

2024 Fire Levy Lid Lift

Walla Walla County Fire District 4 is asking voters for a fire levy lid lift in the August primary election to fund essential services and enhance emergency response with additional firefighter/paramedics.



Walla Walla County Fire District 4
2251 S. Howard St.
Walla Walla, WA 99362
(509) 529-1282
wwfire4.com



How do we fund emergency services?

Our daily operations are funded by a fire levy capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Our fire levy accounts for almost 60% of our budget. EMS is partially funded by a county levy of \$0.50 per \$1,000. The county levy is not adequate to fund our EMS program.

In 2003, our fire levy rate was \$1.39. Since then, the rate has dropped to \$0.88.

What would be on the ballot?

We are asking voters for a \$0.38 lid lift on the August 6, 2024, primary election ballot. This would raise the fire levy rate to \$1.26 per \$1,000.

What would the lid lift fund?

- Essential emergency services
- Up to three firefighter/paramedics to respond to higher call volumes.
- Renovations to Station 41 (Howard Street) to reduce response times and improve firefighters' health and safety.
- Replace aging apparatus

Why are we considering this?

Revenue from our fire levy is not keeping up with higher call volumes and costs to provide service. Since 2018, our call volumes have increased 30%. Calls for EMS are also increasing and now account for 68% of all emergencies. Our annual costs increase 4-5% each year, but we are limited to just a 1% revenue increase each year. We require additional personnel to meet the emergency service level needs of our community. We also need to renovate Station 41 so more firefighter/ EMT's can respond from the station and get to you faster in an emergency.

What would this cost?*

The owner of a \$400,000 home (considered average) would pay an additional \$152 per year or \$12.67 per month. This would be our first levy lid lift in almost 40 years.

*Homeowners who are 61 years or older and others who meet income and eligibility requirements may qualify for a property tax exemption. Contact the Walla Walla County Assessor at 509-524-2560 or online at https://www.co.walla-walla.wa.us/government-assessor/senior_exemption.php to see if you qualify.

Do my property taxes increase by the same percent of my home's assessed value?

No. We can only increase our revenue by 1% each year per state law. Any amount higher than that must be approved by voters. Even if your property value increases by double-digits, we can only collect 1% more (or any voter-approved increase). This means the fire levy rate falls as property values rise to limit our budget to the amount approved by voters. Our fire levy rate has dropped from \$1.39 in 2003 to \$0.88 in 2024 and is no longer adequate to meet the emergency service level needs of our community.



Learn more at www.wwfire4.com. Fire Chief Rocky Eastman welcomes your questions at 509-529-1282 or reastman@wwfire4.com.