



# Snohomish County FIRE DISTRICT 7

*Earning Trust Through Action*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** September 3, 2019  
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### **One-Year Lid Lift Planned for November Ballot of Residents in Snohomish County Fire District 7**

Monroe, Wash. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Snohomish County Fire District 7 approved a resolution asking property owners to return the fire levy from \$1.36 to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The measure will be on the November 5 General Election ballot.

If approved, the 14-cent lid lift would last for one year and cost the owner of a \$450,000 home \$63 per year or \$5.25 per month. Voters last returned the fire levy to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2016.

The Fire District originally asked voters for a fire levy lid lift that would last six years, which was rejected during the August election. Fire Chief Gary Meek says that the Fire District learned a valuable lesson.

“We thought people were tired of seeing us on the ballot every couple of years for funding,” said Chief Meek. “What we learned is the exact opposite of that. That’s why we’re asking for a one year lid lift like every time before.”

Chief Meek says that the lid lift is important to continue the fire district’s current financial practices of funding its operation and capital needs through its two levies for fire and emergency medical service. By state law, that combined rate cannot exceed \$2 per \$1,000 (\$1.50 for fire and 50 cents for EMS) of assessed property value.

Fire District 7 is unique. Most fire districts require voter-approved bonds for capital needs, such as stations and apparatus. This costs taxpayers more through the length of the bond (often 20-30 years) and interest payments.

“Bond payments are like having another mortgage. It’s right there on your property tax statement every year for 30 years,” said Chief Meek. “Fire District 7 has put financial practices in place to prevent this, and reduce impacts for our taxpayers.”

In fact, the last bond Fire District 7 requested was in 1978. Since that time, it has worked to have adequate reserves to pay cash for apparatus, station renovations or new construction. It also is prepared if the economy should take a downturn again, like it did a decade ago.

In 2008, assessed property values plummeted and revenue for most local governments declined along with it. Many fire districts in the state were forced to cut staffing levels, programs and services if they were unable to convince voters to pass temporary excess taxes. Fire District 7 had capacity because of its sound financial practices to weather the storm.

Funding from the lid lift will pay for increased operational costs due to higher call volumes and setting money aside for capital needs such as apparatus replacement and new facilities. This helps the fire district meet these obligations as they are needed as opposed to having to cut services if funding requests fail.

“We don’t want to be that fire department who has to decide on cutting essential services if the lid lift doesn’t pass,” said Chief Meek. “This lid lift is about maintaining financial sustainability for years to come.”

More information about the fire levy lid lift can be found on Fire District 7’s web site at [www.snofire7.org](http://www.snofire7.org). Chief Gary Meek also is available to answer questions at [gmeek@snofire7.org](mailto:gmeek@snofire7.org) or (360) 794-7666.

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*Snohomish County Fire District 7 provides fire and life safety services to over 116,000 people over 98.5 square miles in central and east Snohomish County, including the communities of Clearview, Maltby, Mill Creek and Monroe. In 2018 emergency personnel responded to more than 11,000 emergency calls. Through taxpayer support, Fire District 7 has built the most advanced emergency response system in Snohomish County with highly-trained personnel, facilities, apparatus, and rescue programs.*

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