



## Benton County Fire Protection District No. 4

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 8, 2016  
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#### **Board of Fire Commissioners passes resolution on EMS levy** *Voters asked to renew levy during August Primary*

West Richland, Wash. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Benton County Fire District 4 passed a resolution asking voters to renew a levy for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) during the August 2016 Primary Election. Fire Chief Bill Whealan said that the vote was unanimous.

“EMS is the most widely-used service we offer,” said Chief Whealan. “This program has saved numerous lives in our community.”

Chief Whealan is speaking from personal experience. In 2015, he suffered a stroke and credits his full recovery to the fast and experienced response of Paramedics with Fire District 4.

“Every minute counts when you’re dealing with a heart attack or stroke,” he said. “I know that I am alive today because of our EMS program.”

The EMS levy has allowed 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.

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 Paramedics, who train more than 2,000 hours. ALS is critical to patient survival rates – and not all fire agencies have this capability.

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.

The current EMS levy will expire at the end of 2016. If renewed 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) for a 24-hour Paramedic response.

The ballot measure also removes any expiration date for the EMS levy. 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 saves money on election costs, which can be as much as \$36,000 every time the fire district needs to be on the ballot.

“We feel that using these funds for life-saving equipment or emergency personnel is a better option than election fees,” said Chief Whealan.

Information about Fire District 4’s EMS levy renewal can be found at [www.bcf4.org/ems-levy-renewal.html](http://www.bcf4.org/ems-levy-renewal.html).

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*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](http://www.bcf4.org) or “Like” us on Facebook at /BCFD4.*