



SKAGIT COUNTY
Fire District No. 6



Skagit Co Fire Dist. 6

www.skagitfire6.com

16220 Peterson Road
Burlington, WA 98233
(360) 757-2891

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 30, 2023

Contact: Assistant Chief Ed Tjeerdsma | 360-757-2891 | etjeerdsma@skagitfire6.com

Skagit County Fire District No. 6 Reports Call Volumes Are Up 102 Percent Since 2018

Revenue is not keeping up with demand and costs to provide service

BURLINGTON, WASH. — Skagit County Fire District No. 6 responds to an average 1,200 calls per year, which is a 102 percent increase since 2018. Of those total calls, 67 percent are for emergency medical service (EMS). Revenue is not keeping up with this demand for and costs to provide services.

“We can’t control growth, but we must serve it,” Assistant Chief Ed Tjeerdsma said. “As a result of our community’s growth, we have seen our call volumes shoot up over 100 percent. We require additional personnel to keep up with the emergency service needs of our community.”

Skagit FD6 serves 6,800 people over 27 square miles, bordering Farm to Market Road to the west, Highway 20 to the south, District Line Road to the east, and Interstate 5 at Bow Hill Road to the north. It relies on part-time and volunteer emergency personnel.

Funding is required to meet emergency service needs of the community

The fire district funds fire and EMS services through a fire levy capped at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Voters last approved a fire levy of \$1.05 per \$1,000 in 2018. Since that time, the levy rate has dropped to \$0.70 while call volumes have increased by 102 percent. This is called “levy compression” and impacts the fire district’s ability to provide emergency services as call volumes increase.

Why did the levy rate drop?

Each year the fire district is allowed to collect a set amount of revenue. State law limits the fire district to that same amount each year plus one percent more. Even if property values double, the fire district can only collect the same amount it did the year before plus one percent. This means the levy rate drops as property values rise to limit the fire district to that one percent increase.

Skagit FD6 is considering asking voters for a fire levy lid lift of \$0.35 per \$1,000 sometime this year. This would return the fire levy to the same amount of \$1.05 per \$1,000 that voters approved in 2018. It would cost an additional \$140 per year or \$11.67 per month for the owner of a \$400,000 home.

Lid lift would improve service at less cost to taxpayers than borrowing money

The fire levy lid lift would fund two additional firefighters to meet emergency service level demands and help reduce response times. The lid lift would replace an aging ambulance and self-contained breathing tanks and protective gear for firefighters and pay for renovations to add more sleeping quarters at the



SKAGIT COUNTY Fire District No. 6



Skagit Co Fire Dist. 6

www.skagitfire6.com

16220 Peterson Road
Burlington, WA 98233
(360) 757-2891

fire station to provide residents a 24-hour emergency response. The fire district plans to pay cash for these capital items as opposed to borrowing money which costs taxpayers more in interest payments.

The final decision on levy funding will be made after a public process is conducted.

“We believe it is critical for our community to understand how we are funded and how we use tax dollars to provide quality, cost-effective emergency services,” Asst. Chief Tjeerdsma said. “We are your fire district and we report to you. We look forward to having this important conversation.”

More information can be found at www.skagitfire6.com. Assistant Chief Ed Tjeerdsma welcomes your questions at etjeerdsma@skagitfire6.com or 360-757-2891.

###

Skagit County Fire District No. 6 serves 6,800 people over 27 square miles, bordering Farm To Market Road to the west, Highway 20 to the south, District Line Road to the east, and Interstate 5 at Bow Hill Road to the north. The fire district relies on part-time and volunteer emergency personnel who respond to an average 1,200 calls per year – a 102 percent increase since 2018. Of total calls, 67 percent are for emergency medical service (EMS). Skagit FD6 operates under a balanced budget and has passed all independent audits by the state.