



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Fire district feels the burn during wildland fire season**

Clayton, Wash. – Wildland fires in eastern Washington are keeping firefighters with Stevens County Fire Protection District 1 hopping. Firefighters have been deployed to other parts of the state because of their knowledge and expertise in wildland firefighting.

So far this year, District 1 firefighters have responded to over 66,000 acres of wildland fires that have directly threatened the properties of taxpayers. These responses have resulted in a 300% increase in staffing hours for both paid and volunteer emergency personnel, which will be reimbursed by state and federal agencies.

The time spent on wildland fires, in conjunction with the fire district's record-breaking call volume, has put a large burden on existing staff. More firefighters are needed to support the "new normal" of increased call volumes.

Call volumes have increased 21% last year alone, but the fire district has lost 20% of its volunteer firefighters due to age or work commitments. Adding to that challenge is the fact that equipment and facilities for the fire district are outdated and some stations pose a risk to firefighter health and safety.

For example, three water tenders and three engines owned by the district are all more than 30 years old. This equipment is difficult to drive, expensive to repair, and no longer meets the safety standards of the National Fire Protection Association or the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau.

The two busiest fire stations in Loon Lake and Suncrest have nowhere for firefighters to sleep. This means volunteers usually respond from home or work, which can delay response times by five minutes or more. Some have even slept in their vehicles or campers in order to respond to emergency calls faster.

Another concern is that these stations have no way to remove exhaust fumes from the buildings. Firefighters often start an engine up to five minutes before leaving for a call and those diesel fumes are dangerous for personnel breathing them on a regular basis.

To address these issues, Stevens County Fire Protection District 1 is asking voters to approve a levy lid lift and a bond on the November General Election ballot. The lid lift will fund one full-time firefighter and a reserve account to replace equipment and apparatus that is past its usable life. The 20-year bond would replace the Suncrest and Loon Lake fire stations with ones that have sleeping quarters, proper ventilation, decontamination units, and training space. The cost for both measures is 52.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or \$8.75 per month for the owner of a \$200,000 home.

For more information about the ballot measures, please visit <http://scfpd1.com/about/proposed-funding-measures/> or contact Fire Chief Mike Bucy directly at mbucy@scfpd1.com or (509) 262-9660.

Stevens County Fire Protection District 1 provides structure and wildland fire protection, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, and emergency medical service for 13,500 people (22,000 during the summer) over 375 square miles. The fire chief, seven full-time and 40 volunteer firefighter/emergency medical technicians (EMTs) respond to an average of 1,200 calls per year.

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