



**City of Seattle**  
Mayor Bruce Harrell

---

February 15, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Seattle Police Community Commission

Dear Reverend Hunter, Reverend Walden, and Mr. Merkel,

The loss of 23-year-old Jaahnavi Kandula in the collision on January 23, 2023, was truly a tragedy. We know events like these not only effect families, but also the community and first responders. The impacts are far reaching, and we acknowledge the tremendous loss.

You pose a number of questions in your letter regarding the Seattle Fire and Seattle Police joint dispatch protocol for responses to drug overdoses which I will try to address.

To provide context for the scope of the problem, the number of overdoses we are seeing in our communities has increased dramatically. Last year, Seattle firefighters responded to more than 5,200 drug use related calls which is an average of 14 calls daily. In the prior year, we responded to more than 3,600 drug use related calls and 3,000 calls in the year before that. That is a 66% increase compared to two years ago.

The joint response to patients reported to be experiencing a drug overdose is a long-standing emergency dispatch protocol followed by Seattle firefighter dispatchers from the Fire Alarm Center and police dispatchers from what is now the Community Safety and Communications Center. This protocol goes back at least 20 years and is designed to provide scene safety for firefighters and paramedics as overdose patients can become violent during treatment to reverse the overdose.

Encountering combative patients or bystanders on emergency responses has unfortunately become a reality for firefighters and paramedics. Our firefighters take an oath to protect the community through fire suppression and responding to medical emergencies, but now also have to be prepared for the possibility that they could be threatened verbally or physically while on a response. In 2022, Seattle Fire developed a new method for tracking assaults and threatening behavior experienced by firefighters in the field. This information is shared with the department's Joint Safety Committee, which exists to enhance firefighter safety, and with City leadership to include the Seattle Police Department, the City Attorney's Office, Mayor's Office, and Council.

Every day our firefighters work side by side with police officers on emergency responses ranging from scenes of violence to motor vehicle collisions, to incidents at encampments, to drug overdoses. We rely on our partnership with the Seattle Police Department and its officers as we work together in service to this community.

February 15, 2023

Page 2

Please let me know if you have further questions. I am available to meet with you as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold D. Scoggins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harold D. Scoggins, Fire Chief  
Seattle Fire Department

HDS:db