



## Message from the Chief

By Fire Chief Lonnie Click



Summer is usually our busiest time of year at Benton County Fire District #1—and this year is proving to be no exception. With an early start to the wildland fire season, we’re also anticipating that it will go longer this year. As of this writing, we’ve responded

to 690 calls this year, two percent more than at the same time last year. Being hopping busy is business as usual around here, and we’re prepared and ready to respond to emergencies.

Another business as usual item this summer is renewing our levy and bond that you’ll see on your August ballot. The levy rate will remain the same and the bond rate will decrease.

Benton #1’s daily operations are funded through a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value (AV), which voters renew every six years. Voters are being asked to renew the levy for another six years. The rate cannot exceed \$1.50/\$1,000.

Capital projects – such as stations and apparatus replacements – are funded through voter-approved

bonds. In the last two years, the fire district paid off two such bonds averaging 11 cents per \$1,000 of AV. The fire district also is asking citizens for a replacement bond to continue funding facility renovations and apparatus replacements. This bond would last for 20 years and be an estimated 10-cents per \$1,000 of AV – one cent less than the bonds it is replacing.

In this newsletter we’ve included some information about the County’s Public Safety Sales Tax fund. I’m often asked why we don’t receive funds from the fund. The simple answer is that fire districts, like Benton #1, are not eligible. We’ve included more about it, to clear up some common misconceptions.

Lastly, on the back page, please see our article about wildland fire preparedness. We’re well into the season, but it’s never too late to get organized—*just in case!*

Benton #1’s website ([www.bentonone.org](http://www.bentonone.org)) is a good resource of information about these, and other, issues. Please like our Facebook page (@bcfire1) or follow us on Twitter (@BentonFire1PIO) to receive our latest updates. Also, I’m always available to answer questions at 509-737-0911 ext. 5 or [lonnie@bentonone.org](mailto:lonnie@bentonone.org).

## Clarification: County’s Public Safety Sales Tax Fund

**What is the Public Safety Sale Tax Fund?** In 2014, voters in Benton County approved a 0.03% increase on sales tax to fund public safety.

**Who gets the sales tax that is collected?** Benton County’s government receives 60% of the funds,

and four cities divide the remaining 40%: West Richland, Kennewick, Richland, and Prosser.

**Why aren’t Fire Districts eligible for funds/grants from the fund?** When it was approved, it was specifically designated to: hire additional police

officers, corrections officers, and prosecutors; fund the Metro Drug Task Force and gang and crime prevention efforts; and fund court and clerk programs including a seventh Superior Court Judge and drug and mental health courts.

**Is Fire District #1 part of Benton County?** No. The fire district is a separate entity, and is a junior taxing district. It is funded by residents that live in the fire district paying a fire levy and bonds. It is not a part of Benton County government.





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# Wildland Fire: Plan and Prepare Now!

With the recent wildland fires around the region, it may be on your mind...what would I do in case of one near me? It never hurts to be prepared in advance so that if you ever need to evacuate, you and your family are ready and know what you would do.

First, it's important to know in advance what you want to take with you. For those living in a high risk area, now is the time to have your bag packed and near the door, if you don't already. A few things that should be on your pack list (for each member of the family):

- Changes of clothes, socks, and shoes
- Food
- Water
- Prescriptions
- Phone chargers
- Spare pair glasses/contacts
- Phone numbers you may need (in case phone battery dies)
- List of important items/memorabilia to grab (location too) *if there's time!*

Here are also a few other good sources of information:

- Wildland fire preparedness: [www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/wildfire/wildfire-preparedness](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/wildfire/wildfire-preparedness)
- "Ready, Set, Go: Wildland Fire Action Plan" for homeowners: [www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Readysetgo\(1\).pdf](http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Readysetgo(1).pdf)

This is also a good time to remind residents that Benton County has an emergency notification service, called CodeRED. It allows emergency officials to notify residents and businesses—by telephone, cell phone, text message, email and social media—of time-sensitive general and emergency situations. To sign up go to <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BF5CA95E04FE>.

