

September 30, 2013

Ms. Mary Ann Duncan-Cole, City Administrator  
City of Stevenson  
7121 E. Loop Road  
Stevenson, Washington 98648

RE: Emergency Facility Feasibility Study

Dear Mary Ann,

It is with great pleasure we present this feasibility assessment for a shared joint emergency response facility for the City of Stevenson Fire Department, Skamania County Department of Emergency Management, Skamania County Fire District #2, and the Skamania County Hospital District.

This report represents the culmination of the three month effort four agencies have spent determining the benefits and practicality of sharing a facility. Are there economic advantages to building and operating a facility together? Are there long-term operational benefits in co-locating these agencies under one roof? Would a joint facility be in the best interest of the citizens of Stevenson and the community surrounding Stevenson; for the property owners, businesses throughout Skamania County, and the thousands of visitors who come here every year?

We feel the unequivocal answer to all of these questions is a resounding "Yes." We believe there are strong reasons for all the participating four agencies to continue down this path of partnership.

We have enjoyed working with you, learning more about your community, and preparing this report. Please do not hesitate to call me if you, or any of your elected officials, have any follow-up questions.

Sincerely,  
Rice Fergus Miller

  
David A. Fergus, Architect, NCARB  
Senior Principal



Skamania County  
Emergency  
Management



## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine if it's practical and cost effective for four public agencies in Skamania County to share in the building of a joint facility.

### **Participating Agencies**

The agencies participating in this feasibility study included the Skamania County Department of Emergency Management, Skamania County Hospital District, Skamania County Fire District #2, and the City of Stevenson Fire Department. All four agencies are located within the boundaries of Skamania County, Washington, but each agency's service boundaries vary within the County, and each operates under different governance and funding structures.

### **Existing Facilities**

Each of the agencies included in this feasibility assessment have facilities in varying degrees of condition, functionality, useful life, and adequacy.

The Skamania County Department of Emergency Management is operating out of the lowest floor in the County Jail. The space is too small and crowded when its Emergency Operation Center is activated in response to a large regional emergency, which can call upon upwards of 50 volunteers to appropriately staff.

The Skamania County Hospital District provides emergency medical and rescue services throughout Skamania County home based from a single station located in Stevenson, Washington on First Street. The building is well maintained, but undersized in many ways.

The Stevenson Fire Department and Skamania Fire District #2 provide service from a main headquarters fire station in Stevenson and a rural satellite station 2-1/2 miles north of Stevenson. Both structures are antiquated and insufficient in meeting the needs of the community.

### **Programmatic Requirements**

Over the course of several workshop sessions with representatives of the four participant agencies, programmatic needs were identified and evaluated in terms of both current and long-range perspectives. This methodology resulted in an itemized list of rooms and spaces that detailed specific needs. Built as individual facilities, the tally was 25,090 square feet. Built as a single shared facility the tally was 20,870 square feet, which equated to a net reduction of 17% in size.

## **Property Considerations**

Together with the participant agencies, property characteristics to support the functional aspects of the shared facility were identified, evaluated, and quantified. These characteristics were then applied to a large number of properties in the greater Stevenson area. Ultimately, two parcels were analyzed in greater depth to assess their suitability in terms of topography, utility availability, zoning and land-use restrictions, transportation access, and the potential development costs. Both were determined to be viable options in terms of constructability and development cost, yet each had other factors for weighing advantages (or disadvantages) over the other.

## **Building Layout**

Consideration was given for how a shared building of this type might be laid out. Building diagrams were prepared to demonstrate two important aspects. First was to establish a general footprint for the building to assist in defining property requirements that would support it. Second was to assist the participant agencies in understanding how they might co-mingle and co-occupy a joint facility.

Two options are presented in this report for further consideration of the participant agencies. Both are approximately the same in square footage, and both respond to the same programmatic requirements. The contrast comes in how the individual agencies live together under one roof, how integrated each agency's programmatic needs are intertwined, and how the facility is 'shared' overall.

## **Costs**

The total estimated cost for this project, including land acquisition and all project expenses, would be approximately \$10.5 million dollars.

Identifying potential funding sources was a large portion of our conversations over the course of preparing this report. Grants and low interest loans were generally identified as the most viable. A listing of those potential sources is included in this report.





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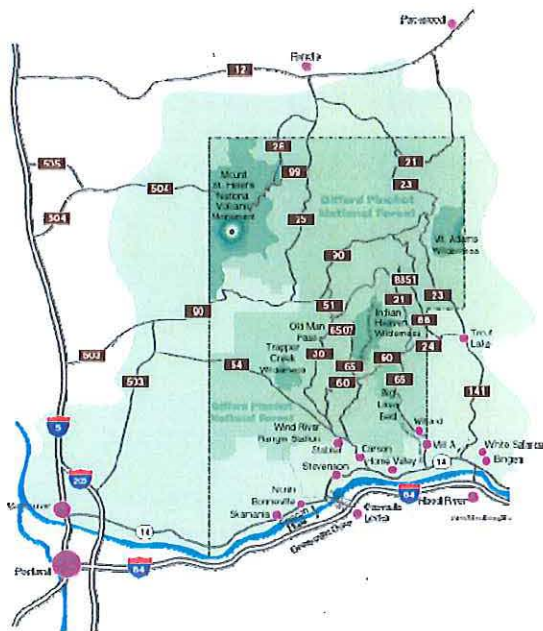


## Participating Agencies

The agencies participating in this feasibility study include the Skamania County Department of Emergency Management, Skamania County Hospital District, Skamania County Fire District #2, and the City of Stevenson Fire Department. All four agencies are located within the boundaries of Skamania County, Washington, but each agency's service boundaries vary within the County, and each operates under different governance and funding structures.

## Skamania County, Washington

Located in southwestern Washington, Skamania County extends from the northern shores of the Columbia River, through the forested ridges and ravines of the Cascade Mountains, north beyond Mount St. Helens, and east to the flanks of Mt. Adams.



Skamania County is 1,672 square miles in size and encompasses the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. Eighty percent of the county is National Forest.

Skamania County was established in 1854, one of the first counties in the state. It operates under the laws of the State of Washington with a Commission form of government. Skamania County is a general purpose government that provides public safety, road improvement, parks and recreation, judicial administration, health and social services and general administration. There are eleven elected officials: three County Commissioners, an Assessor, an Auditor, a County Clerk, a District Court Judge, a Prosecuting Attorney, a Sheriff, a Superior Court Judge and a Treasurer.

The county population is approximately 11,000, spread throughout the communities of Washougal, Stevenson, Carson, Stabler, Home Valley, Mill A, Willard and Underwood.

## Skamania County Department of Emergency Management

The Skamania County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) prepares for all natural and man-made emergencies and disasters that occur throughout Skamania County, coordinates





responses, and provide logistical support, mitigation and recovery efforts.

The term 'emergency' means a set of circumstances which demand immediate action to protect life, preserve public health or essential services, or protect property. 'Disaster' means the situation is beyond the capabilities of the responding jurisdictions or organizations.

In accomplishing their mission, Skamania DEM operates hand-in-hand with the County Sheriff on all four phases of emergency management: Preparedness, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

Skamania DEM employs one full-time and multiple part-time individuals, coordinates more than 100 volunteers, and is currently located in the basement of the County's jail facility. The DEM's duties include implementing National Incident Management System (NIMS) protocols and coordinating search and rescue operations. Skamania County's rural areas include the Mount St. Helens National Monument, Mt. Adams Wilderness, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, and Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Millions of tourists visit these areas annually. This large service area is vulnerable to large scale emergencies such as volcanic eruptions, wildland fires, and landslides, as well as the more frequent small scale emergencies related to lost hikers, lost mushroom collectors, boating and kite/sail boarding recreationists, and compromised climbers.

**Governance.** Skamania County DEM is managed by the County Sheriff, governed by the Skamania County Commissioners, and operated under state law per WAC 118-30 and RCW 38.52 laws.

**Funding.** Appropriations to fund the Skamania County Department of Emergency Management are at the discretion and direction of the County Commissioners. The Department of Emergency Management may also receive funding in the form of gifts, grants, and/or loans.

### Skamania County Hospital District

The Skamania County Hospital District (dba Skamania County EMS) provides emergency medical services (EMS) to the residents and visitors of Skamania County. Their nineteen employees and twenty-two volunteers operate three ambulances out of their facility in downtown Stevenson and have one other ambulance strategically stationed in the county's west end. Skamania EMS also employs a rescue vehicle for automobile extrication, rope rescue and trail rescue, two squads, and a mass casualty trailer. Like the other partners of this feasibility study, Skamania EMS personnel are needed to serve visiting tourists. Responses of this nature continue to increase.



In addition to providing emergency medical services, Skamania County EMS provides a wide range of rescue services:

**Rope Rescue.** Most of Skamania EMS employees are rope rescue technicians. This service is important to Skamania County for two reasons. First, the diverse terrain throughout the County in which to navigate for rescues. Second, because of the many recreational activities specific to Skamania, including Beacon Rock and the Ozone as highly popular climbing areas, there is a growing incidence





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of rope assisted rescues.

**Trail Rescue.** Trail rescue is an important activity for this agency. With a new Wilderness Program, they are able to provide a higher level of advanced life support (ALS) in remote conditions. Preplanning is done for all area trails and is reviewed monthly.



**Vehicle Extrication.** Skamania County is one of the only Emergency Medical Services agencies in the County that provides vehicle extrication. Skamania EMS employs hydraulic tools such as the Jaws of Life and Rescue 42 Jacks for vehicle extrication. These techniques and procedures are updated and reviewed monthly.

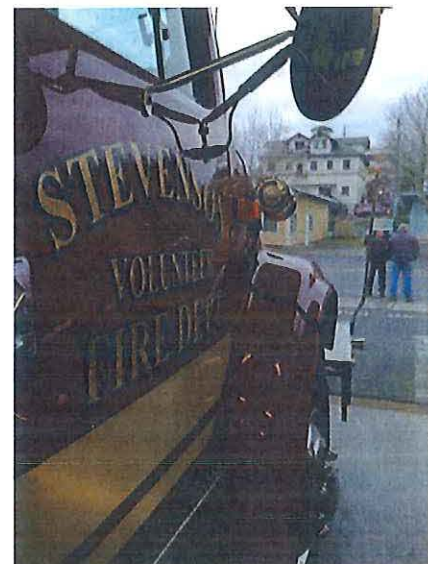
Skamania County EMS also provides event standby services for the community and an extensive number of on-going classes in CPR, First Aid, A.E.D. Operations, Blood Borne Pathogens, CPR for Health Care Providers, Emergency Medical Responder training and Wilderness First Aid.

**Governance.** Skamania County Public Hospital District is governed by three commissioners, elected for six-year terms from residents whom reside within the District's service area. Public Hospital Districts in Washington State are governed by Chapter 70.44 RCW.

**Funding.** Skamania County EMS's primary revenue source is levying taxes on property within the county wide Hospital District. This amount is limited to fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value on taxable property, plus an additional annual tax as a hospital district not to exceed twenty-five cents per thousand dollars. Revenue can be collected above these amounts when authorized by a vote of the people. The commission is also authorized to borrow money or issue warrants under certain circumstances. Additionally, Skamania EMS's revenue is supplemented by charging fees for ambulance service.

### **City of Stevenson Fire Department / Skamania Fire District #2**

The Stevenson Fire Department and Skamania County Fire District #2 operate as one entity. The Chief and his 35 firefighters are all volunteers. The administrative duties of the Department are performed by City staff, and the administrative duties of the District are completed on an as-needed basis by a part-time secretary. The service area includes all of Stevenson and surroundings that stretch all the way to the Bonneville Dam. The volunteers respond to house fires, traffic accidents on the state highway, railway derailments, wildland fires, and emergencies requiring mutual aid in both Washington and Oregon. With the recent reductions in Gifford Pinchot Forest staffing the closest United States Forest Service response team is more than 45 miles from Stevenson. Together, the Stevenson Fire Department and Skamania Fire District #2 often serve as first responders for fires in the Gifford Pinchot, Washington DNR and private holdings.



**Governance.** The Stevenson Fire Department is governed by the City of Stevenson. Stevenson operates under a Mayor-Council form of government where the Mayor serves as the head of the executive branch and five council members serve as the legislative branch. The Mayor and City Council members are elected by the citizens of Stevenson and serve four year terms.

Skamania Fire District #2 is governed by three members of the community, elected to serve as Fire Commissioners. They serve staggered six year terms and are responsible for oversight of the District and their agreement with the City of Stevenson.

**Funding.** Funding for the Stevenson Fire Department is by annual appropriation by the City of Stevenson. Funding for Skamania County Fire District #2 comes primarily through the collection the taxes levied on real property within the boundaries of the Fire District.





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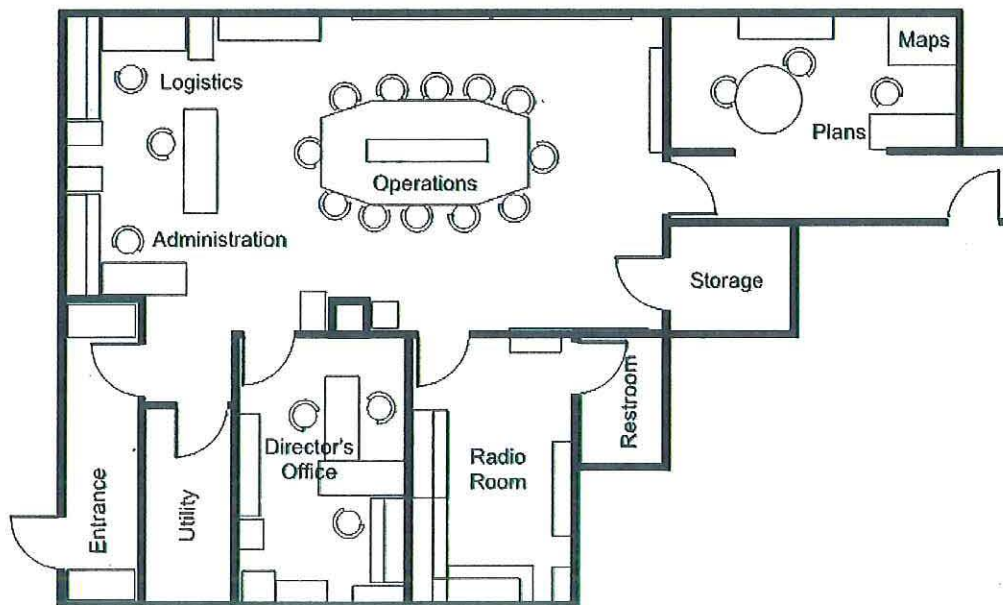
## Existing Facilities

Each of the agencies included in this feasibility assessment have facilities in varying degrees of condition, functionality, useful life, and adequacy.

### Skamania County Department of Emergency Management

The Skamania County Department of Emergency Management is operating out of the lowest floor in the County Jail. It occupies approximately 1,365 square feet. While this location provides high security and good protection from the damage associated with a significant earthquake, it is only moderately satisfactory as an Emergency Operation Center for a service area as diverse and vast as Skamania County.

The central hub for Skamania County DEM's space is an open conference/meeting/training area that becomes the regional Emergency Operation Center (EOC) when required. The central table can accommodate 12 individuals, which has proven inadequate during large scale regional disasters when upwards of 50 volunteers may be called upon to report to the EOC.



Floor Plan  
**Department of Emergency Management**  
Skamania County, Washington



## **Skamania County Hospital District**

The Skamania County Hospital District provides emergency medical and rescue services throughout Skamania County home based from a single station located on First Street in Stevenson, Washington.

The facility is approximately 4,000 square feet covering two floors. It includes administrative offices on the main floor and living quarters on the upper floor for the 24-hour shift personnel assigned to the station.

The building has been well maintained and is in relatively good condition. The building appears to meet current building codes in general and provides functional areas consistent with today's design standards.



The building's shortcomings, as further noted in the Programmatic Requirements section of this report, would be in overall lack of space. Skamania EMS has exceeded its capacity to store their ambulances and support vehicles indoors. Dedicated space for decontamination, as well as adequate storage space for equipment and supplies is inadequate. Additionally, the living quarters are crowded and have limited the number of 24-hour personnel that can be assigned at this location with only three sleep rooms. The single restroom upstairs and single uni-sex locker/shower area do not provide the same level of gender separation as would be expected in a modern EMS station.

### **Main Floor**

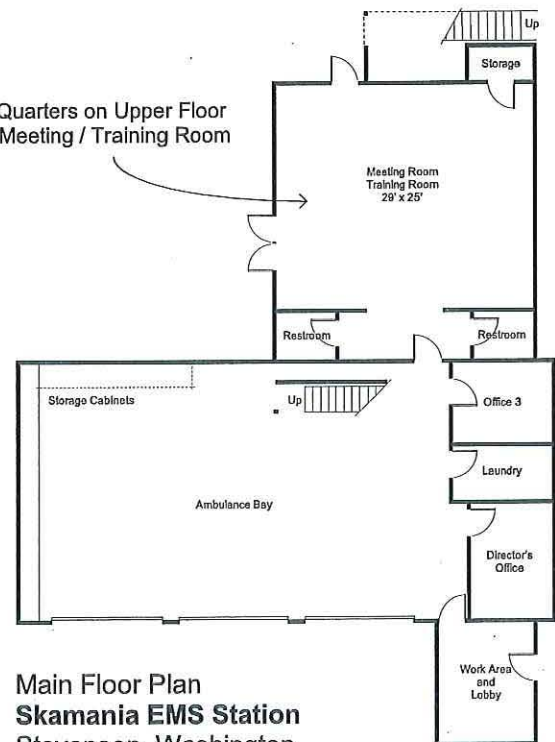
Apparatus Bay	1,250 sf
Lobby / Office	150 sf
Director's Office	130 sf
Laundry	80 sf
Office	110 sf
(2) Restrooms	100 sf
Meeting / Training Room	725 sf
Training Room Storage	30 sf
Stairs / Circulation	225 sf
	<b>2,800 sf</b>

### **Upper Floor**

Kitchen / Day Room	440 sf
(3) Sleeping Rooms	340 sf
Restroom	80 sf
Lockers / Shower Area	180 sf
Stairs / Circulation	160 sf
	<b>1,200 sf</b>

**Total Square Footage 4,000 sf**

Living Quarters on Upper Floor  
above Meeting / Training Room



**Main Floor Plan  
Skamania EMS Station  
Stevenson, Washington**



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## Stevenson Fire Department / Skamania Fire District #2

There are two structures the Fire Department and Fire District provide emergency services from – a main headquarters fire station in Stevenson on First Street, and a satellite fire station north of town and close to the intersection of Loop Road and Stewart Road.



The fire station on First Street is approximately 4,320 square feet and consists primarily of a large garage space for storing fire apparatus and equipment. There is a small meeting and training room in the rear of the building and a single occupant restroom.

Included in the total square footage is a lean-to storage room on the rear of the structure of approximately 960 square feet. This addition has a lower floor elevation than the main station and is consequently accessed only from outside.

The station does not have the amenities expected of a modern fire station, including facilities for decontaminating equipment and personnel from pathogens they may have been exposed to during a call, or a mechanical ventilation system for removing diesel exhaust contaminants when driving vehicles in and out of the station.

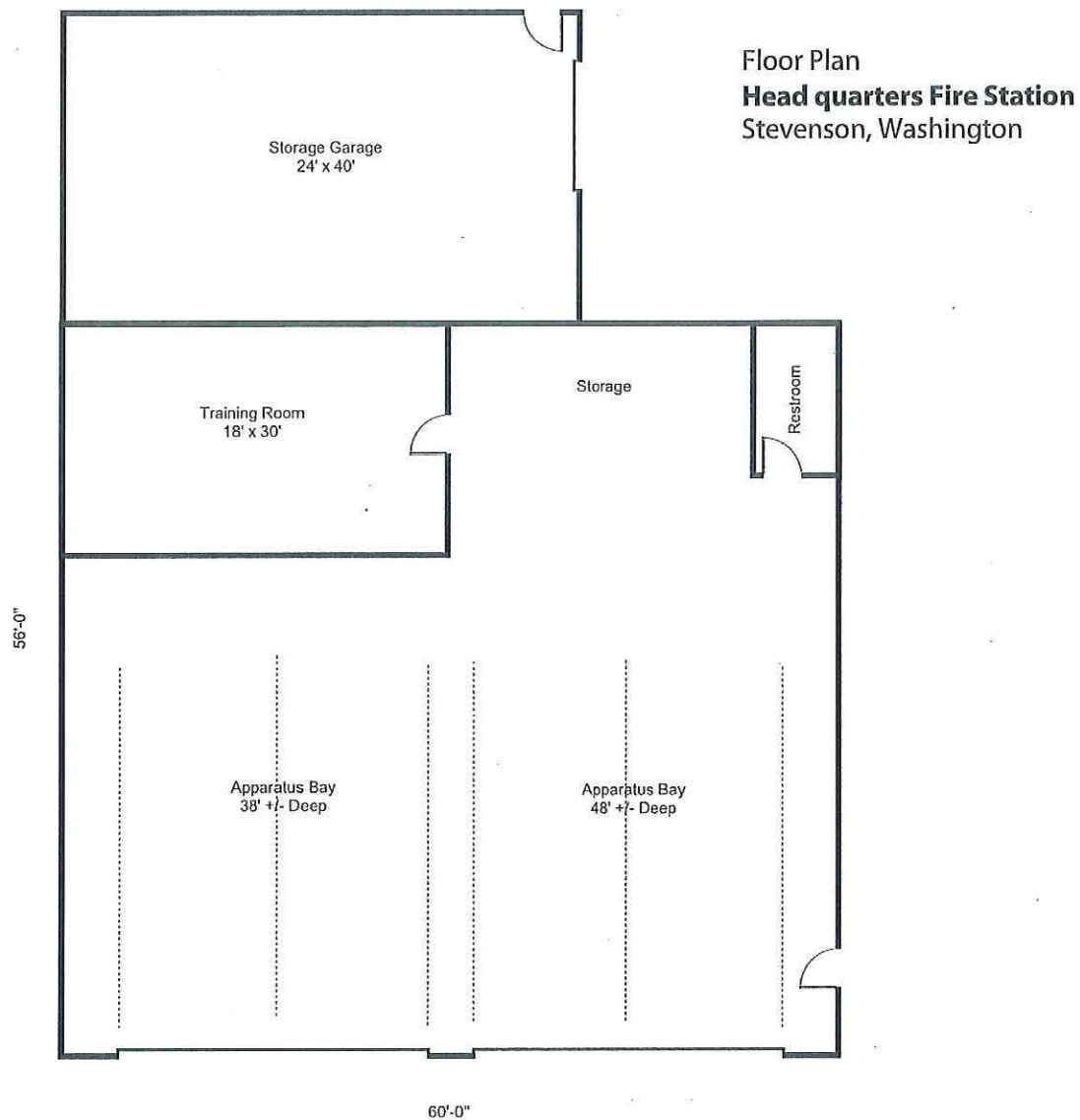
Additionally, the building does not have automatic fire sprinklers and its resistance to a large earthquake is highly questionable. Recently when a fire truck clipped the jamb of one of the overhead doors, significant damage occurred to the building requiring a large steel framework to be installed to support the corner of the building. In many ways, the building is at or near the end of its useful life. Despite good maintenance and care over the years, the building is highly recommended for replacement.



The satellite fire station is a single garage with two overhead doors facing Loop Road. While certain fire apparatus and equipment are located in this station, they are not currently dispatched from this location.

Like the Headquarters Fire Station, this satellite station is antiquated in many ways. Consequently, it is currently being used predominately as storage for the fire district, as opposed to an active fire station.











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## Costs

When evaluating the reasons for partnering in a joint building such as this, that decision should be ground in financial benefits. Cost savings should be clear over constructing independent facilities. And, the opportunities for lower monthly expenses in maintaining and operating such a facility needs to be clear as well. We believe these things to be true for the following reasons:

Built as a single facility, the building is 17% smaller than three individual buildings when allowing for shared use of certain spaces. This equates to a savings of approximately \$2.1 million.

Maintaining a building that is 17% smaller than it would otherwise be has a likely annual savings of approximately \$18,000/year.

There are a number of smaller savings that come from undertaking a single larger project, such as real estate fees in acquiring a single property, a single architectural contract, and a single building permit. Not only are these fees not duplicated, they are often provided at a lower percentage cost as the project cost increases, known as economy-of-scale.

Agencies in shared facilities often find other cost savings in operational aspects, such as a shared receptionist, internet service providers, and/or building insurance. These small items can tally large amounts over time.

## Estimated Project Costs

The total estimated cost for this project, including land acquisition and all project expenses, would be approximately \$10.5 million dollars. In simple terms, the overall budget is apportioned approximately as follows:

Land acquisition	\$	600,000
Site Preparation "pad ready"	\$	300,000
Site Development	\$	900,000
Building Construction	\$	6,200,000
EMS Support Structure	\$	100,000
Washington State Sales Tax	\$	600,000
Project Expenses	\$	1,200,000
Contingencies	\$	600,000
Total Project Budget	\$	10,500,000

A more detailed breakdown of these amounts can be found at the end of this chapter.

### Cost Sharing Amongst Partners

While all four participant agencies are equally committed to each other in seeking funding for this project, it is important to recognize they are not equal in their built needs. Each agency will build and occupy different amount of space. Each will have a certain amount of space dedicated solely to their use and certain amount of space they are quite willing and able to share. Determining an equitable proportioning of building use can be translated to an equitable proportioning of the overall project budget. In seeking grants to fund the project, proportioning is of less importance since those funds could benefit all the partners. However, if the funding strategy includes loans, the agencies would likely choose to retire that debt service based on an agreed to proportioning formula.

Any proportioning formula should have a basis in spaces dedicated for use by one agency verses that which is shared. This should be further refined by assigning benefit to each agency from common areas and common site infrastructure. This is not an exact science. Some shared space may only be occasionally shared while other spaces may be fully shared. Likewise, measuring benefit can certainly be subjective. Consequently, being partners in a joint facility requires each agency to be open, flexible, and respectful of the reasons the partnership was established initially so a fair and reasonable formula can be established.

As noted in chapter 4, approximately 3,000 square feet of the programmed space would be 'shared' amongst the participant agencies. If one also assumes equal benefit in acquiring and developing a piece of property, and that finished interior space is more expensive than apparatus garage space, the overall budget could be apportioned roughly like this:

	Department Emergency Management	Skamania Hospital District	Stevenson Fire and District #2
Land acquisition	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
Site Preparation "pad ready"	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Site Development	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Building Construction	\$ 600,000	\$ 3,200,000	\$ 2,400,000
EMS Support Structure	\$ 0	\$ 100,000	\$ 0
Washington State Sales Tax	\$ 100,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 200,000
Project Expenses	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000
Contingencies	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
<b>Total Project Budget</b>	<b>\$ 1,900,000</b>	<b>\$ 4,800,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,800,000</b>
	<b>18 %</b>	<b>46 %</b>	<b>36 %</b>

### Operating and Maintenance Costs

For a project as contemplated in this study, one could reasonable expect on-going maintenance and utility expenses to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per month. This would include expenses necessary to maintain the building and grounds, and slowly build a maintenance reserve over time.

Further discussion should occur amongst the participant agencies regarding how on-going maintenance and utility expenses would be apportioned amongst each agency. In general, one could





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expect building expenses to be divided utilizing the square footage scenario noted in chapter 4 ( 8% DEM / 51% EMS / 41% Fire ). For expenses associated with maintaining the parking, landscaping, and other site amenities, one could expect a more equal basis since all agencies benefit equally from these site features ( 33.3% DEM / 33.3% EMS / 33.3% Fire ).

### **Cost Impacts of LEED Certification**

Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) is a rating system for measuring a building's performance in reducing energy consumption and good environmental stewardship. It is a well regarded tool nationally for comparing the performance of buildings across the country in a standardized way, regardless of size or type of occupancy.

The principles associated with LEED are wholly embraced by the participant agencies since energy savings lead to lower on-going costs for operating and maintaining facilities. Enthusiasm for obtaining LEED certification for this project was less of a priority because of the cost associated with applying for that recognition, and the documentation require supporting the application. These efforts can add as much as 5% to the overall cost of a project.

### **Potential Funding Sources**

As previously noted, there are significant differences amongst the participant agencies in their governance, jurisdictional boundaries, and funding mechanisms for daily operations. Consequently, it is likely the funding strategy for this shared facility would be derived from multiple sources. These sources fall into three general categories: grants, loans, and voter-approved measures.

Leaders from the participant agencies have uniformly expressed their dislike for funding this project through a voter-approved levy or by selling voter-approved bonds. Given the low population base of Skamania County, a taxation-based funding structure would result in a relatively high levy rate on those citizens. A more appropriate scenario may be given to a voter-approved tax measure that funds only a portion of the project and is part of a larger strategy of sources to fund the project. More discussion of the issues surrounding voter-approved measures can be found in the appendix of this report.

Obtaining grants and/or low interest loans is another viable option. These programs are usually highly competitive, but well worth the rewards if received. The strategy is particularly attractive in this joint project in that different granting agencies have different funding priorities. This makes some grants easier and more applicable to EMS agencies over fire departments and some vice versa. The following prospective programs were identified:

- **US Dept of Housing and Urban Development, CDBG Program** – Construction projects for a fire facility are eligible for grant and/or loan funds. The requirement is that 50% of the population served is below the HUD-determined moderate income level. (We were eligible for this grant, subject to the same requirements). Applications are submitted to the Washington Dept. of Commerce.

- **US Dept of Agriculture, RDA Grants and Loans** – Funding assistance is available for facility projects in rural areas and communities (below 2000 population) and will cover 75% of the project costs. Grant funding depends on median household income and population.
- **US Dept of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Public Works Grants & Loans** – Grants and loans to support infrastructure projects that will stimulate economic development and/or job opportunities. Portions of the Emergency Facility Project may be eligible for public works funding assistance.
- **FEMA, Assistance to Fire fighters Station Construction Grants** – Funded 120 stations in the past...there are no funds currently in place.
- **Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG)** – Although most of the funding is for firefighting equipment and vehicles – we could probably get some of the equipment (internet connections, wash down equipment and etc.). It is worth the investigation (1-866-274-0360 firegrnats@dhs.gov).
- **International Association of Firefighters Promotes Fire Protection Funding** – A lobbying association for SAFER and FIRE Grants who could provide guidance for applications.
- **CERB Funds** – Grants and loans for infrastructure that primarily create jobs – cities, counties and special purpose districts are eligible. If presented correctly this may be a focus for the hospital district.
- **Public Works Trust Fund** – Loans for infrastructure. (This year state legislature swiped all of the cash).
- **Washington State Capital Budget** – Political, we would be asking for capital grant funding assistance via special appropriations by the Washington State Legislature. Do not try to ask for more than 25% of the cost. Project must be shovel-ready. Forms are available from the Washington legislature – best to contact our Washington State legislative representative for a copy of the form.
- **Washington Investment Board** – Special funds only available for citizens within the Gorge. Capital Projects are eligible.

Another source of revenue for constructing the project could come from outright donations from business entities with a base in Skamania County or significant presence in the community. Examples could be Burlington Northern Railroad or the Bonneville Power Administration. Enterprises such as these sometimes generate a high risk for large scale emergencies or regional disasters, but don't always contribute a commensurate level of revenue to the emergency service providers for the risks they bring to the community.

### Professional Cost Estimate

Following is the professional cost estimate prepared by ProDim of Kirkland, Washington, dated August 12, 2013.