



# CHELAN FIRE AND RESCUE



## WHY DO WE NEED A FIRE LEVY LID LIFT?

### FACT SHEET

In 2006, the fire district's property tax rate was \$1.50 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation, as approved by the voters. That meant the owner of a \$400,000 property would owe \$600 annually in property taxes, which would go to the district for fire protection and emergency medical services. By 2018, only 12 years later, that levy rate has dropped to approximately 92 cents per thousand, a decrease of more than one-third. (this means a \$400,000 property would pay only \$368.00 in property tax to the district.) This rate decrease is due to: (1) the so-called "Eyman Initiative", which limits annual revenue growth to 1% regardless of inflation and (2) the increase in the total tax valuation of all property within the district.

The purpose of a lid lift is to allow the voters to disregard that 1% "lid" on annual increases, and instead raise the total tax revenue by an agreed amount. In this case, the district is asking to lift the lid to establish a new rate of \$1.32--an increase of 40 cents per thousand over the current rates.

Home Value	Current Fire Levy Rate of \$0.92	Additional Fire Levy Rate of \$0.40	Total New Fire Levy Rate \$1.32	Fire Tax Broken Down Monthly
\$250,000.00	\$230.00	\$100.00	\$330.00	\$27.50
\$300,000.00	\$276.00	\$120.00	\$396.00	\$33.00
\$350,000.00	\$322.00	\$140.00	\$462.00	\$38.50
\$400,000.00	\$368.00	\$160.00	\$528.00	\$44.00
\$450,000.00	\$414.00	\$180.00	\$594.00	\$49.50

But let us get back to the basic question above--why do we need to lift the lid? The fire district is currently operating with six firefighters who were hired through a federal SAFER Grant, but that grant will be expiring at the end of 2018. A citizen's task force, appointed by the district's Board of Commissioners to review the fire department on behalf of the Chelan community, recently concluded that the community is happy with the current level of service provided. They recommended that this level of service be retained, and stated that the Board should decide how that might be financed. The Board then decided unanimously that the most effective way to raise those funds to operate and manage the fire district was to ask the voters to lift the lid. But why not lift it back to the previously authorized \$1.50 per thousand? The Board felt that a sudden, "all at once" tax increase of 63% was not fair and would not be acceptable to the community. Nonetheless, they decided that it was time to re-establish to some degree the higher levy rate of just 12 years ago.



What would the money be used for? A forty cent rate increase would yield a total tax revenue for the district about \$864,000 higher than last year. The total annual budget would be about \$2,856,993 instead of the 2018 total annual revenue budget of \$1,992,993, if this lid lift is approved. Approximately \$660,000 of those dollars would be used to cover, annually, the six permanent firefighter positions, when one considers all of the related costs, not just salaries. \$150,000 of that revenue would be added



to the existing Apparatus Replacement Fund. (This fund is used to eventually replace fire engines and other apparatus; currently the fleet of vehicles includes seven vehicles that need replacing in the near future.) Finally, \$50,000 would be used in the district's volunteer programs. This money would be used to ensure volunteer stipends, to pay for volunteer call-back and similar volunteer efforts, as volunteers are essential to the district's staffing needs. We are trying to guarantee a minimum of four personnel on duty all the time, 24x7, through a combination of career firefighters and volunteer firefighters. Current safety laws require two firefighters outside a burning building if two firefighters need to enter the building (except for situations involving rescue of a person known to be inside, when only one firefighter outside is required for safety law compliance). Hence, the desire to always have four firefighters on duty.

We hope this information provides you with the answer to the question stated above: "Why do we need a fire levy lid lift?" As you can see, the reason is that we want to maintain our level of service after the grant expires, rather than moving backward as the levy rate has done since 2006. This lid lift is not to build Taj Mahals or fancy fire stations or buy new toys or even to try and reach our long range goals. It is needed because we believe the community has spoken that they like the newer level of service and want to keep it.

The Fire Commissioners job is to consider decisions on the basis of four questions; will it save lives or reduce suffering; will it reduce the loss of structures; will it help reduce insurance premiums and is it fundable.

Chelan Fire and Rescue (outside the city limits) was re-rated by the Washington Survey and Rating Bureau (WSRB) from an 8 to a 7 (lower ratings are better) saving some home owner(s) up to \$140.00 a year or more on their fire insurance premiums.