



## Benton County Fire Protection District No. 4

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 5, 2016  
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#### **EMS calls on the rise for Benton County Fire District 4**

*Medical emergencies accounted for 63% of all calls in 2015*

West Richland, Wash. – Total call volumes increased seven percent for Benton County Fire District 4 in 2015 compared to the previous year. The fire district responded to 1,322 calls for help and medical emergencies accounted for 63 percent of all calls in the same time period. Fire Chief Bill Whealan says that number is expected to increase as the local population ages and increases.

“EMS is the most widely-used service that we offer,” said Chief Whealan. “It’s critical to the health, safety and well-being of our community.”

Calls for emergency medical service (EMS) in Benton County Fire District 4’s service territory have increased 57% since voters approved funding for an EMS levy in 2010. The levy allows the fire district to provide transport services, Basic Life Support with Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Advanced Life Support with Paramedics.

The levy also pays for the fire district to staff another fire station, which has reduced ambulance response times by three minutes on average.

The current EMS levy will expire at the end of 2016, and the fire district likely will ask voters to renew it during the August Primary Election at the same rate of \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The Board of Fire Commissioners is also considering asking voters to remove the expiration date.

A permanent EMS levy would provide a stable funding source 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. Chief Whealan says that this money would better serve the community by funding life-saving equipment or personnel.

The Board will hold two public meetings later this spring about the EMS levy renewal. The public will be invited to attend and provide comment.

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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).*