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BCFD4 board discussing potential fire levy lid lift
Public invited to board meetings on funding and service needs

WEST RICHLAND, Wash. – Benton County Fire District 4’s Board of Fire Commissioners will begin discussing whether to place a fire levy lid lift before voters later this year as the district faces rising demand for emergency services and increasing costs to operate.

The district responded to 2,350 calls in 2025, a 160 percent increase since 2010, reflecting steady population growth and increasing need for fire and emergency medical services throughout the community. As call volumes rise, the district must ensure it has the staffing, equipment, training, and technology needed to respond quickly and reliably.

At the same time, the cost of providing emergency services has increased sharply. In the past year alone, cybersecurity upgrades increased 251 percent, parts and maintenance for emergency apparatus rose 220 percent, and firefighter protective equipment increased 129 percent.

“These conversations are about making sure we can continue meeting the community’s needs as demand grows,” said Fire Chief Paul Carlyle. “Our goal is to maintain reliable response times and the level of service residents expect from their fire district.”

District funding comes primarily from voter-approved property tax levies. Under state law, levy rates gradually decline as property values rise, limiting the amount of revenue the district can collect each year unless voters approve a lid lift. This means the fire district must often serve a growing community with comparatively fewer resources over time.

Benton County Fire District 4 recently received a clean audit from the Washington State Auditor’s Office, which reported no findings, no material weaknesses, and no areas of noncompliance in the sections reviewed. The audit confirmed the district strengthened

financial oversight, updated procedures, and improved internal controls to ensure responsible stewardship of public funds.

Commissioners have been discussing the issue at public board meetings. The next meeting is on Thursday, April 2 at 5 p.m. at Station 420, 2604 Bombing Range Rd. in West Richland. Residents are encouraged to attend and learn more about the future of fire and emergency services in their community.

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Benton County Fire District 4 provides fire and emergency medical service to approximately 25,000 people over 52 square miles. While the service area includes the city of West Richland and its immediate unincorporated areas, BCFD4 is a separate taxing district. BCFD4 firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics respond to 2,350 calls annually, 69 percent of which are EMS-related. Visit www.bcf4.org.