



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: March 28, 2016
Contact: Fire Chief William Whealan
Office (509) 967-2496 Cell (509) 430-7993 wwhealan@bcfd4.org

Board of Fire Commissioners to hold meetings on EMS levy renewal

Medical emergencies accounted for 63% of all calls in 2015

West Richland, Wash. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Benton County Fire District 4 will hold two public meetings to discuss asking voters to renew the levy for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) during the August 2016 Primary Election.

The meetings will be held April 2 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. and April 7 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. at District Headquarters (Station 420), 2604 Bombing Range Rd., West Richland, WA 99353. Fire commissioners will vote on a resolution placing the EMS levy renewal on the August ballot at the April 7 meeting.

In 2015, Fire District 4 responded to 1,322 calls for help – 63 percent of which were EMS-related. In fact, EMS calls have increased 57 percent for the fire district since voters approved funding for the program in 2010.

As part of its EMS program, Fire District 4 provides transport services, Basic Life Support with Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technicians and Advanced Life Support with highly-skilled Paramedics. ALS is critical to patient survival rates – and not all fire agencies have this capability.

The levy also pays for the fire district to staff another station, which has reduced ambulance response times by three minutes on average. In addition to emergency personnel, funding is used for training and certifications, ambulances, maintenance, medical equipment, first aid supplies, and equipment replacement.

If approved by voters, the levy rate would stay the same at 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. That means the owner of a \$250,000 home would continue to pay approximately \$10.42 per month (or \$125 per year).

The current EMS levy will expire at the end of 2016, and fire commissioners are considering asking voters to remove the expiration date. This would stabilize funding for the fire district's most widely-used emergency service and help the agency plan long-term to improve the program. It also would save money on election costs, which can be as much as \$36,000 every time the fire district needs to be on the ballot. Fire commissioners feel this money would better serve the community by funding life-saving equipment or personnel.

Community members who are unable to attend one of the meetings are encouraged to contact Fire Chief Bill Whealan with questions or comments. He can be reached at wwhealan@bcfd4.org or 2604 Bombing Range Rd., West Richland, WA 99353.

"We want to hear how EMS has touched the lives of the people we serve," said Chief Whealan.

###

Benton County Fire District 4 is proud to provide fire and emergency medical service (EMS) to 17,000 people over 52 square miles, including the City of West Richland. Approximately 50 volunteer and career firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics responded to 1,322 calls in 2015, 63% of which were for Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Learn more about Fire District 4 at www.bcf4.org or "Like" us on Facebook at /BCFD4.

###