planning Committee” (i.e. 3-each elected officials from any involved Fire District or Municipal/City Department).



Development:

The Planning Committee meets and establishes their rules of operation and other work product:

- Frequency of meetings
- Chair of Planning Committee (if desired)
- Use of subcommittees
- Time frame for final report



Development:

The Planning Committee must identify the following:

- The vision of the RFA.
- The services to be provided by the RFA.
- Governing body composition is determined by the Plan and can be modified at the vote of the electorate (i.e. a mix of City Council members, Fire District Commissioners, or citizens elected).
- The number of members on the new Governing Body (the statute is silent on this, so it is totally up to the Planning Committee); and length of time each member will serve on the new governing board.



Development:

The Planning Committee must identify the following:

- The funding mechanism to be utilized by the RFA (ad valorem taxes, benefit charges, excess levy, EMS Levy, etc.).
- The level of service/standards of cover to be utilized by the RFA.
- The makeup of the Administrative Team.
- The extent that Labor will be involved in the planning process (it is strongly suggested they be intimately involved throughout the process).



Development:

The Planning Committee must identify the following:

- The methodology to determine how different Labor groups will be combined within the RFA, potentially under a newly negotiated collective bargaining agreement (CBA), or under old CBAs for a short period of time until a new CBA can be negotiated.



Development:

- The Planning Committee finalizes the RFA Plan and adopts it by majority of the Committee.
- The RFA Plan is sent to the individual Governing Bodies. Each Governing Body must approve the Plan for the RFA to continue forward.
- Once approved by the Governing Bodies, the Planning Committee develops ballot language to place the RFA before the voters in all areas affected by the RFA.



Development:

- The individual Governing Bodies must approve the ballot language and then must place it on the same ballot within their individual jurisdictions.
- If the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism for ad valorem property taxes (up to \$1.50 per \$1000 of A/V), then a simple majority (50% plus 1) is required for passage. If the RFA Plan includes an excess levy or benefit charge for operations, then a 60% super majority is required (plus a 40% validation requirement if the excess levy is utilized for funding).



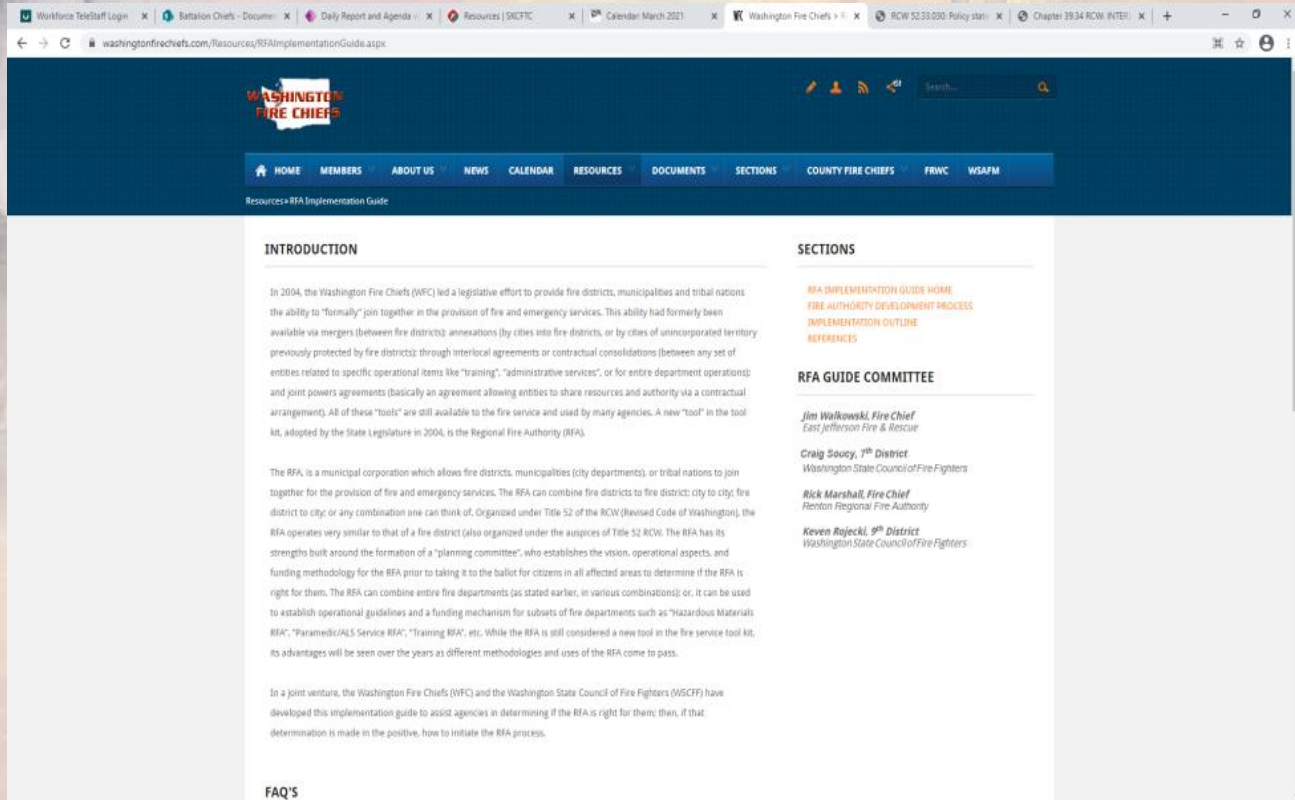
Development:

- If the RFA Plan is passed by the electorate, then the RFA goes into effect on the following January 1st or July 1st following the election (NOTE: the RFA Plan does not need to pass in all individual areas, the vote is a combined total of all voting).



The online RFA Implementation Guide

Located on the WFC website:



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Washington Fire Chiefs website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: washingtonfirechiefs.com/resources/RFAImplementationGuide.aspx. The website has a dark blue header with the Washington Fire Chiefs logo and a navigation menu with links for HOME, MEMBERS, ABOUT US, NEWS, CALENDAR, RESOURCES, DOCUMENTS, SECTIONS, COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS, FWIC, and WSAPM. The main content area is titled "Resources » RFA Implementation Guide" and features an "INTRODUCTION" section. The introduction text discusses the 2004 legislative effort to provide fire districts, municipalities, and tribal nations the ability to "formally" join together in the provision of fire and emergency services. It also mentions the formation of a "planning committee" and the development of the implementation guide by the Washington Fire Chiefs (WFC) and the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (WSCFF). On the right side of the page, there is a "SECTIONS" list with links to RFA IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE HOME, FIRE AUTHORITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, IMPLEMENTATION OUTLINE, and REFERENCES. Below this is a "RFA GUIDE COMMITTEE" section listing members: Jim Walkowski, Fire Chief of East Jefferson Fire & Rescue; Craig Soucy, 7th District of Washington State Council of Fire Fighters; Rick Marshall, Fire Chief of Renton Regional Fire Authority; and Keven Rojecki, 9th District of Washington State Council of Fire Fighters. At the bottom of the page, there is a "FAQ'S" section.

A close-up photograph of a firefighter's helmet. The helmet is black with brass-colored accents, including a Maltese cross badge on the front and reflective strips. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The text "Questions?" is overlaid in a yellow, sans-serif font.

Questions?

Thank-you!