



# FIRE HOUSE NEWS

SERVING THE CITIZENS OF BONNEY LAKE, EDGEWOOD, MILTON, LAKE TAPPS, THE RIDGE COMMUNITIES, SOUTH PRAIRIE, SUMNER, TEHALEH AND SURROUNDING AREAS

FALL 2023



## FROM THE CHIEF JON PARKINSON

As a separate local government, East Pierce Fire & Rescue relies on voter-approved property taxes to fund our people, services, and facilities. We receive no funding from other governments, including the cities within our service area, Pierce County, or Washington State.

How does it all work? Here's a quick primer.

There are two basic parts to our budget:

## Funding Your Fire and Emergency Medical Services

1. **Day-to-day operating expenses** (firefighter salaries, equipment, fuel, utilities, administrative support)
2. **The cost of building and maintaining our fire stations**

Each part of the budget relies on different funding sources. Both pieces are necessary to support your fire protection and life safety services!

### Operating Expenses

Over 80 percent of our day-to-day operating expenses are funded by two voter-approved property tax levies:

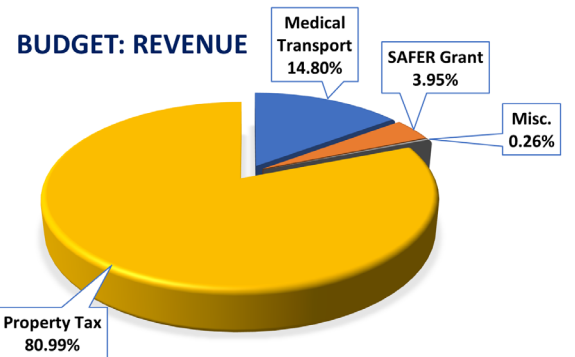
- **Fire Levy:** The maximum rate allowed by state law is \$1.50 per \$1,000 AV (assessed value). When property values go up, the fire levy must go down because state law mandates that agencies like East Pierce cannot capture more than a 1% increase in property tax growth year over year unless voters approve a higher collection rate. The current fire levy is \$1.09 per \$1,000 AV. Voters approved an increase in this levy in 2017.

the new Tehaleh fire station. When that grant funding is spent in 2025, we will need to find other funds to replace it.

- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy:** The maximum rate allowed by law is \$0.50 per \$1,000 AV and is currently at \$0.24 per \$1,000 AV. Money from this levy must be used for emergency medical services costs (medics, aid cars, etc.). This levy was last renewed by voters in 2021 for ten years.
- **The balance of our operating expenses** is paid for by fees for service (such as ambulance transport fees) and grants. For example, in 2022, the district secured a \$5.3 million federal Staffing for Adequate and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant that pays the salaries for 12 firefighters for three years—covering the cost of the additional firefighters we hired to staff

### Funding Our Fire Stations

A third voter-approved property tax levy - our **Bond Levy** - funds our fire stations, which levied a rate of 18 cents per \$1,000 AV in 2023. Money from this levy is dedicated solely to repaying the \$80 million in bonds issued since 2018 to replace our aging fire engines and fire stations and build a new fire station in Tehaleh, a fast-growing part of our service area. The Tehaleh station will open later in 2024. Stay tuned



See FUNDING page 2

## 27th Annual Open House - Sept 30th

Join us for the 27th Annual East Pierce Fire & Rescue Open House from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, September 30, at the East Pierce headquarters station at 18421 Veterans Memorial Drive East, in Bonney Lake.

The free health and safety fair will include more than two dozen interactive booths and displays, such as the fire department's special operations teams - Technical Rescue, Wildland, HazMat, and Water Rescue. Live demonstrations will occur throughout the event featuring the Jaws of Life and performances by Puget Sound Firefighters Pipes & Drums band and EPFR's Honor Guard.

Get an up-close look at EPFR's Ladder 113, the new Marine 122, and the popular Airlift Northwest medical helicopter scheduled to land around 1:30 p.m.

The highlight every year for most kids is the chance to play firefighter. Younger children suit up in pint-size firefighter gear to put out a fire and perform a rescue. Older children can participate in a more challenging course.

In addition to conveying important safety messages, East Pierce firefighters will be selling discounted life jackets (\$17), bike helmets (\$8), and multi-sport helmets (\$11). The wearer

must be present for a custom fitting. Children and adult sizes will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Bonney Lake Rite Aid will offer flu shots for \$32 each, with the option to bill insurance. Ident-A-Kid will provide FREE digital child I.D. cards.

Top it off with free ice cream, popcorn, and cotton candy from the East Pierce International Association of Firefighters Local 3520.

Other interactive demonstrations and booths include:

- Antique Engine Display
- Balloon Twisting
- WA Poison Center
- Children's Fire Safety Trailer
- PSE Electrical Safety
- South Sound 911
- Operation Lifesaver Train Safety
- Pierce County Emergency Mgmt.

Thanks to our sponsors, GLM Charters and Sound Transit, free round-trip shuttle service is available between the Bonney Lake Park-N-Ride and the fire station.

There's fun - and a little learning - for the whole family. We hope to see you there! ■



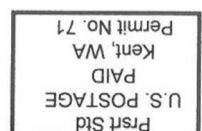
Younger children can perform a "rescue" and spray water from a fire hose in the Junior Firefighter Challenge. Older attendees can participate in a more physically challenging course in the Firefighter Challenge.



Get an up-close look at the Airlift Northwest medical helicopter scheduled to land at 1:30 p.m.



Park for FREE at the Sound Transit Park & Ride (184th Ave. E. just off SR 410 E. in Bonney Lake), then catch the courtesy shuttle to and from the fire station!



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"Where Compassion and Action Meet"

# HEALTH WATCH

## Flu Season is Coming! Are You Protected?

The flu season is expected to ramp up later this fall in Washington State. If you don't usually get an annual flu vaccination, this would be an excellent year to start.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that from October 2022 to April 2023, there have been up to 650,000 flu hospitalizations and 58,000 flu deaths in the U.S. Locally, East Pierce Fire & Rescue firefighters transport seriously ill flu patients to local hospitals annually.

The flu (influenza) is a serious - sometimes deadly - respiratory illness. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue

Unfortunately, these initial signs and symptoms are similar to those of COVID-19. In most cases, healthcare providers will need diagnostic lab testing to determine which disease—flu or COVID-19 – to treat, which can cause delays in care. Further complicating the issue, patients can become infected with the flu and COVID-19 simultaneously, leading to increased chances of hospitalization and death.

Occasionally, people may have vomiting and diarrhea when they have the flu, although this is more common in children. If you are experiencing nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, you may have a norovirus, often mistaken for the flu.

In most healthy people, the flu will run its course in five to seven days. How-

ever, in some cases, the flu can result in a life-threatening illness.

***Flu activity is unpredictable. Its timing, severity, and length fluctuate yearly, making flu vaccination key to preventing illness.***

Who is most at risk for severe illness from the flu? Children under five, adults 65 or older, pregnant women, and people with chronic diseases like heart disease, asthma, and emphysema. A flu infection can lead to pneumonia, sepsis, or death in these patients.

How can you protect yourself and those you love from the flu? The CDC recommends vaccinating everyone over six months of age for the best protection.

For those over age 65, talk to your provider or pharmacist about getting the "high-dose" vaccine designed to elicit better immune responses in older persons.

Each year, scientists try to match the vaccine against the most probable strains of the influenza virus expected to circulate during the flu season.

Are there health risks from getting a flu vaccine? In short—no. Unfortunately, falsified research data was spread years ago, linking vaccines to increased rates of autism in children. Reputable research organizations, hospitals, and pediatricians have demonstrated no link between autism and flu vaccines. Also, there is no live virus in flu vaccinations - flu shots cannot give you the flu.

"Vaccinated patients may sometimes still get the flu—but will often have less serious symptoms," says East

Pierce Assistant Chief Jeff Moore. "Remember, it takes two weeks after getting the vaccine for antibodies to develop in the body to provide maximum protection."

Experts recommend getting a flu vaccine in September and October, available at most pharmacies and medical clinics if you don't have a family physician. The vaccine is inexpensive and covered by most health insurance plans, usually with no co-pays. In Washington, all children under age 19 can get flu and other recommended vaccines at no cost.

Let's fight the flu! Keep up healthy habits of washing hands often, covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or your elbow, and staying home when sick. ■

### When to Call 911 for the Flu

Contact your physician or 911 if the following symptoms are present:

- Difficulty breathing or feeling short of breath.
- Severe headache or stiff neck.
- Sudden dizziness, confusion, or trouble staying awake.
- Children who are difficult to arouse, not interacting, or who are irritable when being held.
- Dehydration (parched mouth or no urination in 8+ hours).
- Babies younger than three months old with a high fever or fever lasting more than five days.

### FUNDING, cont. from page 1

for more details, including how the public can visit!

We operate out of six fire stations—Bonney Lake, Edgewood, Foothills, Prairie Ridge, Sumner, and Lake Tapps. The oldest of these stations was built 75 years ago when Harry S. Truman was President. To continue to serve our growing population and maintain current service levels, we needed funding to address renovation and major repair needs and provide space for more fire trucks and firefighters. Therefore, in November 2018, we asked, and our voters approved (thank you!), an \$80 million capital bond levy to support replacing four stations and building one new station. Bonds are like a mortgage you would have for your

home but for a local government. We borrow the money upfront and repay it over time using the Bond Levy revenues we collect each year. We issued a first series of bonds in 2018, \$40 million, and have been using the money to replace the **Edgewood and Bonney Lake fire stations** and our front-line fire engines and ladder truck.

Striving to utilize your tax dollars as efficiently as possible, we held off on issuing the remaining \$40 million in bonds until last year, when interest rates were lower. We are using the proceeds of this second set of bonds to pay for **Lake Tapps, Tehaleh, and Prairie Ridge fire stations**. Waiting to issue the second set of bonds saved an estimated \$14 million

in interest expense.

Together, the Fire Levy, EMS Levy, and Bond Levy are the three-legged stool to our financial health. And it all depends on you, the voters. Without your approval at the ballot, we would not have the funds to pay for our firefighters, fire vehicles, medic units, and the stations to house them. Thank you!



## SMOKE ALARMS

### A Sound You Can Live With

Studies reveal that three out of five home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires in structures without working smoke alarms. Homes with working smoke alarms reduced the risk of fire fatalities by an astounding 50%.



Thanks to a partnership with the American Red Cross, who provides smoke alarms to East Pierce Fire & Rescue, firefighters can install smoke alarms in homes within the district at no charge. The program is geared toward at-risk residents, including older adults, low-income, people with disabilities, and those who reside in mobile homes. The smoke alarms are equipped with long-life batteries which last approximately ten years.

"In the event of a fire, properly installed and maintained smoke alarms can save your life," says East Pierce Fire Marshal Matt Gilbert. "Smoke alarms provide early detection of a fire to allow your family time to escape safely."

Alarms should be installed inside and outside all sleeping areas and on every level of the home, including the basement. Since smoke and poisonous gases rise, installing smoke alarms on the ceiling is ideal and provides the earliest detection.

"A working smoke alarm continuously scans the air for smoke, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. It never sleeps," says Gilbert.

Hearing impaired alarms are also available, equipped with a lower-frequency tone and bed shaker component.

To schedule a smoke alarm installation, call 253-863-1800 (option 4). To learn more about smoke alarms or tips for home escape plans, visit [www.eastpiercefirer.org](http://www.eastpiercefirer.org). ■

### Know your alarm, know your battery!

Smoke alarms that are hard wired into your home typically have a battery backup, which is usually an alkaline battery. Stand alone smoke alarms can either use an alkaline or long-life (lithium) battery.

Alkaline batteries should be replaced once a year.

Long-life batteries should be installed when the smoke alarm goes in, and the entire unit (including the battery) can be replaced in about 10 years.



### November 5th: Set your clock back 1 hour ...AND check your smoke alarms!

Remember, many smoke alarms are now equipped with long-life lithium batteries intended to last the alarm's lifespan - about ten years. No matter what kind of battery you have, they need to be tested every month. Know your alarm! Know your battery!

# Making Old New(er) Again

East Pierce Fire and Rescue's Logistics Division has been hard at work refurbishing our 2006 Pierce Dash Fire Engine. Although this engine has logged 178,400 miles over the last 14 years serving our communities, it still has some giddy-up to give.

The refurbished engine, affectionately referred to as "Dash," will continue to serve as a reserve engine. With a new apparatus costing \$1 million, we couldn't pass up the cost-saving opportunity of refurbishing an existing engine versus purchasing a new one. Dash will proudly and efficiently serve our communities for the next 5-7 years.

The East Pierce Board of Fire Commissioners allocated \$200,000 for the refurbishment project, which consists of a new motor, transmission, pump, electrical, axles,

and rotors. Dash also received a cosmetic makeover of fresh paint and updated graphics.

Having a good and reliable reserve fleet is vital. When a front-line engine needs repairs or maintenance, Dash will step up (or roll in) to ensure the crews can continue safely delivering the timely and dependable service our communities deserve.

Shout out to EPFR's mechanic, Bryon Chinn, who worked diligently with our Logistics Division staff to see the refurbishment project through to completion.

The result has yielded a safe response engine for our crews, reliable and uninterrupted service to our communities, and cost savings for our tax-paying residents. Win-win-win! ■



EPFR's 2006 Pierce Fire Engine received an overhaul that will extend its service life an additional 5-7 years! A huge cost-savings for our residents and a safe and reliable reserve fire engine for our crews.



Left: Images of the Pierce engine before refurbishment. Above: Refurbishment complete.

## BOND UPDATE: Station 117 Under Construction

In November 2018, voters approved a bond to replace all six front-line fire engines and a ladder truck, replace four fire stations, and build a new fire station in Tehaleh. Many projects slowed due to COVID impacts but are once again moving along.

Below is a brief status update of these projects.

### Fire Station Construction Status

▶ Station 118 - Edgewood

Construction complete. Opens in Fall of 2023.

▶ Station 111 - Bonney Lake  
Under construction. Opens in spring 2024.

▶ Station 114 - Lake Tapps  
Construction underway.

▶ Station 117 - Tehaleh  
Bid awarded. Construction starts in September 2023.

▶ Station 112 - Prairie Ridge

Construction to begin in early 2024.

### Vehicle Status

▶ Ladder 113 and Engines 111, 112, 114, 116, 118, and 1119 are received and serving our communities.

Thank you for providing us with the equipment and facilities to serve you better. ■

### Fire Commissioner Meetings

Board of Fire Commissioner meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Meetings are in person with an option to attend virtually. Agendas and links to the meetings are posted at [www.eastpiercefirer.org](http://www.eastpiercefirer.org).

### 2023 Meeting Schedule

- September 19
- October 17
- November 21
- December 19



East Pierce personnel and community members gathered for a September 9th Groundbreaking Ceremony in Tehaleh for the new Station 117.



## Free Limited Series: Advanced Aging & Care Planning

East Pierce Fire & Rescue, in collaboration with Pierce County Human Services, is offering the three remaining sessions of a six part series to help family members navigate complex topics and overwhelming tasks many people face when caring for aging family members. We'll equip caregivers with helpful tools and strategies to make the care planning process more successful and less stressful.

All sessions are free and occur on the

third Thursday of the month through November in various locations throughout the fire district with the option to attend in-person or virtually.

View the session dates and descriptions below.

√ **SESSION 4: Solving the Mysteries of Medicare & Medicaid**  
Sept. 21, 2023 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Station 111/HQ in Bonney Lake.

√ **SESSION 5: Caring for the Caregiver**  
Oct. 19, 2023 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Station 118 in Edgewood.

√ **SESSION 6: Understanding Palliative Care & Hospice**  
Nov. 16, 2023 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at Station 111/HQ in Bonney Lake.

For more information or to register for the free sessions, visit [www.eastpiercefirer.org](http://www.eastpiercefirer.org). ■



### connect with us!



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info@eastpiercefirer.org



www.eastpiercefirer.org



253.863.1800

## WHO IS EAST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE?

East Pierce Fire & Rescue was founded on a strong commitment to customer service. The district's *Mission, Vision, and Values* guide the department and its employees' actions. Exceptional customer service and concern for employees and their families have become hallmarks of our culture.

EPFR was formed when the City of Bonney Lake Fire Department, Pierce County Fire District 22/Lake Tapps Fire, and Pierce County Fire District 24 merged in 2000 to provide a seamless response to emergencies.

Since then, the following mergers or annexations into EPFR have occurred:

- 2006: Pierce County Fire District 12 and South Prairie/Fire District 20
- 2008: Sumner/Fire District 1
- 2010: Edgewood/Fire District 8
- 2013: Milton Fire Department

Today, East Pierce serves approximately 100,500 residents living in and around Bonney Lake, Sumner, Lake Tapps, the Ridge Communities, South Prairie, Tehaleh, Edgewood, and Milton. The district covers approximately 153 square miles and protects residents from seven stations - six staffed and one facility on Lake Tapps for the marine rescue unit

All full-time firefighters are cross-trained as either emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or paramedics and can respond to medical emergencies and fires.

An independently-elected Board of Commissioners governs the agency.

### COMMISSIONERS

- Jon Napier, Chair
- Edward Egan, Vice Chair
- Mike Cathey
- Kevin Garling
- Randy Kroum
- Pat McElligott
- Cynthia Wernet

### STAFFED STATIONS

- Station 111 - Bonney Lake**  
Headquarters Station  
18421 Veterans Memorial Dr. E.  
(253) 863-1800
- Station 112 - Prairie Ridge**  
12006 214th Ave E.
- Station 113 - Sumner**  
800 Harrison St.
- Station 114 - Lake Tapps**  
1605 210th Ave. E.
- Station 116 - Foothills**  
10515 234th Ave. E.
- Station 124 - Milton**  
1000 Laurel St.



## Outdoor Burning Permits Available Online

Residential fire permits are available on-line beginning October 1st in designated areas of the fire district, providing no fire safety or air quality burn bans are in effect.

Visit [www.eastpiercefirerescue.org](http://www.eastpiercefirerescue.org) for details to obtain a burn permit and view regulations and burn area boundaries.

OR take a **greener route!** Rather than burning, consider chipping, composting, mulching, or hauling excess yard debris to a local recycle/transfer station.



**NOW RECRUITING!**  
Firefighter/Paramedic



We're recruiting for Firefighter/Paramedic! Apply on-line by September 30, 2023. For job posting details, visit [www.eastpiercefirerescue.org](http://www.eastpiercefirerescue.org)



**School Zones Are Back**  
Keep kids safe as they walk and bike to school.

## Tips to Keep Your Lil' Goblins Safe this Halloween!

### Dress safely!

- Select the right costume size to prevent slips and falls.
- Costumes should allow kiddos to see and hear perfectly.
- Light-colored costumes are easier to see in the dark.

### Be visible!

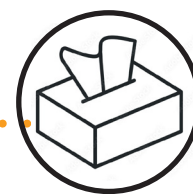
- Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers.
- Use glow sticks or flashlights to be seen by drivers.
- Always use a crosswalk to cross the street.

### Help kids see!

- Face paint is safer than masks.
- If a mask is worn, choose one that is easy to see through.



Get Vaccinated



Help Stop the Spread of Flu Viruses



Take Antiviral Drugs if Prescribed

## East Pierce Classes & Public Education

### - FREE PROGRAMS - To residents of East Pierce Fire & Rescue

**LIFE JACKET LOANER PROGRAM**  
Wearer must be present for fitting. Available at the Headquarters Station.

**CHILD SAFETY SEAT INSPECTIONS**  
District residents can schedule a free appointment. Certified child passenger safety technicians check to ensure your child is in the right seat, the seat is installed correctly, and your child is placed in the seat correctly.

**STATION TOURS** Call to arrange a tour of any of our fire stations.

**SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATIONS** Includes smoke alarm equipped with long-life battery.

**BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS** Stop by any staffed station (subject to staff availability).

**FIRE EXTINGUISHER TRAINING** Learn how to use a fire extinguisher with our interactive, digital training prop either at your location or ours for groups of 10 or more.

**HANDS-ONLY CPR CLASS** One-hour, non-certification class for adult, hands-only CPR. Groups of 10 or more can schedule this training at their location or at our Headquarters Station.

### - SERVICES OFFERED -

**CPR 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | BASIC FIRST AID 1:30-4:30 p.m.**  
Sept 16 or 20 | Oct 14 or 25 | Nov 14 or 25 | Dec 16

The cost for citizens residing within EPFR's jurisdiction (including Sumner, Bonney Lake, Lake Tapps, South Prairie, Tehaleh, Milton, and Edgewood) is \$25 for either a CPR or First Aid class, or \$50 for both. The cost for non-residents is \$40 for each class, or \$80 for both. All classes are held at our Headquarters Station.

To register, call 253-863-1800 during regular business hours or register on-line at [www.eastpiercefirerescue.org](http://www.eastpiercefirerescue.org).

**HELMET SALES AND FITTING\*** Wearer must be present for custom fitting. Bike helmets \$8 each. Multi-Sport helmets \$11 each. Headquarters Station.

**LIFE JACKET SALES AND FITTING\*** Wearer must be present for custom fitting. Life jackets \$17 each. Headquarters Station.

### SAFE SITTER CLASSES

2024 Class Dates: July 9, 10 & 11 | July 16, 17 & 18  
Cost: \$45. To view class details and register on-line, visit [www.eastpiercefirerescue.org](http://www.eastpiercefirerescue.org).

\* Sponsored by East Pierce Professional Firefighters Local 3520