



NORTH WHIDBEY FIRE AND RESCUE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Whidbey Fire and Rescue Lid Lift to Replace Apparatus, Equipment

OAK HARBOR, WASH. — North Whidbey Fire and Rescue is asking voters to consider a 15-cent fire levy lid lift during the November General Election. Funding would be used to replace two fire engines, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (called “SCBAs”) for firefighters, and emergency radios.

While recognizing a fire engine is easy by sight and sound, community members may not be familiar with what SCBAs or emergency radios look like. We hope this is helpful for taxpayers to know how funding would be used to save lives and property if the lid lift is approved in November.



SCBAs provide firefighters with a dedicated air supply when working in environments with smoke or other toxic fumes. The fire district’s SCBAs are from 2007, showing wear and tear, and are past the timeframe for recommended use.



The emergency radios used by the fire district are 25 years old and past their usable lives. Replacement parts are no longer available, and some units have broken down during emergency calls. This can impact the fire district’s ability to communicate with emergency personnel on scene.



Of course, we had to include a picture of one of the fire engines being replaced. Engines 21 and 25 are almost 20 years old and have logged the equivalent of 350,000-400,000 miles (combined road miles and water-pumping use). The fire district has aggressively maintained this apparatus to extend its usable life. However, it's now time to replace both engines before they become unreliable.

Call volumes have increased 45 percent for North Whidbey Fire and Rescue in the past 10 years. Replacing apparatus and equipment is a normal part of emergency service operations. However, the fire district prefers to pay cash for capital items through a lid lift instead of financing these purchases through a bond, which would cost taxpayers more in interest payments.

The proposed 15-cent/\$1,000 lid lift would cost the owner of a \$370,000 home (an average for the area) approximately \$4.63 per month (\$55.50 per year). Replacing these items also will maintain the community's insurance rating, which is linked to the amount some home and business owners pay in premiums.

Even with the lid lift, North Whidbey Fire and Rescue would continue to have the lowest fire levy rate in the county. More information can be found on www.nwfr.org, or by contacting Fire Chief John Clark at (360) 675-1131 or chiefclark@nwfr.org.

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North Whidbey Fire and Rescue provides an emergency response to fires, medical calls, water and high angle rescue, and auto accidents. The agency serves 18,000 people over 55 square miles, which includes the unincorporated area west of the City of Oak Harbor from Deception Pass Bridge (to the north) and Libbey Road in Coupeville (to the south). Highly-trained part-time paid and volunteer firefighters respond to an average of 2,400 calls per year.