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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Fire Levy Lid Lift Update: How Will Funding Be Used?**

LAKE STEVENS, WA –Lake Stevens Fire is asking voters to return the Fire Levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The proposal will be on the August 7 Primary Election and cost the average homeowner \$7.31 per month.

Fire Chief Kevin O'Brien says that he wants the community to know why this is necessary. "It's about being transparent with the people we serve," he said.

Lake Stevens Fire is limited to a one percent levy increase per year. Call volumes continue to increase (31.5% in five years) and revenue received by the fire district is not keeping up with inflation or daily expenses. More calls mean added costs for things like equipment, fuel, utilities, as well as apparatus and facilities maintenance.

Revenue also will go toward hiring emergency personnel for the Chapel Hill Road Station to maintain emergency service levels. Almost 60 percent of the fire district's alarms occur in that area and additional staffing is needed to respond to the demands for service.

"We need to be ahead of curve in planning to address the increase in call volumes before it impacts emergency response times," said Chief Kevin O'Brien. "We want to maintain the level of service we currently provide for our community."

Here's what is going on: If a unit from one station is on a call, there must be another unit ready to respond, which the fire district has. But what happens when you have multiple calls back-to-back? In those cases, it takes longer for responding units to get there because they may be wrapping up a call or coming from a longer distance. The key is to have enough staff to cover anticipated call volumes from anywhere in the district.

The Lake Stevens area has seen a period of rapid growth, and the additional population contributes to more emergency calls. Based on higher call volumes, expenses for emergency services increase. Add to that inflation for goods and services, and it quickly becomes apparent that revenue is not keeping pace.

The fire district has spent a significant amount of time educating community members about how emergency services are funded. Levy rates for Fire and EMS fall over time as property values rise. This limits the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue each year plus a one percent annual levy increase allowed by law.

Voters are given the opportunity to restore funding for emergency services to previously approved amounts through "lid lifts." Last year, the Lake Stevens community approved an EMS Levy lid lift.

**LAKE STEVENS**  
**FIRE**

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*"Touching Lives Today ~ Planning for Tomorrow"*

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However, the last time voters approved a Fire Levy lid lift was in 2007. The Fire Levy provides a majority of funding for emergency services, and all revenue is invested back into the community.

More information can be found on the fire district's web site at [www.lsfire.org](http://www.lsfire.org).

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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](http://www.lsfire.org).*

