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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**East County Fire and Rescue Talks Finances**  
*Fire District Pursues Ways to Save Money*

CAMAS, WASH. – East County Fire and Rescue is asking voters to consider a Fire Levy lid lift during the November General Election. If approved, the lid lift would return the Fire Levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value – the same rate it was in 2008.

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

Chief Mike Carnes says that this is not just about asking taxpayers for more money. The agency operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its completed audits by the state. (It is going through another regularly scheduled audit, which will be finished by the end of this year.)

The proposal will be on the November 6 General Election ballot and cost 21 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value (or \$7.87 per month for the owner of a \$450,000 home). Since 2008, the levy rate has declined to \$1.29 which happens as property values rise to limit the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year.

The fire district has actively pursued ways to save taxpayers money since 2008. It has improved its insurance rating with the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau. This has saved many home and business owners on their annual insurance premiums.

ECFR relies on volunteers to provide some emergency services, which also saves on labor costs. It applies for grants to fund equipment and pays cash for emergency apparatus to avoid interest payments. It even paid off loans early and refinanced bonds, saving taxpayers \$250,000.

"We have done everything possible to delay the need for a Fire Levy lid lift," said Chief Mike Carnes. "However, call volumes have increased to the point that this is our only recourse."

The fire district has seen emergency call volumes increase 52 percent since 2007. The agency is allowed a one percent revenue increase per year by law. That amount is not keeping up with the cost of inflation which is currently 3-4 percent per year and some cost are even higher than that.

For example, utility costs have increased 18 percent in a year for the fire district. The cost for health insurance for district employees has increased 9.3 percent. Training for emergency personnel is 29.5 percent higher than the previous year. Higher call volumes also contribute to the amount the fire district pays in increased costs for operations, such as overtime (34.7 percent higher) and fuel for apparatus (23.4 percent).

Voters in East County Fire and Rescue originally approved a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2008. More information about the lid lift can be found on the fire district's web site at [www.ecfr.us](http://www.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](http://www.ecfr.us).*