

# BENTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **EMS Week May 20-26 Celebrates Life**

*Levy Would Reduce Ambulance Response Times*

KENNEWICK, WASH.— May 20-26 is National EMS Week, an annual event that celebrates life-saving emergency care provided to communities across the country by fire and ambulance personnel. The national event has new meaning this year for Benton County Fire District #1 as it asks voters to consider a levy to fund an EMS program this fall.

“We have an obligation to share good and bad news with our community,” said Fire Chief Lonnie Click. “The good news is that our largely volunteer organization does a great job responding to fires. The bad news is that we could provide faster and more advanced service when it comes to emergency medical calls.”

Chief Click is referring to the fact the Benton #1 does not own any ambulances to provide care and transport patients to hospitals. Instead, the fire district has to wait for neighboring agencies to respond, which takes longer. This can be problematic for residents considering 55 percent of Benton #1’s call volumes are EMS-related and 90 percent of those calls require transporting a patient.

That’s why the Board of Fire Commissioners for Benton County Fire District #1 is asking voters to consider an EMS levy during the August Primary Election. Funding would be used to purchase, outfit and staff two ambulances to respond to EMS calls. A local EMS program would improve patient care and reduce ambulance response times by as much as seven minutes. The 50-cent per \$1,000 of assessed property value EMS levy would cost the average homeowner approximately \$8.33 per month.

Finley-native Scott LoParco has worked for the fire district for 28 years and currently serves as its training captain. He readily acknowledges that tax proposals are not popular with his neighbors but says that it’s right for the Board of Fire Commissioners to let people vote on the issue.

“People in our community are aging and EMS calls are increasing,” said Captain LoParco. “But, we answer to our taxpayers. They will let us know if they want faster response times for medical emergencies.”

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*Benton County Fire District #1 is a combination fire department with approximately 90 volunteer, part-time and full-time firefighters serving 17,800 people over 320 square miles. It responds to an average of 1,300 calls per year for structural and wildland fire suppression, emergency medical service, technical rescue, and hazardous materials response. The fire district operates under a balanced budget, and has passed all financial and accountability audits with the state.*