



Snohomish County FIRE DISTRICT 7

Earning Trust Through Action

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire Levy Lid Lift on August Ballot for Snohomish County Fire District 7

Monroe, Wash. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Snohomish County Fire District 7 unanimously approved a resolution asking voters to restore funding for emergency services through a fire levy lid lift. The measure will be on the August 6 Primary Election ballot for voters in Fire District 7.

Like most fire districts, daily operations at Fire District 7 are funded through two voter-approved levies paid through property taxes. The fire levy is \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, and the levy for emergency medical service is 50 cents/\$1,000 for a combined rate of \$2/\$1,000.

Levy rates fall as property values rise to limit a fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year, plus a one percent increase allowed by law. The one percent is not keeping up with rising call volumes or even inflation, which is approximately three percent for the past year. That's why voters are asked to "lift the lid" to restore funding for emergency services to a rate they have previously approved.

For example, Fire District 7's fire levy has fallen from the voter-approved rate of \$1.50 to \$1.32/\$1,000. If approved by voters, the fire levy rate would return to \$1.50/\$1,000. This would cost the owner of a \$450,000 home \$81 per year or \$6.75 per month. The lid lift would last for six years and can never exceed the voter-approved rate of \$1.50/\$1,000.

Chief Gary Meek says the fire levy provides a supermajority of funding for emergency services in Fire District 7. However, the agency also stretches tax dollars further through innovative programs and partnerships.

"Some fire districts require excess levies – which are extra taxes – for daily operations," he said. "We just want to maintain our basic fire levy rate with voter approval. We are able to do this because of partnerships or mergers with neighboring agencies which have allowed us to be more efficient and share costs for emergency programs and services."

Snohomish County Fire District 3 (Monroe) merged into Fire District 7 in 2016, which improved emergency services and reduced costs for taxpayers. This year, voters in Lake Stevens will have an opportunity to vote on merging with Fire District 7, as well.

Levy rates for fire and EMS under the merger would be the same amount approved by taxpayers at \$2/\$1,000. However, emergency services would improve by better deployment of personnel. The combined financial strength of both agencies also improves the ability to fund capital needs, such as apparatus, equipment and stations.

More information about the fire levy lid lift can be found on Fire District 7's web site at www.snofire7.org. Chief Gary Meek also is available to answer questions at gmeek@snofire7.org or (360) 794-7666.

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Snohomish County Fire District 7 provides fire and life safety services to over 116,000 people over 98.5 square miles in central and east Snohomish County, including the communities of Clearview, Maltby, Mill Creek and Monroe. In 2018 our emergency personnel responded to more than 11,000 emergency calls. Through taxpayer support, Fire District 7 has built the most advanced emergency response systems in Snohomish County with highly-trained personnel, facilities, apparatus, and rescue programs.

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