

Lake Stevens Fire Levy

Frequently Asked Questions

Mail-in Ballots Due May 16, 2006

► **What is the cost for the fire levy?**

This levy will restore funding to \$1.45 per thousand. This is an estimated increase of 55¢ per thousand of assessed value to what you are currently paying.

► **How long will this fire levy last?**

This is a five-year fire levy.

► **Why a five-year levy rather than a one-year levy?**

The customer survey taken by Lake Stevens Fire (LSF) clearly indicated that the community wanted a multi-year levy based on a plan. So while other fire departments run successful levies annually, the Lake Stevens community did not favor an annual levy election. Lake Stevens citizens prefer a long-range plan for funding.

► **Is this fire levy an all mail-in ballot?**

Yes, this is an all mail-in ballot. Ballots will be mailed out to all the voters on Thursday, April 27th and they are due by Tuesday, May 16th. The Lake Stevens School Administration Building and the County Administration Building (Everett campus) will also be accepting ballots on May 16th during the times 7am – 8pm.

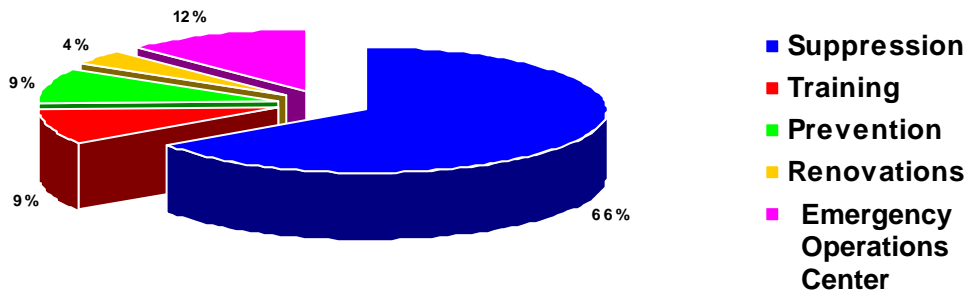
► **Where can I direct questions regarding my ballot?**

If you have questions about your ballot, please contact the auditor's office at phone # 425 388 3444.

► **Why does the levy rate continue to drop?**

As the assessed value on property increases, the district's property tax rate could actually decrease. The reason for the decrease in the district's levy rate is due to Initiative 747, which was passed by the citizens of Washington State in 2001. I-747 states the district can only receive 1% more in total property tax revenue from the previous year. Therefore, if the assessed value increases greater than the 1% allowed by I-747, the levy rate decreases to keep the amount of property tax revenue the district receives from rising above the 1% increase allowed from the previous year. In other words, if we can only receive 1% more in property tax revenue than last year, then when the value of property goes up above that 1%, the levy rate has to be reduced to the property owner so we do not receive more than our 1%. I-747 knew governments could not survive on 1% growth forever, so it provides the opportunity for the fire department to go to the voters and request a lift on the 1% lid to pay for a specific purpose or service, such as Fire or EMS.

► **What is the percentage breakdown of the proposed fire levy funding?**



► **Firefighter staffing has been decreased by 22,464 hours. Why do those hours need to be restored?**

The hours cut affected firefighters who worked the night and weekend shifts. The following impacts are significant:

- The safety of our firefighters has been affected with less firefighters on the fire scene during the most critical moments of a fire.
- There is increased risk to a successful stop of fire spread during the night and weekends to the homeowner.
- The neighboring communities' level of service has been reduced as they increase their assistance to LSF.
- LSF has a reduced level of service during these hours as there are less aid units available. Paramedics are responding and in some cases transporting BLS (Basic Life Support) patients that could have been treated by EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians).

► **Why do additional firefighters need to be hired?**

The fire levy is based on today's and tomorrow's needs. LSF takes responsibility for informing their community on what lies ahead over the next five years. According to Snohomish County demographers, conservatively there will be at least a 9.2% growth in population over the next five years. This levy proposes a long-range plan to hire the firefighters over the next five years.

► **Has LSF considered volunteer firefighters?**

The job of today's firefighters continues to be dangerous and increasingly more complex. Firefighters today have been tasked to defend our communities far beyond just fighting fires and providing first aid. The expectation of today's firefighter is to perform complex rescues, perform advanced life saving efforts, coordinate terrorism preparedness programs, and mitigate bio-chemical and hazardous materials events and to implement Incident Command Systems on situations affecting our nation's critical infrastructure. Adding this new mandate as front-line defenders makes it nearly impossible for a volunteer firefighter to commit the time, energy, training and great personal risk that is now demanded.

► **Will the levy funding help staff the Machias station?**

LSF has worked hard to gain the public's trust. It is the district's goal to ensure the community is receiving the very best level of service affordable. LSF is maximizing resources and that is what the public expects. Maximizing resources includes more than just monetary issues; it also includes levels of service. In the purest sense, LSF strategically places its units, equipment and personnel where they yield the highest possible level of service.

When the levy passes, beginning January 1, 2007, LSF plans to staff personnel at the Machias station as staffing allocations allow. During the annual budget process, consideration will be given to staffing needs of all district stations. Operationally LSF will maintain the ability to move units as deemed necessary to cover areas just as we do today.

► **What is the function and location of the Emergency Operations Center?**

- Single story 8100 square foot building will accommodate fire administration, prevention specialist, training officer as well as local law enforcement space
- Will be located on district property across from Station 82 on Chapel Hill Road
- Will host its own backup power generator system to ensure the Emergency Operations Center remains functional during loss of its primary power source
- Will coordinate the area's disaster and storm readiness and response efforts
- Emergency communications will be capable of interacting with law enforcement and other municipal and county agencies
- Main training and community room will accommodate up to 100 people for department training, disaster preparedness and community events
- Main training and community room will be easily divided into smaller rooms and designed to accommodate public use
- This Emergency Operations Center will place Lake Stevens Fire in a leadership role and at the forefront of emergency preparedness and response

► **Is there truly a need for a 100 person meeting room?**

LSF is "*Planning for Tomorrow*". The fire district does not have enough available space to accommodate department wide meetings or training.

The building of the Emergency Operations Center is based on two very important factors, additional space is needed for firefighters sleeping and disaster preparedness. Once these needs were determined; the most economical way to accomplish this was to erect a building which allowed administration, prevention and training to move out of the fire station. Additionally, this building is being designed to ensure maximum benefit as a multi-purpose building for multiple public agency use and public use at the same time.

The Emergency Operations Center will have a large multi-purpose room. It will serve primarily as the department's meeting/training room and more importantly as the key communication center during catastrophic events. The large meeting room is capable of being divided into smaller rooms for special breakout sessions for training and EOC operations.

The public has clearly indicated the need and desire to have a large public meeting room available to them.

▶ When did LSF pass their last fire levy?

Lake Stevens Fire has not had a fire levy increase for 24 years.

▶ Where can I direct further questions regarding the fire levy?

Further questions regarding the fire levy can be sent via the “Contact Us” page on the Lake Stevens Fire website at www.lakestevensfire.org or feel free to call the Lake Stevens Fire main office at phone # 425 334 3034.