



# The Responder

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Supplement



2021 STATISTICS  
Sept 1 — Sept 30

District Average  
Response Time:  
min. 9 sec. 16

Responses by  
Type:

Fire: 21  
EMS: 309  
Other: 135  
Total: 465



*Proudly serving the  
communities of Blaine,  
Birch Bay, Custer, Laurel  
and the  
unincorporated areas  
of Lynden & Bellingham*

*“Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community”*

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM YOUR FIRE CHIEF: Please vote on Proposition 2021-9



**North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) placed Proposition 2021-9 on the November 2 ballot after a narrow loss in the August primary because time matters—both in an emergency and in an election.**

### Facts about your fire and emergency medical services

**We’re efficient, we’re debt free, we’ve reduced administrative staffing by 30% since 2011, but that isn’t enough.** With annual 911 calls increasing 71% since 2011 in the combined NWFR-District 4 service territory, and most of our fleet of fire trucks and aid cars long past due for replacement, we simply can’t maintain service levels into the future without additional revenues.

**Funding isn’t keeping pace with demand.** We haven’t increased firefighting staff in any of our four stations staffed 24-7 across our 182-square mile service area since 2007. Nearly our entire fleet of fire trucks and vehicles should have been replaced years ago under industry standards. And the 71% more 911 calls are getting more complex—we’re seeing more mental health incidents and overdoses, and COVID-related challenges.

**We cannot maintain current service levels and response times without additional funding.** To address these significant funding challenges, and after the levy failure in August 2021, we have placed another fire levy lid lift measure (Proposition 2021-9) on the November 2 ballot.

In an emergency, how fast fire and emergency medical arrive play a significant role in limiting property damage and improving patient survival. If approved, Proposition 2021-9 will allow us to maintain response times by:

- Adding eight new firefighter/EMTs, four of whom will staff a peak-hour transport unit critical for maintaining response times as we increasingly have multiple medical calls simultaneously.
- Training one Incident Commander per shift (also known as Battalion Chief) to manage complex fire and medical situations alongside three-person crews. These newly-trained staff will elevate skills needed in the field to respond smarter, faster and safer.
- Replacing obsolete fire vehicles and firefighter equipment. Our fleet is so old we spend more to repair some vehicles than they are worth.



After careful analysis of our operations, under Proposition 2021-9 we are seeking a fire levy lid lift to \$1.45 per \$1,000 of assessed value. It will cost the owner of a home assessed at \$400,000 approximately \$10 more per month but it is what is needed to maintain current service levels and response times.



No one likes higher taxes. But we simply cannot cut, squeeze or delay further financial demands without jeopardizing response times—the time crews need to get to an emergency situation. Other than a voter-approved levy lid lift, we are limited under state law to a 1% increase per year in property tax collections, plus the value of new construction. This means our primary revenue source—the fire levy—hasn't even kept up with inflation, much less the 71% growth in 911 calls.

- Our firefighters' salaries haven't kept up with inflation: wages have grown 16.8% since 2011. Employees have even given back wage increases in order to avoid layoffs.
- As in 2011, we have four staffed stations covering our 182-mile service area. Each station has one crew of three firefighters on staff 24/7, the same as 2011.
- Until this year, NWFR hasn't asked voters for a fire levy increase since 2008. But we can't maintain response times without more funding.



The data below provides a snapshot of what “doing more with less” looks like, over the last ten years.

Cumulative growth in property tax revenue 2011-2021	18.99%
Cumulative inflation rate, 2011-2021	21.6%
Growth in 911 calls, NWFR and Dist. 4 2011-2021	71%



### Facts about fire and emergency medical response funding

- All fire levy revenues come to NWFR to support the services we provide. These are local revenues—not county, state or federal revenues.
- Taxes are based on your property's assessed value, not on market value.
- If Proposition 2021-9 is approved by voters, in 2022 the levy rate will reset to \$1.45 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Each year thereafter, the levy rate will again be capped at a level allowing NWFR to collect just 1% more in total property tax collections across the whole district, plus the value of taxes on new construction.



If you have questions about Proposition 2021-9, please go to <https://www.nwfrs.net/levy-lid-lift/>, email [info@nwfrs.org](mailto:info@nwfrs.org) or call 360-318-9933.



Your vote matters, so please return your ballot on or before November 2.

