



# Benton County Fire District

# 4 NEWS

WINTER 2021-22

## Message from Fire Chief Paul Carlyle



Happy holidays! We have much to be thankful for this year, and our community tops that list. Your support of Benton County Fire District 4 is appreciated by every one of us here. I wanted to provide a brief overview of a few issues then let you get back to that turkey dinner.

The first issue we're managing is higher call volumes. We saw a small dip in calls during COVID-19, but they have returned to pre-pandemic numbers and then some. In fact, call volumes are 22.4% higher this month compared to the same time last year.

We have been able to manage this surge thanks to your support of a fire levy lid lift two years ago. We hired three firefighters over the past year, and have budgeted for four more in 2022. If you will recall, our Strategic Plan called for gradually adding staffing so as to reduce impacts to taxpayers.

Like many fire districts, the issue we're struggling with is the cost to provide service. It's not labor; those wages are bargained ahead of time. It's other

costs out of our control for things like apparatus, equipment, and medical supplies while inflation hovers around 6.2%.

For example, our last fire engine we ordered two years ago cost around \$600,000. Today, new fire engines are starting around \$700,000. We have to pay the going rate because reliable, modern apparatus is critical to saving lives and property.

Last year, we cut all budget items that were not critical to our mission. State law also limits the amount of revenue we can raise – and that's a good thing! It makes us justify the need for an increase with the people who pay the bills, our taxpayers.

We are discussing asking our community to return the EMS levy from \$0.35 to \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value sometime in 2022. The additional cost would be \$5 per month for the owner of a \$400,000 home. This revenue would go a long way in helping us fund higher emergency service costs.

We anticipate having a conversation with our community about this issue early next year. As always, your input and participation will be welcome and appreciated.

## 20th Annual Operation Candy Cane

Benton County Fire District 4 will be holding its annual food drive to help neighbors in need this holiday season. Santa and his firefighter helpers will be at Flat Top Park (Please enter the West Richland Transit Center Park and Ride off of Austin Dr.) on Saturday, December 11 from 4-8 p.m., with decorated fire trucks to collect donations and pass out candy canes. In order to receive a candy cane, please donate an item of non-perishable food. Food will be distributed

to families in need, with assistance from Catholic Charities serving Central Washington, West Richland Chamber of Commerce, and Operation We Care-Tri-Cities.



Non-perishable food items can also be dropped off to Station 420 (2604 Bombing Range Road, West Richland) December 1-12. Thank you to Yokes Fresh Market and Craig Bolling with Waddell and Reed for your continued support of Operation Candy Cane!

2604 Bombing Range Rd.  
West Richland, WA 99353  
(509) 967-2945

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## **Benton County Fire Protection District No. 4**

2604 Bombing Range Rd.  
West Richland, WA 99353  
(509) 967-2945

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### **Happy Holidays!**

This holiday season, please remember that we're always here and ready to respond in emergencies. We've heard before from patients that they hesitated to call because they didn't want to disrupt someone's holiday, but that's why we're here. So, please, if you need emergency medical care, call 9-1-1 and we'll be there to help!

## **How We're Funded**

We want our community to understand how emergency services are funded at Benton County Fire District 4. Daily operations are possible because of two property tax levies. The fire levy is capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The EMS levy is capped at \$0.50 per \$1,000.

Many people believe that taxes increase by the same amount as their property values. In reality, levy rates fall as property values rise to limit a fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year plus a 1% increase.

For example, voters returned the fire levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 in 2020. The fire levy is expected to fall to \$1.47 per \$1,000 in 2022. The EMS levy has fallen from the voter-approved rate of \$0.50 in 2017 to \$0.35 per \$1,000 in 2022.

The fire district does receive property tax revenue from new construction, which is used to serve those areas. It takes roughly 157 homes to hire and outfit one firefighter, and that doesn't include capital items, like stations, apparatus and equipment.

"Lid lifts" help a fire district when additional revenue is needed to respond to higher call volumes and costs. Any lid lift must be voter approved.

### **Let's Get Social!**

Please like us on Facebook  
**@BCFD4** or follow us on Twitter  
**@BCFD4Info!**

### **Disponible en Español**

Este boletín está disponible en  
español en nuestro sitio de  
Internet [www.bcf4.org](http://www.bcf4.org)

### **Board Meetings**

The Board of Fire Commissioners  
meets online the 1st and 3rd  
Thursday of the month at 6:00  
p.m. via conference call. All  
meetings are open to the public!

Join via Zoom:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/  
j/6934639066](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6934639066)

Meeting ID: 693 463 9066

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