

Upper County Operation Unaffected by Recent FISH Fire



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The HopeSource food bank in Cle Elum regularly receives commodities from the FISH Food Bank in Ellensburg, but has not been affected by the fire at the FISH location.

On Nov. 28, the FISH Food Bank in Ellensburg burned in a fire. The building was a complete loss, and the fire was determined to have started by a fault in an extension cord. FISH Food bank has resumed operations in temporary locations in Ellensburg.

While HopeSource gets some food from FISH, HopeSource's food supply wasn't affected directly by the fire.

"We were very lucky and had just gotten our commodities delivered Wednesday before Thanksgiving," HopeSource

office manager JoAnn Rushton said. "We did not lose those."

HopeSource gets USDA commodities like tomato sauce and juice that the state buys. It is shipped to FISH Food Bank, and is stored in Ellensburg until it is delivered to HopeSource once a month.

"They're (FISH) our lead agency for state and federal funding," Rushton said. "We work very closely with FISH."

Rushton said the Upper County food bank will continue to receive those commodities, but is not sure if FISH will store them elsewhere in Ellensburg or if the trucks will bring the food directly to Cle Elum upon arrival.

HopeSource, a nonprofit organization that provides access to education, employment and vital services in Kittitas County, is currently the main food bank

serving the Upper County. Easton has its own food bank, Rushton said.

Service

HopeSource provides food bank service to 16 to 25 households a day two days a week. Summer can be a busier time for the food bank while kids are out of school and not getting fed there.

“We come to about 200 households a month,” Rushton said, adding that HopeSource can serve each household up to twice a month.

In April, HopeSource added a mobile delivery service that can take boxes of food to clients in parts of the Teanaway, Easton, Ronald, Roslyn, Cle Elum and South Cle Elum. The mobile food service van was added to deliver food to people who are not physically able to get to the location on Pennsylvania Avenue in Cle Elum. Since the service started, about six people a week use it, but it is likely the number will go up when the snow falls.

“I expect that should go up from wintertime, if we have a winter,” Rushton said. “We have a lot of seniors (using the service). They can’t get out and around. ... quite a few basically depend on caregivers or are on wheelchairs.”

Donate

HopeSource accepts food donations year-round. Local businesses, churches and community food drives help bring in donations for the weekly boxes.

“They do (food drives) a number of places,” Rushton said. “The school just did a big one in conjunction with Rotary’s harvest against hunger.”

The Upper Kittitas County Rotary Club ran a food drive in October called Operation Harvest, and donated four to five truckloads of food to the food bank.

Rushton said one of the primary needs at the Upper County food bank is protein. HopeSource gets peanut butter and tuna fish from the \$10 bags that Safeway allows people to purchase and donate.

“We don’t get a lot of fresh or frozen protein,” she said, adding that the food bank has refrigerators and freezers to store the fresh donations.

The best times for people to drop off donations are Mondays and Wednesdays. Volunteers are available to help unload donations from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday and from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday.

Rushton said the food bank does well this time of year, and hopes people remember to donate in the spring after the holidays.

“We’re reminding everyone in the spring when it comes around,” she said.