



# FRANKLIN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 3

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Franklin County Fire District 3 Responds to Record 804 Calls in 2022**

*Revenue is not keeping up with demand for and costs to provide services*

(Pasco, Wash.) – Franklin County Fire District 3 reports that call volumes have increased 49 percent since 2018. In 2018, the fire district responded to 540 calls, and in 2022, it responded to a record-high 804 calls.

The increase in calls is attributed to growth and an aging population.

Franklin County Fire District 3 (Fire District 3) relies on full-time and volunteer emergency personnel to respond to calls, of which 50 percent are for Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Fire District 3 emergency personnel are highly trained to provide services for fire suppression, including wildland fires, EMS, technical rescues, hazardous material spills, auto extrication, and prevention/safety education for adults and children.

### **Revenue is not keeping up with demand and costs to provide services**

Emergency call volumes have increased 49 percent since 2018 when voters last approved a fire levy lid lift and overlapping calls (two or more that come in at the same time) are happening 30 percent of the time. Current staffing levels are unable to keep up with higher call volumes and overlapping calls, and as a result, response times are increasing.

Higher call volumes and inflation are driving up costs. For example, costs for medical equipment and supplies for the EMS program have increased 43 percent, while firefighter protective gear and breathing apparatus costs are 18 percent higher.

“We work to save taxpayers money by asking volunteers to respond to calls, applying for grants and partnering with neighboring fire agencies to share costs,” Fire Chief Mike Harris said. “These measures, however, are not enough to fund the fire district’s daily operations anymore.”

### **How Fire District 3 is funded**

Daily operations are funded by a fire levy paid through property taxes. In 2018, voters approved a fire levy rate of \$1.27 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Over time, the levy rate falls as property values rise to limit the fire district to a one percent revenue increase per year (or any voter-approved increase).

In 2023, the fire levy rate dropped to \$1.04 per \$1,000. This is called “levy compression” and impacts a fire district’s ability to provide emergency services.

Fire District 3 is considering asking voters to raise the fire levy from \$1.04 to \$1.34 per \$1,000 sometime this year. The final decision will be made after a public process is conducted.

“We believe it is critical for our community to understand how we are funded and how we use your tax dollars to provide quality emergency services,” Fire Chief Harris said. “We report to you, and we look forward to having this important conversation.”

More information about Franklin County Fire District 3 can be found at [www.fcfd3.org](http://www.fcfd3.org). Fire Chief Mike Harris also welcomes your questions at [media@fcfd3.org](mailto:media@fcfd3.org) and 509-547-9306.

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*Franklin County Fire District 3 (Fire District 3) serves 8,225 people over 205 square miles. Fire District 3 is a separate taxing district and is not associated with Franklin County. The fire district relies on full-time and volunteer emergency personnel who responded to more than 800 calls in 2022 of which 50 percent are for Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Fire District 3 firefighters and emergency medical personnel are trained to provide quality emergency services for fire suppression, wildland fires, EMS, technical rescue, hazardous material spills, auto extrication, and prevention/safety education programs for adults and children. Fire District 3 relies on volunteers to respond to calls. If you’re interested in volunteering, contact Fire District 3 to learn more.*