



## WENATCHEE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 7, 2024  
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#### **Wenatchee Valley Fire Department considering change for 2025 budget**

*Community invited to March 13 meeting to learn about a proposed fire benefit charge*

Wenatchee, Wash. – The Wenatchee Valley Fire Department adopted its 2024 budget. The fire department operates under a balanced budget, which identifies the operational and capital needs required to provide fire and emergency medical services to the community.

“Transparency and accountability are key to maintaining the public trust,” Fire Chief Brian Brett said. “We work for you and believe it is critical for our community to understand how we are funded. This is a partnership to save lives and property and we’re grateful for the community’s support.”

#### **How we fund emergency services**

The Wenatchee Valley Fire Department funds emergency services with a fire levy paid through property taxes. The fire levy accounts for 90 percent of the fire department’s budget and is capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

#### **We are considering a fire benefit charge as a fairer way to fund emergency services**

“Under the current model, funding for emergency services comes from a fire tax levy based on a property’s assessed value only,” Fire Chief Brett said. “This means two houses of the same size can pay dramatically different amounts depending on their location within our service area. However, the cost to defend them in a fire is likely the same.”

The fire department is looking at a fairer way to fund emergency services. The department is proposing what is known as a fire benefit charge. Under a fire benefit charge, two houses of equal size would pay the same fire benefit charge.

The Board of Fire Commissioners would set the amount of the fire benefit charge each year based on a property’s size, use, and cost to serve in a fire. Smaller structures, such as single-family homes, are charged less than larger commercial or industrial buildings because it costs less to put fires out in a home. Under a fire benefit charge, the fire levy rate is reduced from \$1.50 to \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

A fire benefit charge must be approved by voters. The fire department is considering asking voters for a fire benefit charge in the August 6, 2024, primary election.

Voters in more than 20 fire districts in the state have approved a fire benefit charge as a more balanced way to fund emergency services.

#### **Join us at the March 13 board meeting to learn more**

The Board of Fire Commissioners will meet on March 13 to hear a presentation from Fire Chief Brian Brett on the proposed fire benefit charge. The community is encouraged to attend the meeting at 2 p.m. at Fire Station 1, 377 Eastmont Ave., East Wenatchee, to learn more about how a fire benefit charge works.

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