



**Mike Morrison** | Sheriff

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**Press Release (7/20/24) for immediate release**

## **Chelan County Sheriff's Office: 'Protecting Stehekin, its citizens our top priority in Pioneer Fire'**

STEHEKIN, WASH. – In a message to Stehekin residents and others concerned about the Pioneer Fire, the Chelan County Sheriff's Office assures the public that emergency responders and Complex Incident Management Teams are united in one goal: Protect the community of Stehekin.

Misinformation on social media in the most recent days has led to some incorrect speculation over fire tactics on the Pioneer Fire, which is burning on the north shore of Lake Chelan and is currently about 4 miles from Stehekin. Both the Sheriff's Office and Chelan County Commissioners Office have received many emails from private individuals, expressing concern over wildfire-fighting tactics.

"This is unfortunate, because it detracts from our emergency planning efforts," said Chelan County Sheriff Mike Morrison. "However, we do understand. These are people's lives, businesses and homes, and with any wildfire comes much stress. But I want to be clear that state, federal and local agencies are working tirelessly on this fire and a strategy is in place to protect the community. We are all on the same team, working together for the same results -- protect Stehekin and keep people safe."

Stehekin, from the landing to High Bridge, is currently under a Level 1 fire advisory. Stehekin residents have been briefed that Emergency Management is prepared for a Level 2 (be prepared to evacuate) notice if the incident management team and Emergency Management determine it is necessary. A new Complex Incident Management Team, the fourth team since the fire started in early June, assumes command of the fire on Sunday, July 21.

"This incoming incident command team, Northwest Team 3, includes several local names, like former Chelan County fire chiefs Mike Burnett and Randy Johnson," said Rich Magnussen, Emergency Management specialist. "The team consists of several U.S. Forest Service employees who live in our area, and the incident commander has served many stints fighting wildfires in the Lake Chelan area. We are in great hands, with people who know our area well."

Undersheriff  
**Dan Ozment**



Chief of Operations  
**Ryan Moody**



Chief of Patrol  
**Seth Buhler**



Chief Civil Deputy  
**Kim Oglesbee**



Executive Assistant  
**April Moore**



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In a community meeting earlier this week, fire officials shared that multiple attempts had been made to stop the fire well south of Stehekin. These earlier attempts were not successful due to extreme fire behavior and very steep terrain. Fire managers have evaluated numerous locations to try and stop the fire from reaching Stehekin; however, rugged terrain, heavy fuels and hazards to firefighters have limited the viability of these locations. A fire strategy is in place and preparations are complete for firefighters to provide point protection to the community, protecting homes and businesses within the Stehekin Valley. Any private actions by community members may jeopardize this plan and the safety of fire personnel, Magnussen warned.

Emergency Management strongly encourages Stehekin residents to stay informed on the Pioneer Fire by signing up for the county's emergency notification system, [Everbridge](#), while also participating in regularly held community meetings. The meetings provide crucial updates on firefighting efforts and offer an opportunity to ask questions. A fire message board and public information officer are also located at the Stehekin landing.

Other resources for official fire information are at:

[Inciweb: Pioneer Fire Information](#)

[Pioneer & Easy Fires Information Facebook page](#)

Pioneer Fire Information telephone line: 541-861-5808.

[Chelan County Emergency Incidents Map](#)

[Chelan County Emergency Management Active Emergencies](#)

[Chelan County Emergency Management Facebook page](#)

Morrison emphasized that the county is working in collaboration with the Complex Incident Management Team and supports its strategy for keeping the community safe.

"We have been beside the Stehekin community from the start of this fire, providing strategy for evacuation planning and input into wildfire management while also speaking with residents," Morrison said. "We will continue to be at the community's side until this fire is put out."

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