

CASCADIA **DAILY** NEWS

Three Whatcom fire districts seek levy lid lift in August election

Cost of staff, facilities, equipment all rising faster than revenue (July 22, 2026)



North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Station 62 in Semiahmoo has been mostly inoperable since it opened in 1995. The district is asking voters to approve a levy lid lift to help fund staffing at the vacant fire station, among other expenses. ([Hailey Hoffman](#)/Cascadia Daily News)

By [Julia Tellman](#)
Local News
Reporter

Three Whatcom County fire districts — District 1, Glacier and North Whatcom — are asking voters to approve levy lid lifts to help the districts continue providing emergency services to their respective communities.

A levy lid lift is not a new property tax; it's a voter-considered adjustment to an existing regular levy.

The fire districts all cite “levy compression,” in which property values grow faster than the 1% revenue limit allowed by state law. Even as the districts’ millage rates and revenues shrink, the number of calls for service has increased, as have the costs of personnel, apparatus maintenance, fuel, utilities, insurance and training.

District 1 serves approximately 106 square miles that include Everson, Nooksack, Deming and the Nooksack Indian Tribe. The district is seeking to establish its regular real property tax levy rate at \$1.48 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The district’s last levy lid lift was approved by voters in 2021, when the levy rate was restored to \$1.40 per \$1,000 of

assessed property value. Since that time, the levy rate has gradually decreased to approximately \$1.12 per \$1,000

Glacier Fire & Rescue, or District 19, covers 109 square miles, including the community of Glacier and surrounding forested areas, and is seeking voter approval to restore its fire levy to \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. This would bring the district's levy back up to what was approved by voters in 2021.

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue, or District 21, covers 156 square miles and includes the communities of Blaine, Custer, Laurel, Birch Bay, Semiahmoo, and unincorporated areas of Lynden. North Whatcom also serves residents of District 4 along the north shore of Lake Whatcom through a contract agreement.

North Whatcom has [struggled for years](#) to keep up with rising costs and growing demand in the large, predominantly rural district. In 2025, the district responded to 5,986 calls, of which almost 70% were for medical emergencies.

Voters in North Whatcom last approved a levy rate of \$1.37 in 2006; the rate has since dropped to 77 cents. The district tried and failed with levy lid lift attempts in August 2021, November 2021 and August 2024.

This August, the district is asking voters to restore its fire levy to \$1.20 per \$1,000 of assessed value. If the ballot measure is approved, the district would be able to increase its annual revenue by up to 3% in each of the five subsequent years.

If voters OK the levy lid lift, North Whatcom would be able to replace aging equipment, update the Birch Bay fire station and staff the Semiahmoo fire station, which has been mostly out of operation since it opened in 1995.

[Julia Tellman](#) writes about civic issues and anything else that happens to cross her desk; contact her at juliatellman@cascadiadaily.com; 360-922-3090 ext. 107.