



NORTH COUNTY FIRE / EMS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 22, 2023
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Board of Fire Commissioners to Meet on EMS Levy Resolution

Community invited to learn more and provide comment

STANWOOD, WASH. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for North County Fire & EMS will meet April 12 to discuss a resolution to place an EMS levy lid lift on the August 1, 2023, primary election ballot. The community is encouraged to attend the meeting at 4 p.m. at Station 99, 8117 267th St. NW in Stanwood.

Call volumes for North County Fire & EMS have increased by 27 percent in the last six years. On average, the fire authority responds to 10,000 calls a year – of which 86 percent are for emergency medical service (EMS). Growth in the north Stanwood area is driving the higher demand and costs for emergency services, and the fire district is committed to serving the expanding community.

“We believe it is important to be transparent with our community,” Fire Chief John Cermak said. “The population growth we have been and continue to experience for the foreseeable future has brought us to the point where we require additional personnel to keep up with the emergency service needs of our community.”

EMS calls account for 86 percent of all emergency calls

North County Fire & EMS provides a 24-hour EMS response. This includes Basic and Advanced Life Support. Basic Life Support is for non-life-threatening injuries.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) is a response with highly skilled paramedics. ALS is the highest level of emergency care available outside a hospital. Paramedics can start intravenous lines, administer lifesaving medication, provide advanced airway management to help patients breathe, and perform other lifesaving care for trauma, heart attack, stroke, and critical infections.

How North County Fire & EMS is funded

Daily operations are funded through two property tax levies for fire and EMS. Voters approved a fire

levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2021 and an EMS levy of \$0.50 in 2015. Since then, the EMS levy rate has dropped to \$0.28.

Why did the levy rate drop?

Over time levy rates drop as property values rise to limit the fire authority to a set amount of revenue each year plus a one percent increase allowed by state law (or any other voter-approved increase). Even if property values double, the fire authority can only collect one percent more. This is called “levy compression” and impacts a fire authority’s ability to provide emergency services.

The fire authority is considering asking voters to return the EMS levy to \$0.50 per \$1,000. The funding would pay for up to six firefighter/EMTs or firefighter/paramedics per shift to provide an additional transport unit and staff Station 96 in Freeborn full time. It would also replace three ambulances and fund local training programs to ensure residents continue to receive the highest level of EMS care possible.

The EMS lid lift would cost an additional \$99 per year or \$8.25 per month for the owner of a \$450,000 home.

“We can’t control growth, but we must serve it,” Chief Cermak said. “We want you to know how we are funded and the challenges we are facing. We look forward to having this important conversation.”

Learn more at www.northcountyfireems.com.

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North County Regional Fire Authority, known as North County Fire & EMS, provides fire suppression and emergency medical service (EMS) to 46,000 people over 120 square miles, including the cities of Stanwood and Arlington. Emergency personnel respond to an average of 10,000 calls per year – of which 86 percent are for EMS. North County Fire & EMS operates under a balanced budget, is debt-free, and has passed all independent audits by the state.