



King County Fire Protection District #44

Mountain View Fire & Rescue / Black Diamond Fire Dept.

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For Immediate Release

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Mountain View Fire Dept. On Nov Ballot & Asks Citizens To Participate In Committees

Fire District 44 Board of Fire Commissioners have adopted a resolution that places a District Ballot Issue on the November 5, 2013 general election. District 44 is asking the public to consider a four year levy that will allow the District to preserve firefighter/emt staffing, response times and current service levels.

Declining assessed property values have caused the District's revenue to drop in excess of \$1,850,151.00 from 2008 to 2013. The District has reduced its operating budget including not filling a vacant firefighter position and reduction of five administrative, support and maintenance personnel during the last two years. Each of the last two years, the District has supplemented the budget with emergency reserve funds. In 2013, District 44 saw a further reduction of 9.21%, a loss of \$ 283,685. Administrative wages have been frozen for over five years and career firefighters declined wage increases in 2013.

The District Board of Fire Commissioners has approved the utilization of fire station "Brown Outs" to reduce overtime costs for the remainder of 2013. Browning out of fire stations is the temporary closing of fire stations that are normally staffed and will increase response times to emergencies in the District.

Should this Levy be approved, the District will have the ability to maintain the current level of service and response times. Should the levy not be approved, further budget cuts to include layoff of firefighters, closing of fire stations and other budgetary reductions that will reduce the level of emergency medical and fire response could be implemented beginning in 2014. A further reduction of operating revenue in 2015 of \$ 170,000 will occur when a funding agreement with Valley Regional Hospital expires. Further reductions will take place again in 2015, should this Levy not be approved.

Chief Smith said "despite dwindling revenues, over the last five years, District 44 has been able to maintain the minimum firefighter staffing on duty during the day". Fire District 44 is a "combination department" utilizing both career and volunteer firefighter/EMTs. Career firefighters enable the District to provide a daytime response, when most of the volunteers are at work or attending college. The District assigns six career firefighters to staff three stations during the day and volunteers in the evenings to protecting 70 square miles out of eight fire stations. At one station, a career firefighter and captain are on duty 24 hours seven days a week, to provide supervision and oversee the emergency operations in the evenings. The District responds to an average of over 1,700 incidents each year, about 70% of these are emergency medical related.¹

"The foremost concern is the District's ability to maintain the day time staffing while volunteers are at their regular jobs", said Chief Smith.

¹ Incidents from 2008-2012

The Commissioners felt prior to reductions that will greatly diminish our ability to maintain the current level of service, Chairman of the Board, Jim Farrell said, “It is important to ask the voters what level of service they wish to maintain, prior to making significant further cuts.”

The November levy will allow the District to preserve current staffing levels. Chief Smith said, “This levy should be the helping hand we need to get us through until we see revenues return to what they were prior to the recession. It took us a couple of years to see the true impact of property value decline; it will undoubtedly take a couple of years for improvements in values to rectify our funding situation”.

If the levy is approved, the additional maximum tax is estimated not to exceed approximately \$31.00 each year or an additional \$2.58 per month for fire protection and emergency medical services, per \$100,000.00 assessed valuation.

The District will provide further information to the public over the course of the next few weeks and will be hosting open public meetings in September and October related to this ballot issue. The District's web page www.kcfd44.org will be updated on a regular basis related to this issue.

Fire District 44 is accepting applications for committees to prepare statements in favor of and in opposition to a District ballot measure. There is a limit of three members per committee.

The Ballot issue will be related to an Excess Levy to be placed on the November 5, 2013 Election. Dead Line for application is August 7, 2013.

Those interested should contact Chief Smith at 253 735 0284 or INFO@KCFD44.org

Questions can be directed to Chief Smith at 253 735 0284, or info@kcfd44.org

About Mountain View Fire & Rescue / Black Diamond Fire Department

King County Fire Protection District #44 (KCFD #44) also known as Mountain View Fire & Rescue / Black Diamond Fire Department serves approximately seventy square miles in South King County. We serve The City of Black Diamond and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe but the majority of our area is unincorporated King County. KCFD #44 has approximately 150 volunteer firefighters, EMTs, and rescue personnel and 17 career firefighters.

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