



## **Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services**

**Serving all of Whatcom County including Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine, Everson, Nooksack and Sumas**

On May 31, 2016 the Whatcom County Council passed an ordinance placing a 6-year, 29.5-cent Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy before the voters in November, 2016. The 29.5-cent levy rate supports the programmatic, administrative, and fiscal proposals contained in the EMS Plan developed by the Whatcom County EMS Funding Work Group, and is the rate that the EMS Executive Oversight Board endorsed in April 2016. The levy is estimated to support the EMS system of approximately \$46 million in services over the next six years. This will cost the average homeowner, who owns a \$250,000 home, \$74 a year.

The Whatcom County EMS system serves Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas and all of unincorporated Whatcom County.

### **What is EMS?**

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a 911 call-activated 24-hour, 7-days-a-week emergency response system for medical care.

The focus of EMS is emergency medical care of the patient(s).

- Advanced Life Supports (ALS) provides care, intervention and transport for life-threatening emergencies.
- Basic Life Support (BLS) provides immediate medical emergency response, treatment, and transport.

EMS is a complex, coordinated response and emergency medical care system that requires multiple people and agencies, with each one having an essential role as part of a coordinated, tiered, and seamless system of emergency medical care.

### **History of EMS**

- The EMS program was started in 1974, with the forming of the Whatcom Medic One transport program, through the Bellingham Fire Department.
- In the Early 2000's Whatcom County transitioned to a two-tiered transport EMS system, with Basic Life Support (BLS) transports provided by the fire agencies Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) provided by Bellingham fire Department and Fire District #7 Paramedics.
- There are ten Fire Districts, one Fire Authority and two City fire departments that provide BLS ambulance service in their jurisdictions.
- There are two providers, Bellingham Fire Department and Fire District #7, that provide ALS service throughout Whatcom County.

## What is the EMS Levy?

- The ALS system of Whatcom County has been primarily funded through a combination of user fees, sales tax revenues and funded by Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham.
- The EMS levy is a 6 year property tax levy to help fully fund the unified system for 2017-2022, along with the existing sales tax and transport fees.
- The EMS levy will be on the November 2016 ballot.
- Each fire agency providing first response and BLS transport is funded separately by the residents in that area. The elected officials of those jurisdictions determine the funding and service levels they provide.
- The levy, with existing sales tax and transport fees combined, would fund 100% of advanced life services and provide partial funding to basic life services.

## What is the levy rate? How much will it cost me?

- The proposed levy rate is 29.5-cents per \$1,000 assessed value.
- This will cost the average homeowner, who owns a \$250,000 home, \$74 a year.
- User fees and sales tax revenues will continue to help fund the system.
- A 29.5-cent rate will maintain existing services and allow for future demands on the system.

## What will the levy fund?

### 1. **Maintain the current level of service**

Continues the programs currently in place through 2017-2022 levy span:

- Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support services for local fire and emergency response departments through dispatch costs
- Programs that support functions and services across the entire EMS system.
- Maintain sustainable reserves.

### 2. **Allows the system to meet future demand**

Plans for growth in service needs

- Provides the funding for a 5<sup>th</sup> advanced life systems medic unit to be to continue to meet level of service due to increase of calls and population
- Provide BLS support through training programs, equipment exchange program, and a common Electronic Patient Care Reporting Software
- Modified programs so that the system can meet emerging community needs.

### 3. **Contains the long-term costs of system**

Creates an administrative support system to effectively and efficiently manage the system

- Establishes Data and Report Standards
- Integrates an EMS Administrator to oversee and coordinate the unified system
- Develops and funds an EMS Dispatch Strategic Plan