



LOPEZ FIRE & EMS

EMS LEVY INFORMATION SHEET

PROPOSITION #1

Proposed New EMS Levy

The Lopez Island Fire and EMS District is placing a proposition on the August 3, 2021 Primary Election ballot asking Lopez Island voters to approve a ballot measure to create a new funding source for EMS services on Lopez Island. This measure, if approved by the voters, would establish an EMS levy for ten years beginning with a tax levy rate not to exceed \$.50 per \$1,000.00 of the property's assessed value.

Currently, Lopez Fire and EMS operating and capital expenditures are funded by several types of revenues, including a regular property tax, various grants, patient transport reimbursements and rental income.

Why Is An EMS Levy Needed for Lopez Island?

EMS Expenditures Outpacing Revenues

Costs associated with EMS response and equipment replacement have been consistently increasing at a rate greater than existing tax revenue increases. Lopez Fire and EMS started providing EMS in 1976 with a donated 1950's Cadillac ambulance (donation value of \$100). The current cost of a new ambulance is approximately \$250,000 and does not cover the items needed to stock the ambulance. Lifepak 15 defibrillators, which cost \$30,000 each, are essential in providing the highest level of care available. In addition, the cost of emergency medications provided to patients have skyrocketed in the past decade with some price increases reaching over 400%.

The Washington State Constitution limits the annual rate of property tax increases to 1% per year. However, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Seattle Area consumer price index which measures the change in prices over time increased by an average 2.23% over the past 10 years.

Increase in EMS Service Calls

Lopez Fire & EMS call volumes have steadily increased over the years from 365 (of which 300 were EMS) in 2009 to 504 (of which 416 were EMS) in 2020. In addition, EMS calls requiring air or boat patient transports, which takes more time and are more involved, have increased from 8% of EMS Calls to 35% of EMS calls over the past few years.

Aging Equipment

Given the existing revenues available, the steadily increasing costs of providing EMS services has negatively impacted the District's ability to replace Fire gear and apparatus such as Firefighter bunker gear. With a life expectancy of only 10 years, it is vitally important to keep up with the replacement of this required safety gear. At a cost of over \$3,200 per firefighter, the District's current budget cannot sustain a revolving replacement schedule for its bunker gear. In addition, a number of Fire vehicles are

significantly past their typical useful lives which results in the need to spend precious operating dollars on repairs and maintenance.

Closing the Gap Between Funding and Expenses

Lopez fire and EMS continually applies for grants to supplement its existing, stable property tax revenues in order to cover its operating and capital expenses. In 2020, a \$192,000 grant was received from the federal government to purchase breathing units for firefighters. Also, a Department of Ecology grant was awarded that will replace an aging wildfire brush truck, a command vehicle, and multiple handheld radios for our volunteer officers. These grants are competitive, for specific uses, and not always available which means that they are not a reliable funding source for Lopez Fire & EMS.

How Will This EMS Levy Benefit Lopez Island?

The EMS levy will provide the District with a stable, dedicated funding source for up-to 10 years that will provide the ability to retain Paramedics and volunteer emergency medical technicians; provide proper training; obtain, operate, and maintain EMS vehicles and facilities; obtain consumable medical supplies and appliances to equip vehicles, personnel, and facilities; and maintain an appropriate level of emergency medical services to the Lopez Island community and visitors. An EMS levy will keep 24/7 Paramedic coverage on Lopez island viable.

A dedicated EMS funding source would allow the District to focus spending existing property tax revenues on needed Fire personnel, equipment, training, maintenance, vehicles and facilities.

Each Lopez Island property owner's home and property insurance is impacted by the fire protection rating assigned to their property's location. When determining the island's fire protection ratings, Washington Survey and Ratings Bureau assesses, at a minimum, the Fire District's operations, number of available firefighters at any given time, firefighter training, type and age of equipment and vehicles, fire hydrant availability, fire station proximity, and other infrastructure.

How much will the new EMS Levy Cost?

If you own a property in San Juan County, your property taxes are based on the assessed value of your property. The below table provides a comparison of annual property tax amounts for the proposed \$0.50 new EMS Levy for properties with different assessed values.

Home Assessed Value	Annual Amount You Would Pay	Monthly Amount You Would Pay
\$400,000	\$200	\$16.67
\$450,000	\$225	\$18.75
\$500,000	\$250	\$20.83
\$550,000	\$275	\$22.92
\$600,000	\$300	\$25.00
\$650,000	\$325	\$27.08
\$700,000	\$350	\$29.17

Based on the 2021 total assessed value of properties on Lopez Island, if the EMS Levy is approved by Lopez Island voters, the Lopez Fire & EMS District's dedicated EMS property tax revenues, to be assessed in 2022, would be \$653,380.