

By CENTRAL WHIDBEY ISLAND FIRE & RESCUE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contact: Jerry Helm, Fire chief

Office: 360-678-3602

E-Mail: jhelm@cwfire.org

Higher call volumes and overlapping calls are leading to longer response times

Fire levy lid lift would fund four additional personnel to respond to calls

Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue reports call volumes have increased 50 percent since 2012, but current staffing levels have not kept up with the community's growing demand for emergency services. As a result, response times are increasing.

Additionally, Central Whidbey Fire cannot guarantee personnel will be available to respond when a second, third, or fourth call happens at the same time – which is occurring more frequently. Overlapping calls account for 28 percent of all calls. The fire district relies on full-time, part-time, and volunteer personnel, but volunteers are not always available to respond, which results in unpredictable staffing levels. This then leads to longer response times that can seriously affect survival rates.

“Sixty percent of all calls are for emergency medical service, commonly known as EMS, and longer response times can impact patient outcomes,” Fire Chief Jerry Helm said. “We need additional personnel to respond to calls and reduce response times.”

EMS calls require on average two to eight emergency responders, depending on the medical situation. For example, calls involving patients who aren't breathing, or multi-injury car accidents require several responders on scene to perform various lifesaving tasks. These tasks include performing CPR, stabilizing a patient, administering treatment, managing traffic or crowds, as well as family members, and transporting patients to the hospital.

Central Whidbey Fire is asking voters for a fire levy lid lift to fund four additional firefighter/EMTs in the November 7, 2023, general election. The additional staff would allow the fire district to provide both a fire engine and a medical unit at the same time – instead of just one or the other. It would also allow the fire district to meet state safety requirements to perform interior search and rescue operations without having to wait for another fire engine to arrive on the scene.

These improvements will help reduce response times and improve service reliability across the district.

The fire district is asking voters to change the fire levy from \$0.86 to \$1.18 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The \$0.32-cent lid lift would cost an additional \$160 per year or \$13.34 per month for the owner of a \$500,000 home.

Learn more at www.cwfire.org. Fire Chief Jerry Helm also welcomes your questions at jhelm@cwfire.org and 360-678-3602.

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Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue provides fire and life safety services to 9,000 people over 50 square miles north of Mutiny Bay and south of Libbey Road. The fire district relies on full-time, part-time, and volunteer emergency personnel who respond to an average 1,715 calls per year, of which 60 percent are for emergency medical service (EMS). Firefighters are highly trained to provide services for fire suppression and prevention, EMS, technical rescues, hazardous material spills, auto extrication, and life safety programs. Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its financial and accountability audits by the state.

www.cwfire.org