

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Klickitat County Department of Emergency Management

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**KLICKITAT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
CELEBRATES “Team of the Year” Award**

Thursday, September 27, 2018, Klickitat County Department of Emergency Management (KCDEM) is pleased to announce recognition from the Washington State Chapter of APCO (Association of Public Safety Communication Officials) and NENA (National Emergency Number Association) as the recipient of the “2017 Team of the Year Award” for Washington State.

This award recognizes the emergency communication team that handled an unforeseen or unusually challenging situation causing each nominee to handle additional responsibilities in addition to their regularly assigned duties. The team used uncommon methods to problem solve, teamwork to create a solution, and together were instrumental in making a difference in the outcome of the event.

The recognized team of Klickitat County Communications Officers were nominated for the exceptional efforts they each displayed during the industrial fire that occurred in the early morning hours on Wednesday, October 18, 2017 at the Underwood Fruit & Warehouse Co. on the west end of the town of Bingen. With usually only 2 communications officers working at any one time, any call out of the ordinary can take a toll on resources. The morning of the Underwood Fruit Fire was no exception. The initial 9-1-1 call came in shortly before shift change so fortunately there were about to be 4 communications operators in the room (2 going off shift and 2 coming on shift). The initial 9-1-1 call was received from a tug-boat operator on the Columbia River advising of “visible flames” and the call was quickly dispatched to the Bingen and White Salmon Fire Departments and Fire District 3. Very quickly it became evident that this was going to be a large fire because of the location and the many potential hazards. The 2 communications officers that were getting off shift stayed plugged in and the other 2 communications officers quickly plugged in to the other available consoles and began helping. There was no question that the 2 going off shift would stay and help – that’s what you do in a small communications center – help your team and don’t let them down. The call load and other assigned duties is usually enough to keep 2 people working steadily throughout the shift. Add in something major and it can take a toll. These communications officers can roll with it. They have high standards for themselves for handling the day to day so add in a major incident and their standards get ramped up! We all live in this small community and take pride in the job we do for our citizens. Many of our staff are from the local area and grew up here. Therefore, when things like this

happen it can be personal and most likely you know many of the people involved, they aren't just names.

We would like to congratulate the award winning team of Filiberto Ontiveros, Nicole Vincent, Vicky Ramsay, Pam Schilling, Shirley Chapple and Melina Geary. The "Team of the Year" award will be presented during the Awards Ceremony and Banquet being held at the Washington State APCO-NENA 9-1-1 MegaForum at the 3 Rivers Convention Center, Kennewick, WA on Wednesday, October 10, 2018.

Emergencies can occur at any time that require police, fire or emergency medical services. When an emergency occurs the prompt response of emergency personnel is critical to the protection of life and preservation of property. The safety of our emergency responders is dependent upon the quality and accuracy of information obtained from citizens who telephone the Klickitat County 9-1-1 Dispatch center.

KCDEM Communications Officers are truly, the first, first responders and the most critical contact our citizens have with emergency services and are the single vital link for our emergency responders by monitoring their activities via radio, providing them critical information and insuring their safety.

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For more about Klickitat County Department of Emergency Management go to <http://www.klickitatcounty.org/249/Emergency-Management>