



BENTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 4 NEWS

bcfd4.org • 509-967-2945

SUMMER 2026

A Message from Fire Chief Paul Carlyle



Happy summer and thank you for your continued support of Benton County Fire District 4. As part of our commitment to serving the community, we want to help residents better understand how the fire district is funded and the financial challenges we face. BCFD4 is a separate taxing district with its own locally-elected Board of Fire Commissioners and does not receive funding from the city of West Richland or Benton County.

We've spent considerable time educating the public about how we are funded. Our primary source is a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The fire district is limited to roughly the same amount of revenue each year. As property values rise, the levy rate decreases to maintain that cap.

Many believe new development increases our funding, but it does not. Higher assessed values lower the levy rate further, requiring the district to provide service for less than it actually costs. This revenue gap increases further with rising costs and inflation.

For example, voters approved a \$1.50 levy rate four years ago, but it has since fallen to \$1.31. The Board is asking voters to restore the levy rate on the August 4, 2026 primary ballot.

Funding would cover rising costs, support the hiring of six firefighters over three years, replace an aging engine, and improve water rescue programs. The \$0.19 lid lift would cost the owner of a \$350,000 home about \$5.54 per month, or \$66.50 per year.

More information is available on our website. I also welcome your questions at 509-967-2945 or pcarlyle@bcfd4.org.

Water Safety Reminders



We are already responding to water rescues as more people head outdoors for recreation. Please make water safety a priority by following these tips:

- **Wear a life jacket.** Even strong swimmers can get into trouble quickly.
- **Never swim alone.** Use the buddy system whenever possible.
- **Watch children closely** near water. Drowning is often quick and silent.
- **Be aware** of changing river conditions, currents, and cold-water temperatures.
- **Avoid alcohol or drugs** while boating or swimming.

Need a life jacket? Benton County Fire District 4 offers **life jackets** in all sizes for community members to borrow free of charge at Station 420, located at 2604 Bombing Range Rd. in West Richland.

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WILDFIRE SEASON IS UNDERWAY

Wildfire season is starting earlier across the region, and Benton County Fire District 4 is already responding to grass and brush fires in local communities. Prepare your home by taking simple steps that can make a big difference in keeping your loved ones safe.

Keep grass and weeds trimmed and remove dead vegetation, pine needles, leaves, and other dry debris from around your home. Clear roofs, gutters, decks, and areas under porches where embers can collect. Store firewood, propane tanks, and other combustible materials away from structures whenever possible.

Residents should also clear vegetation and low-hanging branches along driveways and access roads. During a wildfire, burning vegetation can block evacuation routes and delay emergency responders trying to safely reach homes.

Know multiple evacuation routes and sign up for CodeRED alerts to receive emergency notifications during wildfires and other emergencies.

BCFD4 encourages residents to begin wildfire preparation now rather than waiting for peak summer heat. Learn more about preparing your home for wildfire using the QR code to the right:



Benton County Fire District #4
2604 Bombing Range Rd.
West Richland, WA 99353
509-967-2945

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FIREWORKS IN OUR COMMUNITY: IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Fireworks regulations, including whether fireworks are allowed, restricted, or banned, are established by the City of West Richland and Benton County. Residents with questions about local regulations can contact the City of West Richland at 509-967-3431 or Benton County at 509-786-5710.

Benton County Fire District 4 responds to fireworks-related emergencies each year and remains focused on protecting lives, property, and public safety throughout the community. Even small fireworks can quickly become dangerous during dry conditions, leading to grass fires, structure fires, and serious injuries.

Residents are encouraged to take simple precautions to help reduce the risk of fires and injuries during holiday celebrations:

- Consider attending a community-sponsored fireworks event.
- Never use fireworks under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Keep a bucket of water or garden hose nearby.
- Never allow young children to handle fireworks.
- Never aim fireworks at people, homes, vehicles, or vegetation.
- Do not relight malfunctioning fireworks.
- Soak used fireworks thoroughly in water before disposal.

Our goal is to help prevent emergencies before they happen and support a safe holiday for everyone in our community.

