



Wenatchee Valley Fire Department Spring 2024 Newsletter

A Word from Fire Chief Brian Brett

Greetings, residents of the Wenatchee Valley. I want to explain how we fund emergency services and why we're considering establishing a fire benefit charge.

We currently fund emergency services with a fire levy paid through property taxes. The fire levy accounts for 90 percent of our budget and is capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This means two houses of the same size can pay significantly different amounts depending on their location within our fire district, while the cost to defend both in a fire is the same.

This is why we're looking at a fairer way to fund emergency services. Under a fire benefit charge, two houses of equal size would pay the same fire benefit charge.

A fire benefit charge takes a more fair and balanced approach. You pay according to the size, risks, and hazards of the building on your property. So industrial and commercial buildings with higher risks pay more, while residential homeowners pay less. It takes fewer firefighters and fire engines to put out a fire in a single-family home than in a larger, commercial building. That's why most homeowners pay less for emergency services with a fire benefit charge.

A fire benefit charge must be approved by voters. The Board of Fire Commissioners will hold a public hearing on April 10 to discuss putting a measure on the August 2024 primary election ballot. The community is invited to learn more and provide comments.

You can also find more information on our website, <https://www.wenatcheevalleyfire.org>.

Thank you for supporting your Fire Department.

Brian Brett, Fire Chief

What would this cost me?*

In 2023, the owner of a 2,000-square-foot home in Douglas County, appraised at \$500,000, paid a fire levy of \$750. Under a fire benefit charge, the owner would pay a fire levy of \$500 and a fire benefit charge of \$218 for a total of \$718. In most cases, homeowners will pay less under a fire benefit charge and a reduced fire levy rate funding model.

COMING SOON: Compare what you paid in property taxes to the proposed fire benefit charge using a calculator on our website.

**Property owners have the right to appeal their fire benefit charge if they believe it is incorrect. Seniors, disabled persons, exempt properties, and low-income households will maintain any current exemptions they have through the county.*

Spring Cleaning for Fire Safety

The weather is beginning to warm, and this means it is time to start thinking about spring cleaning! Don't forget to add some fire safety tips to your list. Following these simple tips can reduce the risk of a fire in your home. Please take some time to clean and declutter – it could just save your life!

Indoor Spring-Cleaning Fire Safety Tips

- 1. Clear out any clutter from your home**, especially in hallways and stairways. Clutter provides fuel for a fire to spread. Make sure your exits are clear and that your family has a clear path to them. Move items blocking an exit immediately to ensure your family has good escape routes should you need to evacuate. Does your family have an emergency escape plan? If not, create a plan. If you have an emergency escape plan, review it and practice with your family.
- 2. Check your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms** to ensure they are working properly. Now is an excellent time to install new alarms if you don't have any. Replace the batteries in carbon monoxide and smoke alarms, and look for any corrosion on the batteries or on their connection points inside the alarm. Replace alarms if you notice any corrosion in the battery compartment or if your smoke detectors are over 10 years old. The date should be posted on the back or side of the alarm. All smoke alarms have batteries—even smoke alarms that are hard-wired. The fire department has partnered with the American Red Cross to offer free smoke alarms to Wenatchee Valley residents. Please contact us if you need alarms installed or if you would like us to evaluate your home.
- 3. Don't use electrical appliances or tools with frayed cords**, replace them as soon as possible. Using damaged electrical cords could start a fire. This is an excellent time to check your extension cords too. Too many devices plugged in can overload the outlet and cause a fire. Large appliances and appliances that require larger amounts of power, such as heaters, refrigerators, and freezers, should be plugged directly into a wall outlet and NEVER plugged into an extension cord or power strip.
- 4. Check for water around electrical appliances** such as your washing machine, dryer, or dishwasher. If you notice any water, have a professional inspect your appliance to make sure it is safe to use.
- 5. Check all your appliances** to make sure they are in good working condition, including your stove, oven, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, and anything else you use daily. If you notice issues, repair or replace it as soon as possible.
- 6. It's a great time to clean your clothes dryer vent and lint trap.** Lint is highly combustible and can easily cause a fire if it isn't removed. Clean your lint trap regularly, and clean the dryer vent and hoses at least once a year to prevent any excess lint buildup or blockages.

Outdoor Fire Safety Tips continued on next page

Emergency Preparedness Courses

Wenatchee Valley Fire Department, in partnership with the American Red Cross, is hosting Community Emergency Preparedness Courses on the 3rd Thursday of every month from 6:00 pm-7:30 pm. The courses will be held at Fire Station 1 at 377 Eastmont Avenue in East Wenatchee. Classes are free of charge. Upcoming topics are:

- March 21 - Evacuations, Levels I,II, and III
- April 18 - Fire Extinguishers and Smoke Alarms
- May 16 - Defensible Space and Wildland Urban Interface

Contact the department at 509-662-4734 to register.

Address Signs

Even with today's technology, first responders still rely on address numbers posted in a location visible from the roadway. They are especially helpful at night, or if you live up a long driveway. The Volunteer Association offers reflective address signs that cost \$20 - \$30. Stop by the station at 731 N. Wenatchee Avenue or visit wenatcheevalleyfire.org for more information. Proceeds support the Volunteer Association and their mission to ensure the highest quality emergency response to our community.



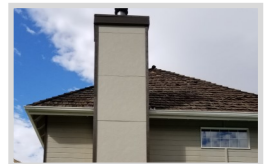
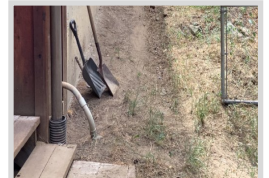
Spring Cleaning, continued

Outdoor Spring-Cleaning Fire Safety Tips

- 1. Trim any trees or bushes that are close to your home** to create a “defensible space” between your home and potential fire sources. Now is an excellent time to remove dead or dying trees. Dead vegetation is highly flammable and can easily catch fire. Remember to clean your gutters as well.
- 2. Remove mulch and replace with rock** in the areas within five feet of your home.
- 3. Move your firewood away from your home**, 30 feet away if possible.
- 4. Check your gas grill** for rust, worn parts, grease, and other debris before use. This will ensure your grill is clean and in safe operational order before firing it up for the first burger of the season. Replace any worn parts and check your grill’s propane tank and hoses for gas leaks. How do you do that? Mix water and dish soap in a spray bottle. Spray the solution on the exterior of your hoses. If you see bubbles start to form and grow, you have a leak. Replace the hose immediately if you suspect a leak.
- 5. Move the grill at least 10 feet away from the house** before use. This is essential to help prevent any accidental fires from happening. Keep the area around the grill free of debris and flammable materials.
- 6. Make sure your home’s address is visible from the street.** It is difficult for emergency responders to find your home in an emergency if they can’t see your house numbers. Repaint, or replace your address sign if needed. The Wenatchee Valley Fire Department Volunteer Association also sells reflective address signs at a very reasonable price. Visit the department website at wvfire.org for more information.

Community Wildfire Liaison

- **Reduce Wildfire Risk with a free Home Assessment** - No matter how well mitigated your home is against wildfire, no one is living in a concrete bunker surrounded by 100 feet of gravel. There is always some degree of ignition potential. We often share that our homes exist on a spectrum of risk. Moving the needle toward “lower risk” takes vegetation management, installation of non-combustible surfaces and structure improvements. Keeping the needle in place takes maintenance. The most common finding we uncover during a home assessment is overlooked debris such as leaves in the gutters, accumulations of pine needles beneath the deck, and piles of dry leaves driven into hiding by the wind. Contact the department to schedule a free home assessment and learn how you can lower your home’s wildfire risk.
- **FEMA Wood Shake Roof Funding** - The fire department still has grant funding available to assist homeowners in replacing flammable wood shake roofs with ignition resistant Class A roofing materials and improve the defensible space around their homes. The project is funded in areas of the wildland-urban interface including Lemaister, Eaglerock, Rolling Hills and Sunnyslope neighborhoods along with neighborhoods on the western side of the district close to Number 1 and Number 2 Canyons. Qualifying homeowners can receive up to a \$10,000 rebate once the roof replacement and defensible space elements of the project are complete. The department hopes to expand the project into areas around East Wenatchee.
- **Free Leaf Bags and Organic Recycling** - In partnership with Stemilt Organic Recyclers, the Department of Natural Resources and WAFAC, free leaf bags are available at the downtown fire station. The bags include reminders to reduce your wildfire risk and areas to check for fine, dry materials. Stemilt Organic Recyclers accepts the filled bags for free at their facility in South Wenatchee.
- **Neighborhood Chipping Events** - Keep an eye on our website to learn about upcoming chipping events. The department often partners with local agencies to bring chipping events to neighborhoods around the valley.
- **Questions** - Contact Hillary Heard, our Community Wildfire Liaison, hheard@wvfire.org or 509-662-4734.



Join the Emergency Response Team Protecting your Community!

Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is a combination department with career and volunteer members. The department is recruiting volunteer members to join our team of first responders. The department provides all-hazard response including structure and wildland fire protection, emergency medical services, rope and water rescue. If you have an interest in any, or all, of these response areas, contact us and join our team.



Volunteer Coordinator
Deputy Chief Rick McBride
509-662-4734
rmcbride@wvfire.org

CONTACT US TODAY!

We're Recruiting Volunteers!

ECRWSS
POSTAL CUSTOMER
LOCAL

PRSR1 STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WENATCHEE, WA
PERMIT NO. 7

P.O. Box 2106
Wenatchee, WA 98807



A Newsletter from Your Fire Department