

Lake Stevens Fire has spent time communicating about the challenges to meet the demand for emergency services. Growth in the Lake Stevens area has caused call volumes to increase 31.5 percent in the past five years. Like many fire districts, revenue isn't keeping up with the demand for service or even the cost of inflation.

Fire districts in Washington are allowed to ask voters to approve "lid lifts" for fire and EMS, which returns levy rates to previous amounts. This is an increase, but rates are capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value for fire and 50 cents per \$1,000 for EMS.

Last year voters approved an EMS levy lid lift for this life-saving program. This year, Lake Stevens Fire likely will ask the community to lift the lid on its fire levy, which provides a majority of funding. If approved by voters, revenue would be used to add an emergency aid unit to respond to higher call volumes and maintain emergency response times. There will be public meetings this spring to learn more about the proposal, and we hope you will take part.

Short-term, we want to maintain emergency service levels. Long-term, we need to improve emergency services by working with neighboring agencies to be more efficient. For example, South Snohomish County Fire and Rescue is the successful combination of Snohomish County Fire District 1 and the Lynnwood Fire Department. Voters in those areas saw the value that working together provides.

Monroe Fire merged with Snohomish County Fire District 7 a couple of years ago, which serves other east county communities including Clearview, Maltby and Mill Creek. Taxpayers in Monroe saw a significant savings and improved service as a result. Our fire district currently shares a maintenance shop, fire marshal services, training programs, and a Community Resource Paramedic with Fire District 7. We are assessing whether a partnership would improve our emergency response capabilities and be more efficient for our taxpayers in the long run.

It's critical that we are able to meet the demand for fire and EMS as our community grows. Most importantly, we believe this partnership could improve our capability to save lives and property. At the end of the day, that's why we do what we do.

*Chief Kevin O'Brien wants to hear from residents of Lake Stevens Fire. Contact Chief O'Brien at (425) 212-3044 or [kobrien@lsfire.org](mailto:kobrien@lsfire.org).*