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Call volumes increasing for East County Fire and Rescue
52 percent higher in 10 years

Camas, Wash. – East County Fire and Rescue analyzed its emergency call volumes and the numbers are climbing. Since 2007, emergency call volumes have increased almost 52 percent in 10 years. That’s alarming for a fire district that relies on a combination of paid and volunteer firefighters to respond.

“Even if you average it at five percent a year, that’s still more than the revenue we’re receiving which is limited to a one percent increase,” said Mike Carnes, Deputy Chief.

More calls mean added costs for personnel, apparatus, equipment and supplies. In contrast, the one percent increase is not keeping up with the cost of inflation which is currently 3-4 percent per year. That’s why the fire district is proposing a lid lift to restore funding and maintain emergency service levels for our community.

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).

For example, voters in East County Fire and Rescue approved a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2008. That levy rate has fallen to \$1.29/\$1,000 in 2018.

East County Fire and Rescue will consider asking voters to return the fire levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The proposal would be on the November 6 General Election ballot and cost 21 cents per \$1,000 (or \$7.87 per month for the owner of a \$450,000 home).

Funding would be used to maintain emergency service levels, improve firefighter training and repair equipment and apparatus. These items are also necessary to maintain the community’s insurance rating, which affects the premiums that home and business owners pay.

“We have a responsibility to communicate with our community about the challenges we are facing,” said Deputy Chief Carnes.

The fire district is planning a series of public meetings in late spring. In the meantime, community members with questions are encouraged to contact Chief Carnes at 360-834-4908 or mcarnes@ecfr.us.

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East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) serves 10,000 people over 60 square miles in the unincorporated areas of Vancouver, Camas and Washougal. The fire district operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its independent audits by the state. The level of service provided by ECFR has improved the community’s insurance rating, which reduced premiums for home and business owners. More information on East County Fire and Rescue can be found on its web site www.ecfr.us.