



FIRE 3 Insider

Clark County Fire District 3 NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

Fire District 3
CLARK COUNTY WASHINGTON

IN THIS EDITION:

**Message from
the Chief**

**The Chief
welcomes the
opportunity to
meet with
HOA groups
Email him at
scott@fire3.org**

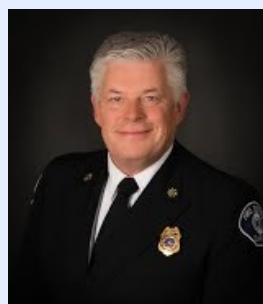
**Time to spring
into spring
cleaning**

"more than fire..."

17718 NE 159th Street
Brush Prairie, WA 98606
(360) 892-2331
www.fire3.org



FireDistrict3



Message from the Chief

By Chief Scott Sorenson

I want to update you on our efforts to restore sufficient funding for fire and emergency medical services. Last year, we asked voters for a fire

levy lid lift. We were not successful, and this year, we had to make cuts to balance the budget.

Two of the district's 14 firefighter/paramedics left for other jobs, and those positions are now unfunded. This is impacting service levels. Revenue from our current fire levy of \$1.16 (down from \$1.42 in 2017) is not keeping up with the staffing levels we need to respond to calls and manage higher costs to provide services.

Our call volumes have increased more than 25 percent in the last six years and EMS calls now account for 70 percent of all calls. Our daily costs increase almost 6 percent each year, but state law limits us to just a 1 percent revenue increase per year. We also receive one-time payments for new construction, but this revenue is not guaranteed.

The bottom line is that costs and demand for services are outpacing revenue. This is

why we are asking voters for a fire levy lid lift to reset the levy rate from \$1.16 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to \$1.50. The \$0.34 lid lift would fund:

- 24-hour staffing at all five stations
- Additional paramedic-certified firefighters to improve survival rates in our community
- A new ambulance to be used when transport to hospital cannot be delayed
- Fire station improvements needed to maintain operational readiness

The fire levy lid lift would cost the owner of a \$500,000 home an additional \$14.17 per month or \$170 per year. The proposition will appear on the August 6, 2024, primary election ballot.

We pride ourselves on being transparent with our community because your partnership is critical to maintaining the level and quality of emergency services our community requires.

You can learn more about the levy lid lift on our website, www.fire3.org, or you can contact me with questions at scott@fire3.org or 360-892-2331.

How does growth affect our fire levy rate?

Our fire levy rate falls as property values rise to limit our budget to roughly the same amount each year plus a 1 percent revenue increase allowed by state law. New homes and businesses increase property values, which further drives down our levy rate. This is called "levy erosion" and impacts our ability to provide emergency services.

For example, it costs \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to serve our community, but our levy rate is down to \$1.16. This means we are serving more people with far less revenue than it actually costs to provide fire and EMS services.

What can be done to address growth?

The city of Battle Ground adopted impact fees to offset costs associated with growth. Clark County has yet to follow the city's

lead. We have worked tirelessly with the County Council for three years to adopt impact fees – and it looks like that may change soon. Impact fees would help fire districts offset capital costs, like stations and fire engines, that are required to serve a growing community.

Cities and port districts, for example, try to attract new businesses by offering tax breaks for a set number of years – called TIFs. Fire districts and other taxing agencies are not paid during this time, but they still have to serve the new growth. This means taxpayers are left subsidizing businesses. Fire districts are working to secure an exemption, so businesses must pay for fire and EMS services during their TIF time.

Fire District 3

CLARK COUNTY WASHINGTON

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CHECK YOUR INSURANCE RATING: The Washington Survey and Rating Bureau evaluates fire services. It issues a rating that is used by most insurance companies to determine insurance rates for homes and businesses. In Fire District 3, properties within 1,000 feet of a hydrant receive a Class 4 rating, and properties over 1,000 ft. and within 5 miles of a station receive a Class 5 rating. As a result of your support, we have maintained and improved these ratings, saving you money on insurance premiums. Contact your insurance agent to verify you are receiving these savings.

Time to spring into spring cleaning, prepare for wildland fire season

After a long winter, dust and accumulation of items may have built up inside and outside your home, which can increase the chances for a fire. Here are a few tips to decrease your family’s risk of a home fire.

Fact: Dryers and washing machines cause an average of 15,970 fires per year, with dryers causing 92% of them.

What to do: Clean the lint filter with each load and remove any lint that has built up around your dryer. Keep your dryer clear of flammable items like clothing and cleaning supplies. Every six months, clean the dryer exhaust vent tube.

Fact: Nine-volt batteries can start fires. Batteries stored in drawers surrounded by metal objects, like paper clips or coins, can increase fire chances.

What to do: Keep batteries in original packaging until

ready for use. Battery posts that come into contact with metal can generate enough heat to start a battery fire. Store batteries standing up.

Prepare now for wildland fire season

- Provide good access to your home that allows firefighting vehicles to get onto your property. Firefighting vehicles cannot go into areas where there are no access options.
 - Have your address posted on your driveway entrance and house so firefighters can locate your property.
 - Have an evacuation plan.
 - Create a “fire barrier” by maintaining a 30-foot defensible space around your home.
 - Prune or remove combustibles.
 - Clean gutters and roofs of debris regularly.
 - Keep lawns well-watered.
 - Don’t store combustibles under your deck/near home.
- For additional resources, visit www.fire3.org.