



WEST THURSTON REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

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The November 8, 2022 M & O Levy – Not a new levy

Recently, West Thurston Fire ran the Maintenance & Operations Levy (M&O Levy) in the primary election ballot on August 2, 2022. The present M&O Levy imposed throughout West Thurston Fire is set to expire at the end of 2022. Although a majority of our citizens supported continuation of the M&O Levy, it did not crest the required 60% supermajority needed for passage. As a result, we will run the M&O Levy again in the November 8, 2022 general election. Passage of a continued M&O Levy will support the critical funding needed to continue operations at West Thurston Fire for the next four years.

We have listened to the concerns of the citizens and some reasons why the M&O Levy failed at the primary election. Some citizens voiced confusion about what they are voting for. I hope to clarify what the M&O Levy ask is about. It is a levy to maintain our continual effective response to meet the needs of the citizens. By seeking passage of this M&O levy, we are asking voters to maintain service levels, which will require increasing service *capabilities*. Of course, maintaining service levels requires voters to agree to taxation, and here are the facts about the present tax situation:

Maintain service levels requires increase in service capabilities

First, I want to acknowledge the fact that voters are now receiving your property tax statements. The property tax values are increasing across the board, and your fire department members are not immune to it either. While property valuation is specific to each property within our boundaries, we understand there is anywhere between a 10-20% increase in assessed values as well. With everything costing more now, we understand the burden families and individuals are under. In the context of where your fire department fits in the grand scheme, below is a graph that shows where your tax dollars go, taken directly from the Thurston County Office of the Assessor Property Tax Analysis Tool for a given property within the Rochester community. Follow this link to review the analysis tool:

<https://www.co.thurston.wa.us/assessor/>

Under the current M&O Levy, which ran from 2020-2022, taxpayers remitted \$0.97 per \$1,000 of assessed value, on average over the three-year period of the levy. This means that a taxpayer remitted \$97.00 per \$100,000 of assessed value on average over the three-year period. As we move forward, we are asking for a four-year levy that will average \$1.60 per \$1,000 of assessed property tax in Fire Districts 1 and 11 over the four-year levy period. This equates to \$160.00 dollars per \$100,000 in value. This amounts to a difference of \$63.00 a year on average per \$100,000 of assessed valuation. Special populations may be able to request exemptions and discounts through the Thurston County Assessor. This levy will help maintain service levels as our community grows. But to be clear, maintaining service levels does *not* mean continuing to provide service with our present operational resources. Maintaining service levels will require an increase in service *capabilities*. Please take these facts under consideration:

Increasing Call Volumes

West Thurston has seen an increase of 40% in the amount of 911 calls in the past 9 years. Last year was a record number of 911 calls for service at 3,431. By comparison, in 2013 we responded to 2443 emergencies. We have no reason to believe our call volume and service demand will decrease. The M&O Levy is designed to maintain effective service response during a time of increasing demand, which requires an increase in service capabilities. In 2021, we were managing two (2) or more incidents at the same time, 36% of the time, throughout our boundaries. We are struggling with current staffing to keep pace with the current call volume. Your Firefighter/EMT's are now tasked with mandatory overtime to fill staffing gaps, and this can impact service levels.

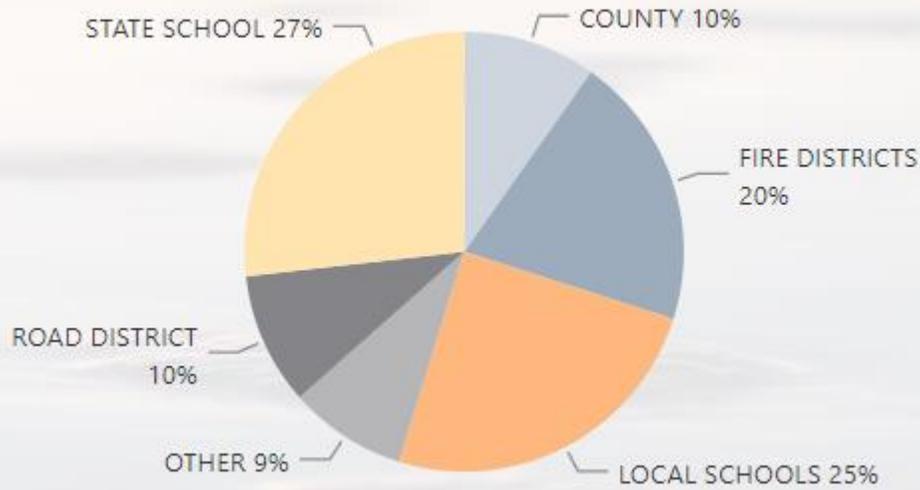
Staffing to keep pace with growth

With the above facts in mind, we need to continue imposing the M&O Levy. Part of the money received from this M&O Levy will go to hiring six additional Firefighter/EMT's, because again, to maintain service levels, we need to increase service *capabilities*. We believe the addition of six additional Firefighter/EMT's will meet the demands not only for today but years down the road as well.

Please go to our website at www.westthurstonfire.org, look for the header 2022 levy, and scroll down for more information and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the Levy. You can also call us at (360) 352-1614 to answer any of your questions.

Thank you for considering the above information. I believe it's important to have complete transparency with our community about how we operate. Thank you for trusting us with your emergency needs and be sure to vote at the general election on November 8, 2022.

Tax by District Group 2022



West Thurston Regional Fire Authority is located just south of Olympia, Washington. The 158 square mile response zone stretches approximately 12 miles east and west along Interstate Five from the city limits of Tumwater to the Lewis County Line. The RFA began from the partnership between Thurston County Fire District 1 and Thurston County Fire District 11. West Thurston RFA delivers comprehensive emergency services including Fire Protection, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services and Patient Transport. The Regional Fire Authority serves approximately 30,000 residents in the communities of Bordeaux, Delphi, Gate, Grand Mound, Littlerock, Maytown, Michigan Hill, Rochester and Scott Lake. The diverse service area includes industrial, commercial, residential, and forest land. The Regional Fire Authority delivers exceptional service with state-of-the-art fire, rescue and emergency medical apparatus and equipment through 76 exceptional professionals both career (31) and volunteer (45). Our proud professionals respond to an average of 3,400 emergency 911 service calls each year.