



The Responder

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Supplement



2021 STATISTICS *August 1 — August 31*

District Average
Response Time:
min. 9 sec. 28

Responses by Type:

Fire: 23
EMS: 360
Other: 144
Total: 527



*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 ABOUT PROP. 2021-09 | FIRE LEVY LID LIFT



TIME MATTERS IN AN EMERGENCY

How fast fire and emergency medical help arrive plays a significant role in limiting property damage and improving patient survival

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue (NWFR) is unable to maintain current response times and provide quality fire and emergency medical services to our nearly 33,8000 residents, businesses and properties without additional funding.

Please take time to learn about Proposition 2021-09. **Put simply, current service levels and response times cannot be maintained under existing funding, which is limited by state law.**



WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME

NWFR has proposed another fire levy lid lift—Proposition 2021-09—at the November 2 election because a similar measure failed at the August primary. Our fire levy has not been increased by voters in 12 years, but our world has changed dramatically over that time period:

- **911 calls have increased in number and complexity:** over 52% since 2011, and more pandemic and mental health incidents.
- **Fire and EMS vehicles and equipment are outdated and less reliable:** nearly all are overdue for replacement or should be in backup or reserve status based on industry standards.
- **Staffing limitations:** the biggest obstacle to maintaining response times. We are asking our firefighters to do more with less; they recently voluntarily gave up wage increases to preserve jobs.
- **Vast 156 square mile service territory:** our fire stations on average are nearly 15 miles apart meaning longer travel times, and we can't depend on as much mutual aid because we are bounded by the Canadian border and the Pacific Ocean.
- **Funding constraints:** State law caps total property tax collected by local governments to 1% more each year plus the value of new construction.



MAINTAINING RESPONSE TIMES DEMANDS ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Passing Prop. 2021-09, the fire levy lid lift will:

- **Add firefighters / emergency medical technicians (EMTs):**
Four firefighters/EMTs to staff a peak-hour transport unit to increase our ability to transport residents more quickly during peak times and when we are receiving multiple calls.
Train one shift commander per 24 hour shift to manage complex fire and medical situations.
Four firefighters to fill positions vacated by newly-trained shift commanders to respond to increased and more complex service demands.
- **Replace obsolete fire vehicles and firefighter equipment** to ensure vehicles, critical for 911 response, are able to respond reliably and as fast as possible.

Passing Prop. 2021-09 will cost the owner of a home assessed at \$400,000 approx. \$10 more per month to maintain current service levels and response times. If the measure is approved, NWFR's fire levy will be raised from \$1.15 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2021, to \$1.45 beginning in 2022. The highest allowed rate is \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, but \$1.45 is what we need to maintain current service levels and response times.

All Prop. 2021-09 funds go directly to NWFR and can only be used for fire protection and emergency medical services in our District. Funds do not go to Whatcom County. Standard exemptions apply, including low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

We are fortunate to live in a country where we are allowed to vote. Elections are decided by people who vote. Please learn about Proposition 2021-09 at www.nwfrs.net, and please vote; it matters.

HOW ARE YOUR FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES FUNDED TODAY?

NWFR's services are primarily funded by a voter approved property tax levy. The fire levy has not been increased by voters in **12 years**.

In 2021, NWFR's total tax levy rate is \$1.15 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The highest allowed rate is \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation

Prop. 2021-09 asks voters for \$1.45 per \$1,000 assessed valuation, which is what is needed to maintain current service levels and response times.

WHAT IS A LEVY LID LIFT?

A "levy lid lift" is a voter approved action to increase property tax collection by more than the 1% per year "lid" put in place by Initiative 747 in 2001. Specifically, Initiative 747 limits the amount of property tax a jurisdiction may collect to one percent (1%) more per year plus the value of new construction. The limit remains regardless of inflation or population growth or increased demand for service. The only way to exceed that "lid" is with voter consent, requiring simple majority (50% +1) voter approval.

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE & RESCUE: YOUR PUBLIC SAFETY PROVIDER

History

- Formed Dec. 2006 when Whatcom County Fire Protection District 3 and Whatcom County Fire Protection District 13 merged
- Serves Whatcom County Fire District 4 under contract

Leadership and Personnel

- 5 member Board of Commissioners
- Fire Chief Jason Van der Veen
- 47 career (EMT trained), 21 volunteer firefighters and 6 administrative staff provide fire protection/suppression and emergency medical services, including BLS (basic life support) transport, rescue and hazardous materials response.

Facilities and Vehicles

- 5 fire stations (3 staffed 24-7, 2 served by volunteers)
- 5 engines (Average age 15.25 years)
- 2 ladders (Average age 19 years)
- 6 aid units (Average age 10 years)
- 6 water tenders (Average age 27.5 years)
- 3 wildland brush trucks (Average age 19 years)

Service Area

- 33,800 residents, businesses, properties
- 156 square miles

