

What the Fair is Doing about the August 20 Shooting

We committed to keeping the community informed about actions we are taking in response to the unfortunate incident at the Fair on August 20, 2011.

There were many different agencies involved in responding to the shooting and stabbing incident. They included the Lynden Police, Lynden Fire Department, Whatcom County Sheriff's Department, Everson Police, Sumas Police, the Border Patrol, Phoenix Security and Fair security personnel.

Fair General Manager Jim Baron and Board Chairman Lauren Meenderinck met with representatives from most of these agencies for a review of the incident on August 24 at the Fair. The Fair took this opportunity to thank the responding agencies and personnel involved for the outstanding job they did in dealing with this situation. The effective response was due in part to the preparation and planning that has been part of preparing for the fair in consultation with these agencies.

A review of available security personnel revealed that at the time of the incident, there were 9 Lynden Police Officers at the Fairgrounds along with 2 Sheriff Deputies, at least two Border Patrol agents, 5 members of Phoenix Protective Services, an armed agency hired by the Fair and 11 members of the Fair's own security force.

While the investigation into this incident continues, we wanted to convey to you some of the initial discussion as a result of this incident.

First, we are fully committed to protecting the safety and security of everyone attending the Fair, while maintaining a fun, family atmosphere. That means we are aware of the problems of creating obtrusive security measures that add to concerns without reducing risks.

Some measures discussed and being evaluated include:

- increasing uniformed police or security officer presence
- evaluating admission procedures to see what is both prudent and legal in allowing or denying admission
- reviewing lighting throughout the fair facilities to eliminate darker areas that may attract those seeking trouble
- evaluating measures that have proven effective in dealing with similar situations at other fairs in the state and around the country
- engaging local law enforcement officers familiar with local gang members to help identify and prevent incidents
- evaluating fair response procedures and facilities to make certain we are supporting effective response

This was an unusual incident and we want you to know that we are taking it very seriously. Balancing the need for increased security with the desire to not allow a few troublemakers to damage or destroy what has been built over the past 101 years is our challenge now.

We will continue to keep you informed of our actions relating to this incident.

Jim Baron
General Manager, Northwest Washington Fair