



INTEGRITY  
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# FLASH POINT

SUMMER 2024  
Newsletter

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

By Nick Walsh, Fire Chief



Summer! There are lots of good things happening at South Whidbey Fire/EMS. We are grateful for your support. Take a few minutes to learn more in our newsletter.

SWFE has a fire levy lid lift on the primary election ballot. Ballots must be returned or postmarked by August 6 to be counted. Inflation and higher call volumes are impacting the level and quality of service we can provide.

The lid lift would fund:

- Two more firefighters per day
- Staffing at a third station in the southeast part of the district
- Firefighter training programs
- Replacement of engines and equipment that have aged out of service

SWFE is a good steward of your tax dollars, operating under a balanced budget and passing all independent financial and accountability audits. Another example of this stewardship is through our levy rate. State law limits a fire district to a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Voters approved a fire levy rate of \$0.95/\$1,000 in 2021. SWFE is asking voters to change it to \$1.20/\$1,000.

I want to focus on the importance of response times. Two more firefighters per day will allow us to staff a third station. This means we can reach you five minutes faster during your emergency. This is critical to saving lives and property. Please read about the importance of emergency response times in this newsletter.

Learn more at [www.swfe.org](http://www.swfe.org). I also welcome your questions at 360-321-1533 or [chief@swfe.org](mailto:chief@swfe.org). Thank you for partnering with us to save lives and property.

## Every minute counts

The most important part about the fire levy lid lift is reducing emergency response times by five minutes on average. What do five minutes mean in a fire or medical emergency?

It's obvious that faster response time will reduce the amount of structure damage in a fire. Emergency medical service is where it's most critical.



Survival rates for heart attacks and strokes improve by 10% per minute with an effective emergency response. Reducing response times by only one minute on average would save thousands of lives per year across the nation.

Medical emergencies are a majority of our calls. We appreciate your consideration.



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## Water Tenders: How They Reduce Your Homeowner Insurance



Sufficient water flow and pressure are key to fighting fires and lower homeowner insurance premiums. While some of the fire hydrants in our district provide adequate pressure and water flow for firefighting, others are supplied by small water systems that just don't meet the minimum standards. And, a large portion of south Whidbey is served by well water with no fire hydrants.

That's why SWFE brings water to an active structure or wildland fire through tank trucks known as "water tenders." Our tenders carry 2,500 gallons of water and pump 750 gallons per minute. We have ordered a new tender to replace our oldest at 29 years and have an option to purchase a second one to retire a 26 year old unit should the fire levy lift pass.

Local fire hydrants in unincorporated areas don't always do the job. At a major fire, we place one or more water tanks on the ground at the fire scene and deploy multiple tenders to rapidly fill these tank(s) to replenish the water as it is used on the fire. The goal is to have the holding tank(s) full for the duration of the fire so firefighters have as much water as needed to douse the flames as fast as possible.

Because of SWFE's capable fleet of tenders, we received an improved Protection Class rating from 7 to 6, a positive change that may lower your homeowner's insurance premium.