



# Thurston County Fire Protection District 8

*Proudly Serving Northeast Thurston County Since 1953*

The Thurston County Fire Protection District 8 (also known as the South Bay Fire District 8), works hard to provide consistent, high-quality, round-the-clock emergency medical and fire services from our two primary fire stations.

For many years, we have funded our service with a property tax levy rate of up to \$1.50 per thousand of the assessed real property value. Our property tax levy rate has declined to \$1.20 per thousand for 2023 as property values have increased faster than we are allowed to increase revenue. To keep up with growing costs, we are proposing a Primary Election ballot measure (August 1, 2023), that would authorize a return to the \$1.50 rate effective in 2024.

We also plan to propose a **separate \$0.45 levy in the fall of 2024** to take effect in 2025, bringing the total District Levy to a maximum combined rate of \$1.95. Together, these combined levies would meet our projected expenses over the next five years.

This document will attempt to answer frequently asked questions. If you have further questions, please visit our website at [www.southbayfire.com](http://www.southbayfire.com) or email our Fire Chief Brian VanCamp at [vancamp@southbayfire.com](mailto:vancamp@southbayfire.com). You can also call us at 360-491-5320.

## **South Bay Fire District 8 Ballot Measure Frequently Asked Questions. (FAQs)**

### **Why Does the District need more money?**

*There are several reasons that the District is asking for additional funding, including:*

- Increasing call volume and decreasing ability to attract and retain volunteer responders requires us to recruit, hire, and retain more full-time career staff.
- Fewer people now volunteer for firefighting. It takes too much time and effort for most people unless they are pursuing a career in firefighting.
- Rising costs – over the last year, our costs for staff, services, and supplies have increased by over 8%.
- Due to the reduced availability of volunteers, staffing with career responders results in increased labor costs.
- The statutory limitation for property tax revenue (\$1.50 per thousand of assessed value) and the cap on levy increases (from 1%-6% for five subsequent years) don't keep up with inflation and don't provide sufficient funding for operations.
- To consistently achieve our Target Levels of Service:
  - Fire calls: four firefighters respond and begin firefighting operations within 10 minutes of the alarm.
  - Medical calls: two EMTs respond and begin basic life support services within eight minutes of the alarm.

### **What do you plan to do with the extra money collected?**

*The District will use the additional funding to:*

- Maintain the District's growing demand for career staff.
- Provide sufficient funding for planned replacement of vehicles and equipment; and
- Help pay for increasing costs of operations and ongoing maintenance of vehicles, equipment, and facilities.

## How much will this cost a tax paying community member?

- The current (2023) basic property tax levy rate is \$1.20 per thousand of assessed value);
- If approved by voters in **2023**, the basic tax levy would cost homeowners an additional .30 cents per thousand of their assessed value in 2024 (a total of \$1.50 per thousand of assessed value); and
- If approved by voters in a **separate ballot measure in 2024**, an excess tax levy would cost homeowners an additional \$0.45 per thousand of their assessed value in 2025 (a total of \$1.95 per thousand of assessed value).

## How will this improve your services?

- In 2022, the District had 16 career responders and 32 volunteer responders.
- As part of a five-year plan, the District would have 28 career responders and 25 volunteer responders by the year 2028.
- The District's current (2022) average response time is seven minutes and 17 seconds.
- With voter approval of the proposed ballot measures, the District could implement the recommended staffing plan that provides an estimated reduction of average response time by about one and a half minutes.

## What will happen if this measure does not pass?

- Over time, staffing at the North Olympia Firestation would become difficult, if not impossible, without the additional funding.
- Service levels would be impacted throughout the District as we would have only one crew to serve the entire district at any given time. We would not be able to support concurrent calls.
- We estimate that average response times would increase by an average of one to two minutes.
- If the Levy restoration passes but the excess levy is not approved, the same impacts will take place, but over a longer period.

## Where can I get more information?

- Additional information is posted on our website at [southbayfire.com](http://southbayfire.com).
- You can call Chief VanCamp at 360-491-5320 or email him at [vancamp@southbayfire.com](mailto:vancamp@southbayfire.com).

## About Us

The South Bay Fire Department (Thurston County Fire Protection District 8), proudly provides firefighting, emergency medical services and community risk prevention to more than 13,000 people, over a 31-square mile area, including Johnson Point, Puget Beach, South Bay, Gull Harbor, Boston Harbor, Fish Trap, and Woodard Bay. We average 1,300 calls per year. The South Bay and North Olympia Fire Departments (merged in 2015) have been providing outstanding service since 1953.

We strive to save tax dollars by relying on a combination of exceptionally trained volunteers and full-time career staff to respond to emergency calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We are governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners who meet monthly to monitor the status of the Department.