

Fully Involved

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ECFR Receives \$1 Million in Federal Staffing Grants

Volunteer Grant

The \$299,500 SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response) Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Grant will increase the number of ECFR Volunteer Fire Fighter/Emergency Medical Technicians by at least 20—and will assist in the retention of Volunteer Members beyond the normal 2—3 years of service, typically found nation-wide.

Funds will assist in development of a marketing plan and production of recruiting materials; will provide 20 sets of protective fire gear (approximately \$2,000 per set); will provide over 200 hours of fire and medical training per Volunteer, as well as reimburse Volunteers for 'time lost' from their 'real' jobs when attending State-mandated training; will provide injury insurance and contribute toward a modest retirement fund; and will provide recognition for Years of Service to our Community.

FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) will reimburse the Fire District for actual (authorized) expenditures over a four year period.

Volunteers help staff ECFR fire stations—where crews

are, typically, made-up of one Full-Time Fire Fighter and one College Intern who are on-duty 24 hours at a time. A Part-Time Fire Fighter helps staff the Engine during 12 daytime hours. One or more Volunteers replace that Part-Timer in the evening hours. The new Volunteers (recruited using this grant) will, initially, help staff the Mt. Norway and Fern Prairie Fire Stations.

East County Fire & Rescue is accepting applications for the next Volunteer Training Academy—which begins in mid-September.



ECFR Volunteers Provided Service to Our Community, Valued at \$374,000, during 2010.

Grant for Full-Time Fire Fighters

This \$724,659 SAFER Grant will allow the Fire District to hire five (5) Full Time Fire Fighter/Emergency Medical Technicians. The grant doubles the number of Full-Time Line personnel staffing East County Fire Stations.

Grant funds pay for most of the Fire Fighters' wages and benefits during the first two years of a three year employment commitment. FEMA reimburses the District for actual (authorized) expenses in Years 1 & 2. The Fire District pays the full cost of the third year of employment.

Fire Chief Scott Koehler noted that, "This grant will allow us to complete our planned hiring—to staff one fire station 24/7/365 on each side of the Washougal River—despite the down-turn in the economy; and the \$500,000 reduction in tax revenue that we have experienced, as a result of decreases in assessed property values, over the last couple of years."

The Fern Prairie Fire Station is already staffed 'round-the-clock'. The Mt. Norway Fire Station goes to full 24-hour per day, in-house crews, starting July 1st.

The Fire District currently has 4 Full-Time Fire Fighters and 8 Part-Time Fire Fighters. There are 2 Full-Time Chief Officers and 2.75 paid Administrative Staff positions. There are, also, 35 Volunteers within the Agency.

FIRE COMMISSIONERS BALANCE BUDGET— IMPROVE SERVICES—IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

The Board of Fire Commissioners insures that ALL Fire District Members are using taxpayer resources efficiently. (By recruiting more Volunteers, utilizing Part-Time Fire Fighters, cutting costs and seeking grants).

Through the Board's careful attention to detail, ECFR has been able to maintain—and, in fact, improve—our service levels during these tough economic times.

These improvements have been achieved while staying within available tax revenue (which has dropped \$500,000 over the last two years) and using income derived from State Mobilization—Wildfire response.



Fire Commissioners (L to R) George (Jack) Hooper, Gary Larson, Vic Rasmussen, John Clancy and Mike Berg conduct Fire District business at the June 7th Regular Board Meeting .

The Board has balanced the budget—and improved service to our Community—even in these tough economic times.

Board Meetings are held on the first and third Tuesday of each month, starting at 7 PM, at the Fern Prairie Fire Station, 600 NE 267th Avenue, Camas, WA 98607 (next to the Grove Field Airport).

The public is invited to attend—and comment.

Fire/EMS Stations: Bear Prairie, Fern Prairie, Livingston Mountain, Mt. Norway, Orchard Hills and Sunnyside.

Ongoing Efforts Result in Significant Cost Savings

These are tough economic times, and East County Fire & Rescue has taken steps to reduce costs:

- All Employees waived pay raises for 2011
- Full-Time Employees changed to a less expensive health insurance plan and make larger physician co-pays
- Four Commissioners seek only partial reimbursement for Meeting costs
- Replaced a Chief's vehicle—no longer reliable for emergency response—with a rental return car. The one model-year-old car came with a full manufacturer's warranty. Saved over \$11,000 off State Bid price.
- Conducted this year's fire hose testing in-house (saved over \$5,000 in vendor costs)
- Crew Members try to drive the smallest appropriate vehicle to calls and on errands
- An Off-Road Fuel Permit allows Emergency Vehicles to avoid paying \$0.56/gallon in State & Federal road taxes
- Re-usable linen towels are used in place of paper towels
- Clean garbage liners are re-used
- All Members work to turn-off lights in rooms that are not occupied
- Heaters have been turned down in truck bays and in portions of the station that are not, always, occupied
- Energy-saving equipment is being installed (over several years) at Fire Stations (door sweeps, automatic thermostats, automatic light sensors, etc).
- Re-evaluating various contracted services for cost-savings (fire alarm monitoring, auto parts, etc.).
- Print only one public newsletter per year (in black and white). Publish the other semi-annual newsletter on the Fire District web site (www.EastCoFire-Rescue.org) in October.

CREATIVE STAFFING AND COST SAVINGS MAINTAIN RESPONSE CAPABILITY

Mixed-crews (one Career Fire Fighter, one College Intern, and a mix of Part-Time Fire Fighters and Volunteer Fire Fighters) are a cost-efficient means of staffing, and provide (typically) 3 or 4 Emergency Responders on each staffed Fire Engine. (Sometimes more).

Employees waived pay raises and changed insurance to help save money—to avoid any reduction in staff hours; or employee layoffs. These efforts help ensure that fire and medical response is timely; and that adequate staff is available to serve our Customers. This is very important when considering that decreasing property values have resulted in a \$500,000 revenue reduction—for the Fire District—during the last two years.

The Fire District wishes to publicly thank our Employees for their help in reducing costs in an effort to maintain staffing/response capability. We, also, acknowledge our Volunteer Fire Fighters for helping to staff fire stations to ensure appropriate personnel are present for rapid, efficient and safe response.

Smaller Fire Apparatus are Less Expensive

The Fire District is looking at down-sizing the apparatus placed in fire stations that have low call volume/limited staffing. These mid-sized pumpers will still meet Washington Survey and Rating Bureau (VWSRB) standards—but will cost about 60% the price of a full-sized structural pumper (\$250,000 vs. \$400,000).

This is very important when considering that WSRB grants no fire protection credit to fire engines that are older than 20 years. ECFR has to replace three fire engines in the next five years to avoid Customers being charged higher fire insurance premiums due to being served by 'out-dated' pumpers. (You must live within 5 road miles of a 'rated' fire engine to get the Class 8 with Tender Credit insurance rating).

Savings in employee wages and benefits, from the SAFER Staffing Grant, will be placed in an Apparatus Reserve Fund to assist in the purchase of needed apparatus and equipment. The Fire District will, also, seek Federal grants to replace apparatus that exceeds the State's 20-year service life.

Review ECFR's 2010 Year-End Report at www.EastCoFire-Rescue.org

Grants Stretch Local Funding

The Fire District aggressively seeks grants to extend local tax dollars. Grants, totaling more than \$1.5 million, have, in recent years, provided the Fire District with:

- a Breathing Air Compressor/SCBA Refill System (\$46,000)
- a "Live Fire" training prop (\$33,000)
- three Thermal Imaging Cameras (\$24,000)
- new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (\$301,000)
- a Health & Wellness Grant (\$98,000)
- a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Grant (\$299,500)
- a grant for five new Fire Fighters (\$724,659)
- Reimbursement from the Department of Homeland Security for participation in a regional MCI (Multiple Casualty Incident) drill with Skamania County Fire District # 4.
- Various equipment grants from the Department of Health and the Department of Natural Resources

EAST COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE

Serving over 10,000 Residents in
the 60 Square Miles of
Unincorporated Area Around
Camas and Washougal.

East County Fire & Rescue
600 NE 267th Avenue
Camas, WA 98607
360.834.4908

www.EastCoFire-Rescue.org

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Board Chair

Gary Larson
GLarson@eastcofire-rescue.org

Mike Berg

MBerg@eastcofire-rescue.org

John Clancy

JClancy@eastcofire-rescue.org

George 'Jack' Hooper

GHooper@eastcofire-rescue.org

Vic Rasmussen

VRasmussen@eastcofire-rescue.org

Commissioners meet the
first and third Tuesdays of
each month
Station 91 at 7pm



To Prevent, To Protect, and To Serve

Funding Local Ambulance Service

Camas Ambulance has announced that their budget has a \$310,000 short-fall, this year, due to decreasing property values—and, thus, decreasing property tax revenue. Medicare/Medicaid payment limitations, also, negatively affect their revenue stream.

The City of Washougal plans to contribute extra money to the ambulance, while the City of Camas plans to utilize EMS Reserve Funds to off-set the remaining deficit. East County Fire & Rescue has NOT committed to spending more money—until more cost saving measures are enacted by Camas Ambulance.

There are concerns that, if property values decrease again for 2012, that the ambulance service will suffer additional revenue losses. There is discussion about finding new sources of revenue; and alternative providers are being considered by Officials.

ECFR's Board of Fire Commissioners seeks your opinion regarding this issue. Should Camas Ambulance balance their budget—even if it means cutting back hours of coverage for some Paramedic Ambulance unit(s)? Are you willing to increase the EMS Levy beyond \$0.35? Should other ambulance vendors be considered? Please call ECFR Fire Chief Scott Koehler (Monday—Thursday) at 360.834.4908; or send an email to (SKoehler@EastCoFire-Rescue.org) or Commission Chairman Gary Larson (GLarson@EastCoFire-Rescue.org).

Junior Fire Science Program

Juniors and Seniors, from Camas and Washougal High School (and local Home School Programs), can register for this Fall's Junior Fire Science Program.

Students will spend 8 hours, every-other Saturday, learning what Fire Fighter/Emergency Medical Technicians do. There will be both classroom and 'hands-on' sessions. The program meets during the school year. Contact Captain Mike Carnes (360.834.4908) to obtain information about the program.

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