



## Benton County Fire Protection District No. 4

2604 Bombing Range Rd.  
West Richland, WA 99353  
(509) 967-2945  
[www.bcf4.org](http://www.bcf4.org)

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 28, 2015  
Contact: Fire Chief William Whealan  
Office 509-967-2496 Cell (509) 430-7993 [wwhealan@bcfd4.org](mailto:wwhealan@bcfd4.org)

#### **EMS calls on the rise for Benton County Fire District 4**

*SAFER grant will fund vital positions, says Fire Chief*

[West Richland, Wash.] – Benton County Fire District 4 reports calls for service are on the rise – and most calls are for emergency medical service (EMS). As of mid-July, the fire district had responded to 747 calls for help compared to 651 during the same time period in 2014. Just over 64 percent (or 479) of all calls to date are EMS-related, as well.

“There’s no doubt about it, EMS is our most widely used emergency service,” said Fire Chief Bill Whealan. “We expect these numbers to increase dramatically as our population ages.”

Benton County Fire District 4 has seen a 45 percent jump in calls for EMS since voters approved funding for the service in 2010. That type of growth can put a strain on an agency’s resources, which is why the fire district applied for a SAFER grant earlier this year.

SAFER, or “Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response,” is a grant program run by the Federal Emergency Management Administration. Fire agencies may apply for temporary grant funding to hire additional emergency personnel to improve the fire and EMS response in their respective communities.

Last week, fire district officials were notified that their grant application to fund three firefighter/paramedic positions had been awarded. The total amount of the grant is \$493,311 over two years after which time the fire district will look at funding some or all of the positions depending on revenue forecasts.

“These three additional firefighter/paramedics will help improve our emergency response for both fire and EMS,” said Chief Bill Whealan. “It also will provide some much needed relief for our existing personnel.”

The fire district will have 180 days to hire for the new positions. Interested parties should contact the National Testing Network ([www.nationaltestingnetwork.com](http://www.nationaltestingnetwork.com)) to test and add Benton County Fire District #4 as an agency of interest.

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*Benton County Fire District 4 provides Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to 17,000 people over 52 square miles, including the City of West Richland. Approximately 36 volunteer and career Firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and six Paramedics respond to an average of 1,200 calls per year.*