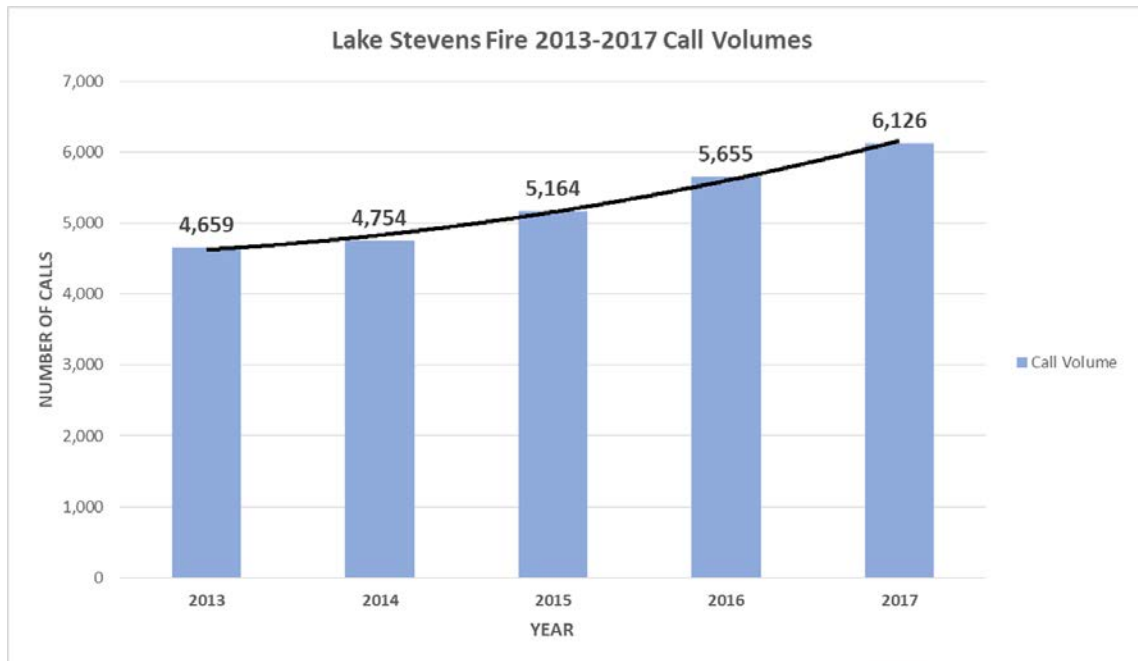


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Call Volumes Continue to Increase for Lake Stevens Fire



LAKE STEVENS, WA – Lake Stevens Fire reported an 8.33% increase in call volumes for 2017. That makes a 31.5% increase in the last five years.

“It’s to be expected that call volumes will increase as our community grows,” said Fire Chief Kevin O’Brien. “We have a plan to maintain emergency service levels in the immediate future and improve service long-term.”

The fire district has spent a significant amount of time educating community members about how emergency services are funded. Two voter-approved levies fund daily operations at Lake Stevens Fire paid through property taxes for fire and emergency medical service. These levy rates fall over time as property values rise. This limits the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue each year plus a 1% annual increase allowed by law. While property values have increased, the fire district is still limited to that 1% increase over previous year’s revenue unless voters approve additional funding.

If the demand for emergency services exceeds available revenue, as the fire district is currently experiencing, voters can be asked to increase funding through a “levy lid lift.” This returns the levy rates to previously voter-approved amounts of \$1.50 per \$1000 of assessed property value for fire and 50-cents/\$1000 for EMS.

Short-term, Lake Stevens Fire is focusing on maintaining emergency service levels for district residents and businesses. Last year, voters agreed to restore funding for the fire district's EMS program. This year, it is likely that the Board of Fire Commissioners will ask the community to return the fire levy, which provides a majority of funding, to \$1.50 per \$1,000 during the August Primary Election. (The last time voters approved a Fire Levy lid lift was in 2007.) That would mean an additional \$87.75 per year, or \$7.31 per month for the owner of a \$325,000 home.

"We want our taxpayers to know that all revenue is invested back into our community to save lives and property," said Chief O'Brien.

Long-term, Lake Stevens Fire is looking for ways to be more efficient and improve emergency service for area residents. The fire district is discussing the possibility of partnering with Snohomish County Fire District 7 that serves other East Snohomish County communities.

Many fire districts are merging to be more efficient, improve staffing and training opportunities, and provide better service. The two agencies already share a maintenance shop, fire marshal services, training programs, and a Community Resource Paramedic. This merger would improve Lake Stevens Fire's emergency response capabilities by staffing current fire stations and planning for future stations. The proposal could be on the November General Election ballot after an extensive public process. If both measures are approved by voters, the fire and EMS levy rates for Lake Stevens would decline by a few cents.

"It's critical that we be able to meet the demand for fire and EMS as our community grows," said Chief O'Brien. "Merging with another fire district provides efficiencies and service improvements that we can't do on our own."

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Lake Stevens Fire provides fire suppression and emergency medical service (EMS) to 44,000 people over 42 square miles. Our highly-trained emergency personnel responded to 6,126 calls in 2017, an 8.33% increase from the prior year. Our fire district is proud to be debt free, operates under a balanced budget and has a long history of passing its independent audits by the state. More information about the fire district can be found at www.lsfire.org.