



FRANKLIN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 3

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Franklin County Fire District 3 Shares Funding Philosophy

Fire chief: "We want our community to understand how we fund emergency services."

(Pasco, Wash.) – Franklin County Fire District 3 provides fire and life safety services to 8,225 people over 205 square miles, operates under a balanced budget and has passed all independent financial and accountability audits. In 2022 the fire district responded to 804 calls – of which 50 percent were for emergency medical service (EMS).

"Transparency and accountability are key to maintaining public trust," Fire Chief Mike Harris said. "We believe it is important for our community to understand how we are funded. This is a partnership to protect lives and property and we are grateful for the support."

How emergency services are funded

The fire district's daily operations are funded by a fire levy capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The fire levy pays for fire suppression and medical services. It also pays for capital projects like station renovations and equipment replacements.

Each year the fire district is allowed to collect a set amount of revenue. State law limits the fire district to that same amount plus one percent more per year. Even if property values double, the fire district can only collect one percent. This means the levy rate drops as property values rise to limit the fire district to the same amount of revenue per year plus that one percent increase (or any other voter-approved increase).

This is called "levy compression" and impacts the fire district's ability to provide emergency services.

For example, voters approved a fire levy rate of \$1.27 per \$1,000 in 2018. Since that time, the rate has fallen to \$1.04, while call volumes have increased by 49 percent. Additionally, costs for medical equipment and firefighter protective gear have gone up by double digits.

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

Stretching tax dollars further

The fire district applies for grants, works with neighboring agencies to share costs, and pays cash for

capital projects, which saves taxpayers from having to pay more in interest. These cost-saving measures are important but are not enough to cover daily operations.

The fire district's funding decisions are guided by its strategic plan. The plan is approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners who are elected to represent the community's priorities. All board meetings are open to the public and meeting information can be found on the fire district's website at www.fcfd3.org.

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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.