



Benton One NEWS

Benton County Fire District #1 NEWSLETTER

Spring 2019

Message from the Chief

By Fire Chief Lonnie Click



Spring is in the air here at Benton County Fire District #1! First, I'd like to start this newsletter by saying "thank you." We couldn't save lives and property without your support, and we consider it an honor to serve.

Last year, we responded to 1,519 calls for structural and wildland fire suppression, emergency medical service, technical rescue, and hazardous materials response—an increase of almost 39% in the last ten years. Emergency Medical Service (EMS) accounts for almost 60% of all our calls – and that number is projected to continue growing as our population increases. By 2037, unincorporated Benton County where we serve is projected to grow by 52%.

Benton #1 operates under a balanced budget and aggressively maintains our apparatus, facilities and equipment to extend their usable lives. We always look for ways to make local tax dollars go further by applying for grants and sharing costs with neighboring agencies. Our fire commissioners are elected by the community, and all board meetings are open to the public (the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 9:00 a.m.).

Daily operations are funded through a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, which our voters renew every six years. Capital projects – such as stations and apparatus replacement – are funded through voter-approved bonds. In the last two years, we have paid off two such bonds equaling 11 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Later this year, our fire levy will be up for renewal at the previously approved rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The levy would last for six years and cannot exceed the \$1.50/\$1,000. The fire district will also be asking citizens for a replacement bond to continue funding facility renovations and apparatus replacement. This bond would last for 20 years and be an estimated 10-cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value—one cent less than the previous bonds it would replace.

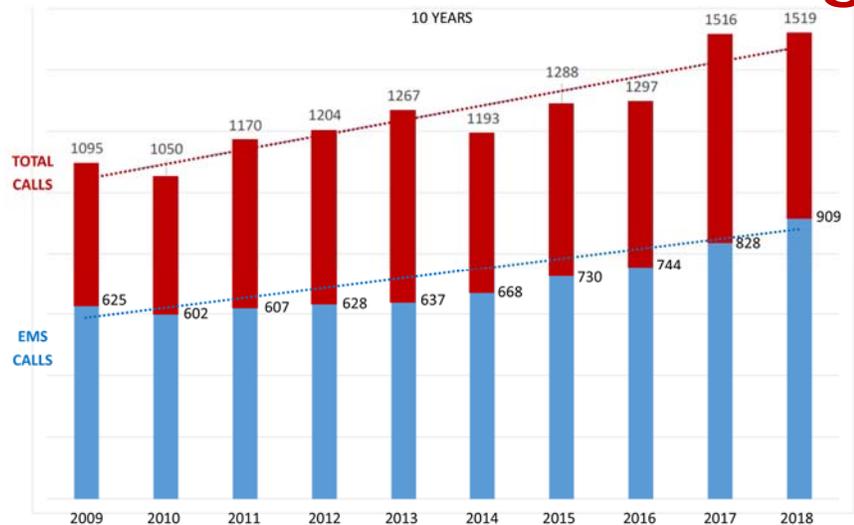
Lastly, on March 6 we lost a longtime friend of the fire district, Commissioner Jerry Sleater. He became a volunteer firefighter for Benton #1 in 1964, then joined the Board in 1990, serving until his passing. I want to recognize his decades of dedication to our fire district. Jerry will be greatly missed.

Another Clean Audit

In 2018, Benton County Fire District #1 again passed its independent financial and accountability audits conducted by the Washington State Auditor's office. The audits, which cover financial and operational practices for 2015-2017, came back with no findings. This continues a long history of clean audits for the fire district.

To read the full audit reports, visit the Office of the Washington State Auditor website at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch> and search "Benton County Fire District 1."

Call Volumes Increasing





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Meet A Couple of Our Volunteers!

Benton County Fire District #1 relies on volunteer, part-time and full-time firefighters/EMTs to provide emergency response. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, age groups and interests, but once they join they become part of a large, supportive “fire family.” We want to introduce you to a couple of them.



First, meet one of our newest volunteers, Ryley Senner! She started with Benton #1 in August 2018 and just completed the recruit academy. Her husband, Eric, is also a volunteer firefighter and inspired her to get involved. She appreciates the opportunity to help others and give back to her community, as well as the comradery with her firefighting colleagues. On top of responding to calls when available, Ryley spends about 12 hours a month keeping up her training and participating in drills. Recently, she took on the role of station safety representative, which involves additional meetings and responsibilities. When not on duty, Ryley and her husband love to travel and take every chance to explore the world.

Brian Nance, one of our longest-serving volunteers began in 1991. He also worked for Franklin County Fire District #3 when he moved there in 1994. When he moved back, he rejoined Benton #1 in 2007. Brian also appreciates the fire family and the sense of community, and enjoys teaching and mentoring younger firefighters. Originally, it was a friend who had joined Benton #1 that piqued Brian’s interest since it sounded like fun! Since then, he has spent countless hours over the years responding to emergency calls and training, and has attended additional wildland firefighting classes. Brian is married with two grown children and a granddaughter. He and his wife run an environmental cleanup consulting business. When he has spare time he likes to travel, hike, camp and fish.



There are a variety of ways you can volunteer with Benton #1. Please contact Captain Ryan Nicholls at ryan@bentonone.org or 509-734-9200 for more information. We are grateful for all that our volunteers give to protect their neighbors and our communities. Thank you!