



Clallam County Fire District 3

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Clallam County Fire District 3 N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 2018

Chief's Corner

By Chief Ben Andrews



Clallam County Fire District 3 has spent time sharing information with you about our most challenging issue: How do we keep pace with an increasing demand for service without adequate and sustainable funding?

Call volumes have increased 33 percent in seven years and will continue to grow. Operational costs increase an average of 3.4 percent annually. However, the fire district is limited to a one percent revenue increase per year by Washington law, which is less than inflation. Without action, the cost to provide service will exceed revenue in 2019 and start draining reserves to maintain current service levels. This is not sustainable.

As a result, our Board of Fire Commissioners is asking the community to consider a general levy lid lift during the November 6 General Election. If approved by voters, the lid lift would be an additional \$5 per month - \$60 per year - for the average homeowner. Funding would be used to maintain service levels, emergency preparedness, improve staffing where possible, train personnel, and fund facility and apparatus needs.

In 2004 our community approved a general levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Since that time, the levy rate has fallen to \$1.26. (The levy rate falls as property values rise and the fire district is limited to roughly the same amount of revenue per year.) The lid lift would return the general levy to \$1.50 and provide a sustainable funding source for emergency services.

More information can be found on our web site at www.ccf3.org. I also am personally available to answer questions at (360) 683-4242 or bandrews@ccfd3.org.



Another Clean Audit

Clallam County Fire District 3 is a good steward of your tax dollars and takes that responsibility seriously. We operate under a balanced budget and have passed all independent audits by the state.

Independent audits are a requirement of any publicly funded agency in the state. In its last audit, we actually saved taxpayers \$3,000 because the fire district was organized and prepared when meeting with state officials.

The state auditor's office said, "The reduction in [audit] costs is primarily due to the responsiveness of District management and staff, the strength of the District's internal controls, and the fact that documentation was well-organized and readily available."

This report covered Fire District 3's accountability and financial statements for the years 2016-2017. A copy of the reports can be viewed at www.sao.wa.gov or on our website at www.ccf3.org.

Look. Listen. Learn!

October 7-13, 2018 was Fire Prevention Week. This year's theme was "Look. Listen. Learn. Be aware. Fire can happen anywhere." The campaign works to educate people about three basic but essential steps to take to reduce the likelihood of having a fire—and how to escape safely in the event of one:

"LOOK" for places fire could start. Take a good look around your home. Identify potential fire hazards and take care of them.

"LISTEN" for the sound of the smoke alarm. You could have only minutes to escape safely once the smoke alarm sounds. Go to your outside meeting place, which should be a safe distance from the home and where everyone should know to meet.

"LEARN" two ways out of every room and make sure all doors and windows leading outside open easily and are free of clutter.

Stretching Tax Dollars Further

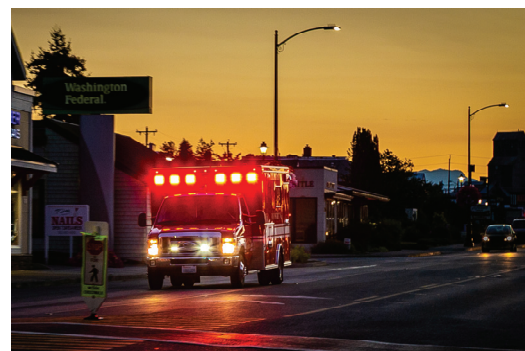
Clallam County Fire District 3 primarily funds emergency services through two property tax levies—the General Fire Levy and an EMS Levy. We work hard to stretch these tax dollars further by applying for grants, extending the life of our apparatus, replacing some equipment with gently-used surplus items from other departments, as well as selling our own surplus items to get the highest market value possible.

Last month, we received a \$541,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to replace all the self-contained breathing apparatus used by firefighters. Grants are not a substitute for regular funding through our property tax levies, but every bit helps!



The fire district also has implemented an Apparatus Replacement Plan to extend the usable life of items like fire engines and ambulances. As apparatus ages, we reduce the amount of time it's on the streets, which makes it last longer. This will help us to avoid approximately \$1 million in ambulance replacement costs over the next 10 years.

Another example of our careful stewardship is that we purchase surplus equipment from other larger departments. We just saved about \$3,000 purchasing a used mobile light plant for scene lighting during large-scale overnight incidents and training drills. Another



recent savings was around \$55,000 for remounting an ambulance cab instead of buying a new ambulance. We are happy to buy gently-used items provided they meet our strict safety standards and save our taxpayers money!