



# CITY OF EDMONDS

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

MIKE NELSON  
MAYOR

May 29, 2020

## KEEP EDMONDS RUNNING DURING COVID-19

When the pandemic hit Snohomish County, the City of Edmonds moved quickly to respond to this disaster to maintain the continuity of critical services running in our city. Critical services include, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, stormwater systems, responding to 911 emergencies, maintaining park facilities, and managing our finances.

Unlike businesses, government can't close. Why? Because this is a disaster and the government has had to operate not only to provide critical services to our community, but to take steps to manage this health crisis and protect the public.

In order to provide these critical services, we had to ensure our employees could be free from exposure to the virus.

### How we responded

The response to this type of disaster is different from most kinds of disasters we are familiar with. After a hurricane or an earthquake, the cavalry rushes in to the specific location to help. This disaster is different because it shook the whole world. Everyone needed the cavalry at the same time so there was no one else to respond.

For example, the City of Detroit learned this the hard way when it had to quarantine 1,000 police officers who were exposed to the virus. No one else was available to respond emergency calls. Can you imagine what would happen if that occurred in Edmonds? There would be no police officers available to prevent crime and help those in need.

Realizing that we were on our own, that every city, county, and state needed resources for immediate help, we created staggered on-call shifts to ensure continuity of critical staff and services for our city.

We split teams in two and placed them on staggered on-call shifts, much like firefighters. We had approximately 40 employees on these staggered shifts. They received stand-by pay which is regular pay. The strategy is simple: if an actively working employee tests positive and we have to send the entire 16-person crew home that day to quarantine for 14 days, well, we then have an entirely healthy crew ready to go. We cannot go two weeks without police officers or without staff at the Waste Treatment Plant. City government simply cannot carry out critical services if this happens.

• *Incorporated August 11, 1890* •  
Sister City – Hekinan, Japan

## **Hazard Pay**

We also provided hazard pay to city employees who were required to work during this emergency and could be exposed to the virus. Any work-related exposure could easily be brought home by an employee to his or her family, especially since in half of the COVID cases, a person did not initially show any symptoms but was actively spreading the virus.

We recognized the unique role government plays in a disaster and recognized the unique risk to our critical frontline staff who were interacting with the public and could not shelter in place.

With those unique risks in mind, the City Council voted in support of a pay differential, which included hazard pay and standby pay for Edmonds City workers. Some, who reported to high-impact areas, received 6 percent hazard pay while they worked their 40-hour work week on site. Those with more limited exposure only received 3 percent hazard pay. Everyone who received hazard pay was working. Hazard pay was tied to the Governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order. We evaluated the City's financial resources and made sure that the City could responsibly afford this additional expense in the budget. Fortunately, Federal CARES Act disaster funding may be used to cover the costs of the hazard pay that has been paid to City employees.

## **It worked**

The strategy we put into place worked. Edmonds City Government has had only two positive cases. This program protected our entire city and saved lives.

Since Day One, our 250 Edmonds City employees have kept your streets open, water flowing, toilets flushing, streetlights on, and responded to your emergency calls. Government can't close. We are proud of our healthy workforce who never stopped serving our community in this time of need.