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Fire District 8 Board evaluating service and funding options
Rising costs and aging apparatus highlight long-term funding needs

SEDRO-WOOLLEY, Wash. — The Skagit County Fire District 8 Board of Commissioners is reviewing service and funding options as the district faces rising response costs and aging emergency apparatus. District leaders say two issues are driving the discussion.

First, the cost of contracting with the City of Sedro-Woolley for emergency response has increased significantly. Skagit 8 relies on this contract to respond to calls that are not adequately covered by current station locations. The cost of the district's contract with the City of Sedro-Woolley increased 57% in one year, rising from \$361,865 in 2024 to \$567,912 in 2025.

Second, three fire engines and two water tenders have reached the end of their usable lives and must be replaced to maintain reliable service.

The district funds daily operations through a property-tax fire levy. In 2019, voters approved increasing the levy to \$1.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value, but the rate has since fallen to about \$0.89 as property values increased.

The Board of Fire Commissioners is reviewing options to address these challenges, including a possible levy lid lift that would return the levy to \$1.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value, the same rate voters approved in 2019.

If placed before voters and approved, funding would support hiring two additional full-time firefighters to help the district respond to more calls locally and reduce reliance on outside response. Funding would also support the replacement of the aging apparatus.

“Our firefighters are committed to protecting this community,” said Fire Chief Josh Carpenter. “But rising costs and aging equipment mean we need to start planning now to make sure we can continue providing reliable emergency services in the years ahead.”

Community members are encouraged to attend and learn more as the Board continues evaluating options for maintaining emergency services.

The Skagit County Fire District 8 Board of Commissioners meets the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at Hickson Station, 20464 Prairie Road.

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Skagit County Fire District 8 provides fire suppression and emergency medical service (EMS) to approximately 10,500 people. Its service area includes Highways 9 and 20, the towns of Lyman and Hamilton, and unincorporated areas around Sedro-Woolley. The district is a combination department of full-time and volunteer firefighters and responds to about 1,100 calls each year – a 58% increase since 2019.