



Fire District 4

FIRE & RESCUE

Serving North Spokane County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire District 4 eyes EMS levy renewal

Levy funds highest level of pre-hospital care

[Chattaroy, Wash.] – Spokane County Fire District 4 invites the community to one of two meetings about a levy renewal for Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Medical emergencies account for 77 percent of all calls on average for the fire district.

The EMS levy will expire at the end of the year if not renewed by voters. Meetings to learn more about the levy renewal will take place:

- Monday, April 11 – 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. – Station 41 (315 East A Street, Deer Park 99006)
- Monday, April 25 – 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. – District Administrative Offices (3219 E Chattaroy Rd, Chattaroy 99003)

At the April 25 meeting, the Board of Fire Commissioners will vote on the resolution to place the EMS levy renewal on the August Primary Election ballot. The levy funds the EMS program for the district, including emergency personnel, training and certifications, a medical response unit, maintenance, medical equipment, first aid supplies, and equipment replacement.

Fire District 4 is licensed to provide Basic Life Support for medical emergencies through firefighter/emergency medical technicians. However, it also provides Advanced Life Support (ALS) through the use of volunteer and part-time paramedics. This unique staffing model saves fire district taxpayers almost \$300,000 per year, compared to a traditional staffing model. Seventeen volunteer and part-time firefighters have their paramedic certification to make this program happen.

Division Chief Gino Palomino, who runs the EMS program for Fire District 4, says that while cost is a consideration, the most important thing is to make sure that ALS continues to be available for local residents. Firefighter/EMTs average 200 hours of training to respond to basic medical emergencies. Paramedics average up to 1,500 hours of training, which includes 276 hours of clinical rotations in area hospitals, and 360-540 hours of field internship with paramedic and physician oversight.

ALS is the highest level of care a patient can receive before being transported to a hospital for further treatment. This type of emergency medical service is critical to saving patients with diabetes, chest pain, shortness of breath, prescription drug overdoses, stroke, or other life threatening conditions.

Fire District 4 had surveyed local residents to gain insight on the emergency service issues that were most important to them. At the time, only 45 percent of ALS calls were being covered by neighboring agencies due to limited resources,

and some had to come from as far away as Spokane. Almost 75% of respondents identified ALS access as a high priority. As a result of that feedback, Fire District 4 started its volunteer ALS program in 2011.

The value in having Fire District 4 provide ALS has been exponential. Within a year, Fire District 4 started receiving positive feedback from area hospitals regarding improved treatment and transport times for cardiac patients and others with critical needs. Emergency response times for these types of calls are now 13 to 15 minutes faster depending on where paramedics respond in the district. And, while the fire district does not guarantee an ALS response because of licensing requirements, it now is able to cover 98 percent of these types of medical emergencies.

Fire District 4 likely will ask voters to renew the EMS levy this fall. Since 1992, voters have approved funding every six years for an EMS levy at \$0.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. In 2010, the fire district asked voters to renew the levy at \$0.33 because of a difficult economy.

Since that time, EMS calls have increased 28 percent as have costs for personnel, medical supplies, equipment, fuel, maintenance, and state fees. To meet this demand for service, the Board of Fire Commissioners would like to renew the EMS levy at \$0.50 before it expires at the end of 2016. That means the owner of a \$200,000 home would pay \$100 per year (approximately \$8.33 per month) for a 24-hour emergency medical response.

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Spokane County Fire District 4 provides fire suppression and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to 45,000 people over 330 square miles in north Spokane County, including the city of Deer Park. Volunteer and part-time firefighters respond to more than 3,100 emergency calls per year; 77 percent on average are for EMS. Fire District 4 is proud to operate under a balanced budget and has passed all financial and accountability audits by the state. Find Fire District 4 on Facebook at XXX, or visit the web site at www.scf4.org.