



Benton County

Fire Protection District No. 4

2604 Bombing Range Rd.
West Richland, WA 99353
(509) 967-2945
www.bcf4.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 7, 2024
Contact: Chief Paul Carlyle 509-967-2945 or pcarlyle@bcfd4.org

No tax increase for Benton County Fire District 4 taxpayers this year

Fire district supporting neighboring agencies says Fire Chief

West Richland, WA – Benton County Fire District 4 provides fire and emergency medical services (EMS) to approximately 22,000 people over 52 square miles, which includes the city of West Richland and surrounding unincorporated areas.

Costs to provide emergency services have increased but Benton County Fire District 4 does not need to ask taxpayers for an increase in 2024. Based on past funding support from the community, it can absorb these costs in the short-term.

“We are extremely grateful. Our community wants the highest level and quality of service and are willing to fund it,” said Fire Chief Paul Carlyle. “This means we can save for a rainy day and that rain is here now in the form of higher costs and inflation.”

Call volumes are holding steady, but costs to provide emergency services have increased dramatically. The price of replacing a fire engine jumped from \$600,000 to more than \$800,000. Fuel costs increased by \$21,000 and the price of EMS supplies went up almost \$28,000 in the past year.

Facility maintenance costs also increased districtwide due to issues with aging stations and equipment. Total facility maintenance costs for 2023 more than quadrupled after heat pumps failed and sewer pipes collapsed at Station 420.

Benton 4 operates under a balanced budget and maintains adequate reserves in case of an emergency. The fire district wants to bring attention to neighboring fire agencies with funding requests on the August 6, 2024 primary election ballot. All fire districts in the Tri-City area provide mutual aid to one another, which provides a safety net for all residents in the Tri-Cities.

“We are all connected and have one goal – save lives and property,” he said. “At the point a fire district is unable to fund an adequate amount of personnel, reliable apparatus and equipment, it impacts all residents in the Tri-Cities.”

Benton 4 and other fire agencies provide a coordinated response to large incidents. An example of this is the recent shooting at Wiley Elementary School in West Richland. Another is the 45-acre wildland fire in Finley that required several fire agencies in the Tri-Cities to respond.

Walla Walla Fire District 4, Walla Walla Fire District 5, Benton County Fire District 2 and Franklin County Fire District 3 are on the August 6, 2024 primary election ballot asking voters for a lid lift.

###

Benton County Fire District 4 provides fire and emergency medical services (EMS) to approximately 22,000 people over 52 square miles, including the city of West Richland and surrounding unincorporated areas. The fire district relies on both full-time and volunteer emergency personnel to respond to calls. In 2023, the district's firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics responded to an average of 2,200 calls – 67 percent of which were EMS-related. Fire District 4 operates under a balanced budget and has passed all independent audits by the state.