

Chief's Corner

By Deputy Chief Mike Carnes



Thank you for supporting East County Fire and Rescue. We serve 10,000 people over 60 square miles in the unincorporated areas of Vancouver, Camas and Washougal. We are a small but mighty organization, providing

better service than most agencies our size.

Whether its terrain challenges, wildland fires or hazardous material spills – we have the skills and connections to save lives and property.

Emergency services are funded through two levies (one for fire and another for EMS) paid through property taxes. Over time, these levy rates fall as property values rise to limit the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year plus a one percent increase as allowed by law.

The issue is that emergency call volumes – 52 percent higher since 2007—and even the rate of

In This Edition:
Chief's Corner
East County Fire & Rescue Passes Audit
Prepare for Wildland Fires Now
Open House July 29—Everyone Welcome!

inflation are higher than the one percent revenue increase we are allowed. Inflation alone is 3-4 percent per year. More calls mean added costs for personnel, apparatus, equipment, and needed supplies.

Voters approved a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2008. That levy rate has fallen to \$1.29 as of 2018. The Board of Fire Commissioners will discuss asking voters to return funding to \$1.50/\$1,000 to maintain emergency service levels for our community. We invite you to take part in two upcoming meetings July 3 or 17 at 6:30 p.m. at 600 NE 267th Avenue in Camas (98607).

If you are unable to attend a meeting, please send questions and comments to me at mcarnes@ecfr.us. All communication is welcome and becomes part of the public record.

East County Fire & Rescue Passes Audit

East County Fire and Rescue operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its completed audits by the state (www.sao.wa.gov).

We even paid loans off early and refinanced bonds, which saved our taxpayers almost \$250,000. We improved our community's

“ We actively look for ways to save taxpayers money, such as applying for grants and paying cash for apparatus like this fire engine, to avoid interest payments. ”



insurance rating, which reduced premiums for home and business owners. We also partner with neighboring agencies to save money on administrative and training costs.



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Prepare for Wildland Fires Now

Last year was worrisome when it came to wildland fires impacting homes and businesses in our area. By all accounts, this year will be just as challenging. Our fire district is prepared to save lives and property, but there are a few things you can do to help minimize any loss from wildland fires.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources provides excellent information about wildland fire preparedness. Learn more at: www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/wildfire/wildfire-preparedness/emergency-preparedness.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs has prepared a document "Ready, Set, Go: Wildland Fire Action Plan" for homeowners. You can find this resource at: [www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Readysetgo\(1\).pdf](http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Readysetgo(1).pdf).

Open House July 29 – Everyone Welcome!

We look forward to thanking our community for its support during our annual **Open House on Sunday, July 29**. The event is from **11 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at fire district headquarters, **600 NE 267th Avenue in Camas (98607)**.

Bring the kids and come for a fun day, including a bouncy house! There will be an ice cream sundae bar and popcorn machine donated by our firefighters. Everyone has the opportunity for tours of the fire station and apparatus, such as engines and ambulances.

This is an opportunity for you to see your tax dollars at work and have a great day out with the family. Come join us! The Camas Washougal Aviators has an Open House too.

