Round 1 We have the answers.

What's on the ballot?

FCFD1 is asking voters to return the fire levy to $0.85 per $1,000 of assessed value. A rate last levied in 2007. The proposal will be on the November 5, 2025 ballot.

How do we fund emergency services?

Emergency services are funded through a fire levy with a maximum allowance of $1.50 per $1,000. Over time, levy rates fall as assessed property values rise to restrict fire districts to roughly the same amount of revenue plus 1%. For example, the levy was $0.92 per $1,000 in 2005 and has fallen to the rate of $0.39 per $1,000 in 2024 because property values have increased.

Is this a new tax?

No. The fire levy is an existing tax that compresses as assessed values increase. The levy lid simply returns the fire levy to a rate within the maximum allowance of $1.50 per $1,000. Districts must get voter approval to return a rate. In this case the rate on the ballot is $0.85 per $1,000

Is the fire district funded by the Franklin County budget?

No. FCFD#1 is a separate taxing district and receives no funding from the county for annual operations. There are occasional federal or state grant opportunities the county may extend to fire districts.

Why is the fire district asking for this?

- Since 2005 call counts have increased over 300%
- Fire apparatus cost have doubled in the last 6 years.
- Insurance has doubled in the last 6 years. Nearly 25% of our budget.
- Dispatch, radios, tech services, and training materials have all increased.
- Maintenance and fabrication costs have increased.
- Fuel, tires, foam, hose, nozzles, and equipment costs all increased.
- PPE and safety equipment.

More calls means higher cost and costs are significantly higher combined with inflation rates.

My property tax valuation continues to go up each year. Doesn't this mean the fire district is getting more money?

No, This is a common question. In Washington State, fire districts are limited to a tax collection growth of 1% per year regardless of property values. As population, emergencies, and cost of operations grow at rates far greater than 1% per year, we struggle to meet the growing demand for service.

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What will this levy lid lift fund?

- Fire fighting and Fire prevention
- Operations
- Maintenance
- Training
- Gear
- Equipment

There is no big item like a new station in the plan. The fire district is in immediate risk of depleting our reserve fund used for future apparatus replacement and unforeseen costs. The last 5 years the fire districts operating costs have exceeded the levy revenue. Despite cost saving reductions.

What cost reductions have been in place?

- Reduction in initial response until confirmation.
- Reduction in equipment replacement. Hose, nozzles, and etc.
- No training material cost outside of grant covered expenses.
- Gear through DNR at a shared cost.
- In the last 8 years six apparatus have been retired from mechanical failure, age, or costly maintenance. Those apparatus have been replaced by five apparatus. All five replacements were built or assembled in-house by volunteers to reduce cost. Four were former military vehicles that included grant funding to assist with building. These vehicles on average cost our district $20,000 each. Far below the $300,000-$500,000 new apparatus cost.
- Common maintenance phrase " It'll have to wait until next year."

What will this cost?

Assessed Value	Current $0.39	Proposed $0.85	Monthly Difference
$300,000	$119.40	$255.00	$11.30
$400,000	$159.20	$340.00	$15.07
$500,000	$199.00	$425.00	$18.83

Dry land value

SECTION 640 ACRES	ASSESSED VALUE	CURRENT $0.39	PROPOSED $0.85	MONTHLY DIFFERENCE
LAND ONLY	$237,000	$94.33	$201.45	$8.93
LAND & HOME	$732.500	$291.54	$622.63	$27.59

Irrigated value

SECTION 160 ACRES	ASSESSED VALUE	CURRENT $0.39	PROPOSED $0.85	MONTHLY DIFFERENCE
LAND ONLY	$277,700	$110.52	$236.05	$10.46
LAND & HOME	$445,200	$177.19	$378.42	$16.77

Round 1

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The rate is more than double, why?

FCFD1 has remained steadfast attempting cost saving efforts, utilizing grants, and adjusting tactics while waiting for a better economical atmosphere to support a levy lid.
FCFD1 fire commissioners have determined we cannot wait anymore and must present the voters with the option to return the fire district to a sustainable levy rate.

The cost is simply too high.
Are other fire district rates this high?

- According to the public record of the Department of Revenue all counties local taxing district detail and the statistics and reports information. Yes
- The state fire levy average for 2024 was $0.95 per $1,000 assessed value.
- We strongly encourage individuals to research the data.
- https://dor.wa.gov/about/statistics-reports/local-taxing-district-levy-detail
- https://dor.wa.gov/about/statistics-reports/assessed-values-levies-rates-major-taxing-districts-interactive-data-graphic

The average must be from west side rates.
Are there local districts with similar rates?

We cannot speak to the comparison of each district or the circumstances. Each district is unique in needs. But strictly on a data available here are some rates of neighboring county district rates per $1,000 in 2024.

- Adams 1-Ritzville $0.83
- Adams 5-Othello $0.65 also running in November for $0.90
- Asotin 1- North County $0.95
- Benton 1 - S Kennewick $1.22
- Benton 2 - Benton City $1.47
- West Benton RFA - Prosser $1.26
- Benton 4 - West Richland $1.29
- Benton 5 - Horse Heaven $0.57
- Benton 6 - Patterson $1.22
- Columbia 1 - Starbuck $1.19
- Columbia 2 - N Waitsburg $0.85
- Columbia 3 - Dayton $0.94
- Franklin 2 - Kahlotus $0.84
- Franklin 3 - North Pasco $0.82
- Garfield 1 - ALL $0.89
- Grant 8 - Mattawa $0.96
- Grant 10 - Royal $1.08
- Lincoln 1 - Sprague $0.80
- Lincoln 3 - Odessa $0.82

We have the answers.

What really happens if the levy lid is rejected?

- FCFD1 will continue to provide the best service possible within our current levy budget.
- More cost saving measures will need to be implemented.
  - More reductions to maintenance including the potential of reducing fleet in lieu of costly repairs.
  - Reduction of response apparatus per incident.
  - Potentially the reduction of stations.
  - Increased burden on neighboring mutual aid districts.
  - Potentially fewer responders to reduce training needs.
- Any of the above as well as unmentioned potentials will be detrimental to the response time, responders, public safety, and effectiveness of the district.

The Washington State Rating Bureau that surveys and assesses fire agencies looks for criteria such as number of apparatus, number of fire fighters, distance from station, response time, and maintenance records to determine the districts rating. This rating is used in the determination of policy and cost to the insured property owner. We urge our residents to research this to determine the impact this would have on your own situation.

I live in the country. Why should my taxes fund city fires?

- The city of Connell is not the jurisdiction of FCFD1. Connell is the jurisdiction of the Connell Fire Department.
- Connell city limits residents do not pay taxes to FCFD1.
- FCFD1 does provide mutual aid to the City of Connell and other agency neighbors. They also provide FCFD1 mutual aid when needed.
- Calls within the city of Connell, Mesa, or Eltopia area make up a small portion of our call counts. Fewer than 10%.
- Most of our calls are in district open land, farm land, or roadside incidents including vehicle accidents that lead to fire in the SR17 or US395 corridors.

Round 2

We have the answers.

I saw Washington State Rating Bureau mentioned previously. Can you better explain what is WSRB?

Yes, the WSRB is a organization that audits fire agencies for specific criteria related to the effectiveness of the agency.
The data and information produced by WSRB evaluations help:

- Insurance companies better understand property risk from fire and natural disasters.
- Insurance consumers feel confident their fire insurance premiums are fair.
- Communities understand how they can improve their fire-defense capabilities and building code effectiveness.

How does WSRB apply to the district?

WSRB rates districts with a protection classification score of 1 through 10. 1 being the best possible and 10 considered no fire protection. Most insurance companies use WSRB data to evaluate property risk. For those companies using WSRB Protection Class data, it is essential for setting fire insurance premiums.

Lower rated agency areas have a higher associated premium. Agency areas rated as low or no fire protection may potentially be declined from insurance providers.

Round 2

We have the answers.

Are there other ratings used for insurance?

Yes, there are many collections of data used as resources. Wildfire risk is a growing evaluation for insurance companies. We are aware of policyholders who have been dropped for "wildfire area risk". Our website community tab has links for additional awareness resources.

How can the district improve ratings?

- More training.
- Improve equipment.
- Maintain stations, apparatus, and responders near higher populated areas.
- Update aging apparatus.

I saw you have received DNR trucks at a lower cost, if funds are low why do you get those?

- Cost savings to the taxpayer.
- All five DNR apparatus replaced other apparatus that aged out, had mechanical failure, or cost too much to repair.
- Effectiveness of the former military trucks to put fires out early in areas difficult to access. Reducing property loss and increasing safety.

How many apparatus does the district have currently?

- 17 total apparatus 7 in Connell, 2 in Mesa, 4 in Eltopia, and the others are in remote areas.
- 2 type 4 wild land with urban interface capabilities. Structure capable
- 5 type 4 wild land apparatus
- 6 type six quick response wild land apparatus
- 3 water tenders
- 1 type 5 utilized as command

Round 2

We have the answers.

Why so many apparatus?

We have a very large district with spread population. FCFD1 protects Eltopia, Mesa, and Connell area. For effectiveness and ratings, we must have apparatus within 5 miles of populated areas. This greatly reduces our response times and effectiveness to stop fires quickly. If we were to remove a station that area would see a negative impact on insurance ratings to a "no fire protection" rating.

In addition, having stations near the populated areas means responders can get to apparatus quickly making responses anywhere in the district faster. This is greatly beneficial as travel from any station could be 20 miles and still be in our district.

Why doesn't FCFD1 continue to seek more grants?

- We do! Every year FCFD1 seeks grants to alleviate needs. Few grants are awarded and many have extensive competition.
- Multiple applications and requests are submitted per year.
- We currently have grants awaiting award or fulfillment for things like PPE, shovels, hose, apparatus improvement, and even apparatus. Grants are not guaranteed and sometimes take years to fulfill.
- We will continue to seek grants, but we cannot rely on grants and grants don't typically cover operations and everyday costs.

I have seen FCFD1 has a website, it seems if you can afford a website you have excess funds?

- Washington R.C.W. requires our district to post agendas to a website.
- The state auditor informed the district that we needed to comply when the threshold was crossed.
- FCFD1 determined if we were going to put in the effort on a website it needed to provide beneficial information to the community.
- It also assists in public education, public information, training, and preventative resources that do count as points in our WSRB rating classification.
- Members of our firefighter crew built, update, and maintain the site.
- The cost of the website annually is about $200.