

BENTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #1

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Benton County Fire District #1 to start slip, trip and fall prevention program

KENNEWICK, WASH.— The Center for Disease Control reports that, “Every second of every day an adult aged 65 or older falls in the United States. Every 12 seconds, one of these older Americans is admitted to the emergency department for a fall; and every day, 74 of those will die from a fall.”

Part of providing effective emergency services is preventing fire and injuries before they happen. That’s why Benton County Fire District #1 is working with neighboring agencies to prevent slips, trips and falls.

People at risk of injury from falling can be well-known to emergency personnel, who respond multiple times to the same address. The fire district is working to identify those individuals at risk for this type of injury from past 911 calls. The plan is for emergency personnel to contact them to discuss prevention strategies for the future. The fire district also is asking community members to contact Lieutenant Tracy Baker at (509) 222-8356 or pio111@bentonone.org if they or someone they know is at risk of injury from slips, trips and falls.

Injuries from falls – particularly for seniors – can be life-threatening. Benton #1 is considering a levy for Emergency Medical Service to be able to transport patients faster to area hospitals. Currently, the fire district must wait for an ambulance from a neighboring agency, which may take longer to reach people in an emergency.

It also impacts the resources area agencies have to serve their communities. Benton #1 Fire Chief Lonnie Click says that the district wants to provide better service for community members, and be a good partner to neighboring agencies.

In 2017, Benton #1 responded to 1,417 emergency calls – 53.56 percent of which were EMS-related. Currently, 90 percent of all EMS calls require transporting a patient to the hospital. A local EMS program would reduce ambulance response times and improve patient care.

The EMS program would be funded by a levy of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value (or \$100 per year/ \$8.33 per month for a \$200,000 home). If approved by voters, funding would be used to purchase, outfit and staff two ambulances to respond to medical calls. This would reduce response times by as much as seven minutes when a patient needs immediate care.

The fire district will hold a series of meetings for the public to learn more and ask questions sometime in March and April. In the meantime, community members are encouraged to contact Chief Lonnie Click with questions at (509) 737-0911 or lonnie@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.