

BENTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1

7511 W. Arrowhead Ave – Suite G | Kennewick, WA 99336

Phone: 509.737.0911 | Fax: 509.737.0927 | www.bentonone.org



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Contact: Chief Lonnie Click (509) 737-0911 ext. 111 lonnie@bentonone.org

EMS improves patient care and ambulance response times

What's the difference between BLS and ALS?

KENNEWICK, WASH.— Benton County Fire District #1 is asking voters to consider a levy for emergency medical service (EMS) this fall to improve patient care and ambulance response times. The fire district has been sharing how it is unable to provide advanced life support and transport patients to area hospitals, which means residents can wait more than 16 minutes for help to arrive from mutual aid.

“We want to do better,” said Fire Chief Lonnie Click. “Our fire district has grown to the point where we need to provide this level of service.”

More than half of all emergency calls received by Benton #1 are for medical emergencies and 90 percent of those calls require transporting patients to area hospitals. However, the fire district does not own any ambulances to do so. Instead, patients wait for neighboring agencies to respond, which takes longer

The fire district is proposing a 50-cent per \$1,000 of assessed property value EMS levy which would fund advanced life support care. This would enable the fire district to purchase and staff two ambulances with paramedics to provide the highest level of EMS care available today. Currently, the fire district provides basic life support with emergency medical technicians.

What's the difference between basic and advanced life support? Here's how it shakes out:

Basic Life Support	Advanced Life Support
Administered by Emergency Medical Technicians with 110 hours of training	Administered by Paramedics with 1,500 hours of training
External procedures only, such as oxygen, glucose, asthma inhalers, splints, and epi pens	Establish IVs and administer medications
	Able to diagnose and treat irregular heart rhythms (EKGs) for heart attacks
	Can create tracheal intubations and new airways in the neck

“You want the highest level of care possible if your family member is in an accident or has a medical emergency,” said Chief Click. “And, right now, Benton #1 can't provide that. We are transparent and accountable to our community and people need to know this.”

The EMS Levy will be on the August 7 Primary Election ballot and cost the average homeowner \$8.33 per month. If approved by voters, the levy would improve patient care and reduce ambulance response times. More information can be found at www.bentonone.org.

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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.