

2024 Fire Benefit Charge

Wenatchee Valley Fire Department is asking voters to consider a fire benefit charge as a more fair way to fund emergency services.



Wenatchee Valley Fire Department
731 N. Wenatchee Avenue
Wenatchee, WA 98801

PRSRT MKT
US POSTAGE PAID
Cashmere Mailing House
PERMIT NO. 7
ECRWSS

Local Postal Customer

What are the advantages of a fire benefit charge?

A fire benefit charge reduces property taxes and is more equitable for taxpayers.

By law, the fire levy rate is reduced from \$1.50 to \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The fire benefit charge is then set each year by your locally elected Board of Fire Commissioners at a public hearing. Smaller structures, such as single-family homes, are charged less than larger commercial or industrial buildings because it takes fewer firefighters and fire engines to put out a fire at a home.

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

How are we funded?

We currently fund emergency services with a fire levy paid through property taxes. The fire levy is capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

What will be on the ballot?

We are asking voters to establish a fire benefit charge in the August 6, 2024, primary election. A fire benefit charge is an annual fee based on the size of the building on the property.

Is a fire benefit charge fairer than just taxing the assessed value of my property?

Yes. Under the fire levy, funding for emergency services is based on a property's assessed value *only*. This means two houses of the same size can pay very different amounts while the cost to put a fire at both is the same. Under a fire benefit charge, two houses of equal size pay the same fire benefit charge. If you have a view or live on the waterfront, you will pay the same as someone who doesn't.

What will this cost?*

In most cases, homeowners pay less under a fire benefit charge and a reduced fire levy rate of \$1.00 per \$1,000. For example, in 2023, the owner of a 2,400-square-foot home in Douglas County appraised at \$600,000 paid a fire levy of \$866. Under a fire benefit charge, the owner would pay a fire levy of \$600 and a fire benefit charge of \$184 for a total of \$784.

Where can I find more information?

At www.wenatcheevalleyfire.org, and try the fire benefit charge calculator. Fire Chief Brian Brett welcomes your questions at bbrett@wvfire.org or at 509-662-4734.

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