



# Fire Levy Lid Lift on August Ballot

Thurston County Fire District No. 9

JULY 2022

## PRIMARY ELECTION TO DECIDE FIRE DISTRICT FUNDING

Soon, you will be receiving your ballot for the August 2022 Primary Election. The Board of Commissioners of the McLane Black Lake Fire Department have placed a Proposition Establishing Property Tax Levy on the ballot for voters' consideration. This is not a new levy but is the existing regular fire property tax levy that pays for the staffing and operations of the Fire District.

The McLane Black Lake FD regular fire levy has continued to decrease since the last voter approved measure

so that you can have the information necessary to make an informed decision before you vote.

Funding from the fire levy supports Fire District operations on a day-to-day basis and maintains emergency services levels. This includes funding for personnel, training, equipment, and firefighting and emergency medical supplies. It also pays for the on-going cost of maintaining and operating fire engines, water tenders, ambulances and rescue vehicles and equipment. Funding

for these items is essential to delivering services and maintaining insurance rating levels.

The primary funding mechanism, that allows fire districts to collect a maximum regular levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value was established in law many years ago, in the day when most fire departments provided services primarily as volunteer organizations, and before Emergency Medical Services were provided. The structure was neighbor helping neighbor. When a call for help went out, Volunteer Firefighters would respond from their homes if available, drove to the fire station, and picked up whatever fire apparatus they were assigned to and head to the scene of the incident. This response model



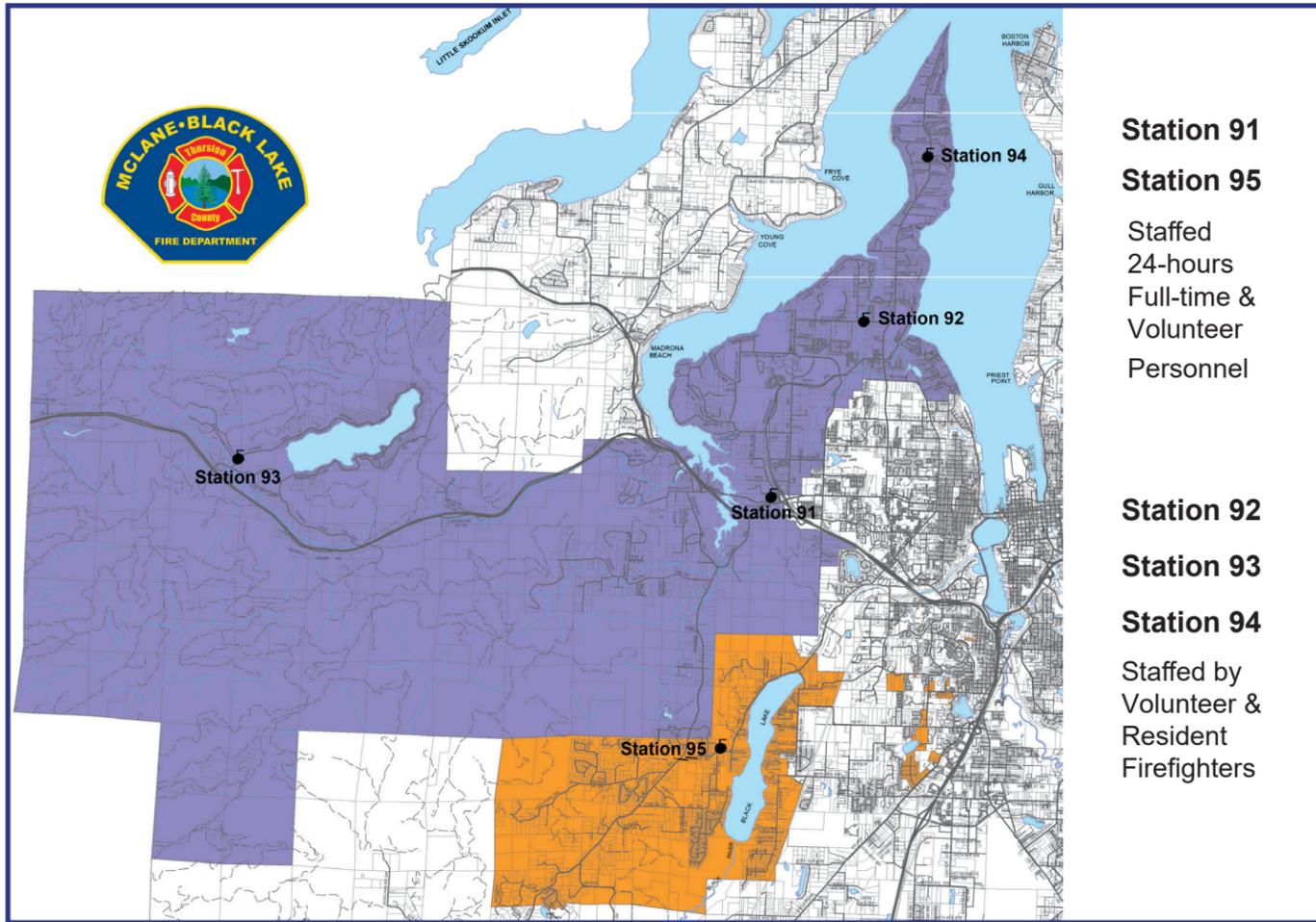
ended. The previous measure approved in 2007 set the rate at a \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Since it ended in 2013, the levy has dropped to \$1.17 per \$1,000 of assessed value (AV).

If approved by voters, the fire levy rate would be returned to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of AV. This is called a fire "Levy Lid Lift." The Lid lift will reset the Regular Fire Levy to the statutory limit of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. It is important that you understand how your fire and emergency medical services are provided and funded

relied heavily on community volunteers. Operating a volunteer department was less expensive than providing response services with career firefighters but it was often less reliable and resulted in longer response times.

The McLane Black Lake Fire Department has evolved into a combination fire department, meaning that fire and emergency medical response services are provided by both career and volunteer firefighters working together. This model provides the most cost-effective and efficient staffing

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**Station 91**  
**Station 95**  
 Staffed  
 24-hours  
 Full-time &  
 Volunteer  
 Personnel

**Station 92**  
**Station 93**  
**Station 94**  
 Staffed by  
 Volunteer &  
 Resident  
 Firefighters

to the community. Having a combination of paid and volunteer staffing at stations, the Fire District can provide the best response reliability when an emergency call for service is received.

**What is response reliability?** Response reliability is a measure of how quickly and effectively the fire department responds to calls for help. To effectively serve, the fire department must have consistent staffing and the necessary apparatus and equipment to support the emergency response needs of our diverse response area. Studies show that staffing, response times and trained personnel are the most impactful factors in creating a positive outcome for an emergency response.

**What has changed?** As demands have increased on the fire service for response, it has also seen changes in the requirements for training of personnel and increased demands on time for volunteers. This has had a direct impact on the number of people willing to volunteer with the Fire District and increased the reliance on full-time staffing at some stations. The decline in volunteerism is a national problem that is impacting the fire service. Since 2018, the McLane Black Lake Fire Department has experienced a significant reduction in volunteer firefighters. We continue to recruit and train volunteers, however like you our volunteers must balance personal life, work and the increasing requirements from the fire service. The typical

volunteer spends over 36 hours a month providing response coverage, completing training, and volunteering their time. Usually these hours are after work, in the evening, or on weekends. We are very proud of the committed volunteers here at McLane Black Lake Fire Department, but increasing demands makes it hard to maintain this force at the strength it once was.

**How is it funded?** Funding to sustain current services is provided in two ways. First the regular fire levy is maintained at or near its threshold of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of AV. Second, by voter approved Maintenance and Operations Levy (M&O). The M&O Levy is submitted

**RESPONSE INFORMATION**

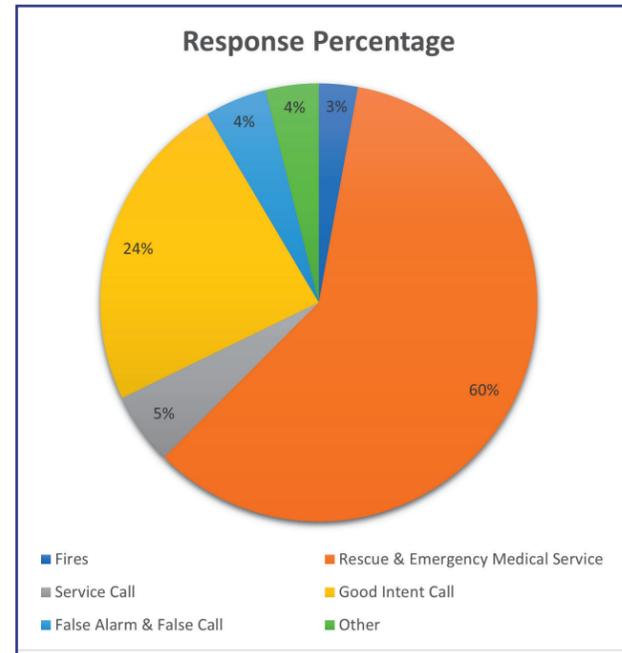
**2021 TOTAL CALLS:** 2262

**AREA SERVED:** 84 Square Miles

**POPULATION:** 15,195 plus Evergreen State College

**DEMOGRAPHIC:** Suburban/Rural

**HAZARD RISKS:** 2 - Lakes, Capital Forest Recreation Area, Wildland Urban Interface Communities, Evergreen State College, Puget Sound shoreline



for approval to Fire District voters, every four-years and is necessary to fund capital projects and supporting additional Firefighter/EMT positions that are not funded by the regular fire levy. The Fire District cannot collect an EMS Levy to support the ambulance program as it is collected by Thurston County. Therefore, the regular fire levy (Proposition 1) and the M&O Levy are all that is available to the Fire District to support the delivery of fire and emergency services.

In 2001, funding for fire departments significantly changed when voters approved Initiative I-747. This initiative, when restored by the legislature in 2007 limited the annual regular fire levy increase to 1% increase over the previous year's collection, regardless of changes in

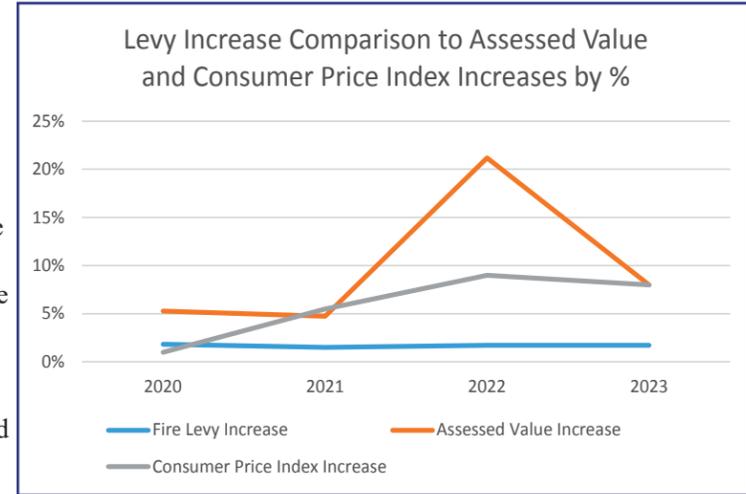


the assessed value of properties, or the Consumer Price Index increase (cost of goods and services). With the 1% limitation, annual tax based funding falls short of the Fire Districts actual increase in expenses. The levy lid lift addresses the impact of inflation and will restore the regular fire levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of AV which will be used to

fund the daily operations of the Fire District.

**How much will it cost?** The current regular fire levy is approximately \$1.17 per \$1,000 of assessed value. If approved, the restored levy will be \$1.50 per \$1,000 of AV for a single year, which is an estimated change of \$0.33 per \$1,000 of AV. For a homeowner with a residence at \$500,000 AV, this would mean an increase of \$165.00 per year.

The increase in the fire levy will be offset by the planned retirement of previously voter-approved Fire District debt. The Fire District anticipates paying-off voter approved long term debt as part of the Financial Plan for fiscal year 2022. Each year the Fire District levies money to continue paying off 20-year bonds approved by voters in 2004 for the construction of new fire stations and purchasing fire apparatus. The Fire District plans to retire this debt earlier than the required payoff date, saving the taxpayers additional debt payments and interest.



If the Levy Lid Lift is approved by voters and the debt is retired, the net result is an increase of approximately \$0.04 per \$1,000 of AV. A homeowner with a residence at \$500,000 in AV will then only experience a \$20.00 a year increase rather than \$165.00.

The level of service the Fire District can provide is directly related to the available funding to support operations. **Please remember to VOTE on August 2nd.**



2815 Summit Lake Shore Rd., Olympia

**JULY 26 - STATION 93**

5911 Black Lake Blvd., SW., Olympia

**JULY 19 - STATION 95**

Link is posted at: [www.mclanefire.org](http://www.mclanefire.org)

**JULY 18 - VIRTUAL**

125 Delphi Rd., NW., Olympia

**JULY 12 - STATION 91**

All meetings are at 6:00 p.m.

# FIRE LEVY LID LIFT INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

McLane Black Lake  
Fire Department  
125 Delphi Rd NW  
Olympia, WA

Local  
Postal Customer

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

**Household Voter(s)**

For more information go to [www.mclanefire.org](http://www.mclanefire.org)

**AT STATION 91, 125 DELPHI RD NW**

**FRIDAY AUGUST 5, 3 PM-6 PM**

# BICYCLE RODEO

## Fire Levy Lid Lift - Facts & Information

**What is on my August Primary Election Ballot?** McLane Black Lake Fire Department (Fire District 9) is asking voters to return the fire levy from \$1.17 back to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value for a single year. This is called a “fire levy lid lift.”

**Why is my Fire District asking for a lid lift?** McLane Black Lake FD currently funds all its daily staffing, operations and volunteer programs through its regular fire levy and the maintenance and operations levy (M&O). The regular fire operating levy is necessary to provide fire suppression, Basic Life Support ambulance services, special rescue operations, fire prevention, maintenance of apparatus and equipment and other essential services to the citizens in the Fire District.

**Have voters approved this before?** Yes, voters approved a fire levy lid lift in 2007. Since then, the fire levy has fallen to \$1.17 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

**How much will the lid lift cost? How long does it last?** The 33-cent lid lift would cost the owner of a \$500,000 home \$165.00 per year (\$13.75 per month). The lid lift would last for one (1) year, and then the levy rate would start to fall again.

**Can the fire levy ever go above \$1.50 per \$1,000?** No. By state law, the fire levy can never exceed \$1.50 per \$1,000.

**What does it pay for?** The fire levy pays for daily operations,

such as emergency personnel, equipment, apparatus, medical supplies, facilities, and repairs and maintenance. It supports both career and volunteer firefighters that provide firefighting and emergency medical services 24-hours a day.

**Doesn't the fire district get more taxes because of increasing property value?** The fire district is limited to a 1 percent revenue increase per year by state law regardless of how much a home appreciates in value. In other words, we do not receive a 10 percent increase in revenue if your home value increases by that amount.

**Does the fire district receive money from the state or county?** No. McLane Black Lake FD is separate from the county and state and receives no funding from them, including any sales tax. The fire levy is the primary funding source for fire and emergency services that are provided within the Fire District.

**What about taxes from “new growth”?** This tax revenue is used to make sure an emergency response (including adequate staffing levels, apparatus, facilities, equipment, and supplies) is available for new homes in the fire district.

**What is the fire district doing to make our tax dollars stretch further?** McLane Black Lake FD has strong financial practices that enable it to fund operations and staffing needs through its two operating levies for fire and EMS.