



FIRE LEVY LID LIFT 2023

Walla Walla County Fire District 5 is asking voters to consider a fire levy lid lift in the November general election to hire more firefighters to improve emergency response.

WHY ARE WE ASKING FOR THIS?

Our call volumes have increased 100 percent in the last 10 years, but our staffing levels have not kept up with our community's growing demand for emergency services. We receive more than one call at the same time 10 percent of the time, and 65 percent of all calls are for emergency medical service (EMS).

We have a long tradition of volunteers serving our community, but we are struggling to retain volunteers because of the time commitment. As a result, we do not have enough personnel to staff and operate fire engines and medic units. This delays response times.

WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT?

We are asking voters to consider a \$0.24 lid lift on the November 7, 2023, general election ballot. This would raise the fire levy rate to \$1.38 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Thirty years ago, voters approved a fire levy rate of \$1.50. Since then, the rate has dropped to \$1.14.

We have been able to operate efficiently for about 30 years without asking for a lid lift. This is no longer an option. Based on our call volumes, we require additional personnel to meet the service needs of our community.

WHAT WILL THE LID LIFT FUND?

- Up to four firefighters to respond to calls and reduce response times
- Station 51 renovations to add sleeping quarters to accommodate more firefighters to allow for faster response times in Charbonneau and Wallula
- Renovations at the main station in Burbank to fit and protect modern fire engines and equipment
- Upgrading diesel exhaust removal systems and decontamination areas to improve firefighter health and safety

WHAT WILL THIS COST?

The owner of a \$350,000 home (considered average) would pay an additional \$7 per month or \$84 per year.

WHY DOES THE LEVY RATE DROP?

Each year we are allowed to collect a set amount of revenue. State law limits us to that amount plus 1% more per year. Even if property values double, we can only collect 1% more.

This means the levy rate drops as property values rise to limit our budget to the same amount per year plus that 1% increase (or any other voter-approved increase).

Find more information at www.wwcfd5.org or Chief Mike Wickstrom welcomes your questions at 509-547-8341 or mwickstrom@wwcfd5.org.

