



ENUMCLAW FIRE DEPARTMENT

1330 Wells Street | Enumclaw, WA 98022 | (360) 825-5544
www.enumclawfire.org | [f EnumclawFire](#) | [@Enumclaw_Fire](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 3, 2021
Contact: Fire Chief Randy Fehr (360) 825-5544 rfehr@enumclawfire.org

Enumclaw Fire Department Passes 2022 Budget

ENUMCLAW, WASH. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Enumclaw Fire Department passed its annual budget for 2022. The fire district held two public meetings before passing the budget, which identifies spending priorities for the upcoming year. Highlights include replacing an aid car, utility vehicle and funding additional staffing through a fire levy lid lift.

The fire district is replacing an aid car that has aged out of service after 21 years. An aid car is a type of apparatus that carries equipment and personnel trained in first aid or emergency medical procedures. A utility vehicle is critical to transport specialized personnel to the scene of an emergency, as well.

The Enumclaw Fire Department also is starting the conversation with community members about the need for a fire levy lid lift to fund additional staffing. Call volumes are projected to rise from an average of 2,300 to 2,600 emergencies a year. That's a 13% increase.

Simultaneous calls – those that come in at the same time or overlap with other emergencies – are also increasing. In 2020, simultaneous calls accounted for 18.3% of the fire district's total call volume. So far this year, multiple calls are 20.4% of total call volumes.

More calls mean added costs, and those costs are higher due to inflation which is currently 5.5% for the area. The fire district is limited to a 1% fire levy revenue increase per year, and Fire Chief Randy Fehr says that the agency is falling behind.

"We need more emergency personnel for the safety of the public and our firefighters," he said.

The Enumclaw community has grown 22.5% since 2011. Daily operations at the Enumclaw Fire Department are funded by a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. New homes provide revenue, but that funding is used to serve those areas.

Higher property values don't translate into more money for the fire district, either. Instead, the total amount of revenue from the fire levy is shared by all properties, which lowers the fire levy rate overall. For example, voters last approved a fire levy of \$1.50/\$1,000 in 2016, and that amount is projected to fall to \$1.38/\$1,000 in 2022.

The fire district is considering asking the community to return the fire levy to \$1.50/\$1,000 during an election sometime in 2022. Revenue would be used to increase staffing from four to five firefighters per shift. This would guarantee both a three-person fire engine and a two-person medical aid unit in service 24-hours a day, improving safety for the public and its firefighters. It also will help maintain the fire district's insurance rating, which is linked to what homeowners pay in insurance premiums.

The Enumclaw Fire Department will hold public meetings on the fire levy lid lift early next year. A copy of the 2022 Annual Budget can be found on its website at www.enumclawfire.org.

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The Enumclaw Fire Department provides fire and life safety services to 22,500 people over 56 square miles. EFD relies on full-time and volunteer emergency personnel to respond to an average of 2,500 calls a year, 74% of which are for emergency medical service. Firefighters are highly-trained to provide quality emergency services often found in larger communities, such as technical rescue, hazardous material spills, auto extrication, fire prevention and life safety programs.