



WENATCHEE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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To the Editor of the Wenatchee World:

I want to start a conversation about how we fund emergency services and why we're considering asking voters for a fire benefit charge. We fund emergency services with a fire levy paid through property taxes. Property taxes are based on your property's assessed value *only* – so two homes of the exact same size can pay very different amounts, depending on the home's location.

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.

For example, 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.

Voters must approve establishing a fire benefit charge, and we're considering asking voters for a fire benefit charge in the August primary election. We want you involved in this important funding decision. You can learn more on our website, www.wenatcheevalleyfire.org.

Thank you,

Brian Brett, Fire Chief
Wenatchee Valley Fire Department