Northern Lakes Fire Protection District

Proudly serving the areas of and surrounding Hayden and Rathdrum

Hayden Area (208) 772-5711 • Fax: (208) 772-3044
Rathdrum Area (208) 687-1815 • (208) 687-2088
www.northernlakesfire.com

******FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE******

Northern Lakes Fire District Announces Levy Initiative to Sustain and Expand Critical Emergency Services

Hayden, Idaho – July 31st, 2024 – The Northern Lakes Fire District is seeking community support for a crucial levy initiative designed to maintain and enhance the district's emergency response capabilities. This temporary levy increase will allow the district to continue its progress in reducing response times, improving firefighter safety, and ensuring the community receives the highest level of fire and emergency medical services.

Levy Details:

- **Proposed Levy Increase: $3.5 million added to the base budget**
- **Current Levy Rate: $62 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value**
- **Proposed Levy Rate: $94 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value based on current conditions.**
- **Previous Levy Rate Ask (2021): $125 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value**
- **Duration: Temporary two-year override (with potential for voter conversion to a permanent levy)**

Tax Impact:

If approved, the proposed levy will result in a tax of $94 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value per year, based on current conditions. The proposed levy replaces an existing levy that will expire on September 30th, 2025, and that currently costs $62 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value. If the proposed levy is approved, the tax per $100,000 of taxable assessed value is expected to increase by $32, resulting in the new rate of $94 per $100,000 of taxable assessed value. This levy would expire on September 30th, 2027.

Cost to Homeowners:

For a home valued at $543,000 (Kootenai County median), after applying the $125,000 homeowner exemption based on current conditions:

- **Current Levy Cost: $21.62 per month ($259.16 per year)**

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- **Proposed Levy Cost: $32.77 per month ($393.32 per year)**
- **Difference: An increase of $11.15 per month ($134.16 per year)**

Purpose of the Levy:

The primary goal of this levy is to retain the 12 firefighters and paramedics funded by the SAFER grant, which has significantly bolstered the district's ability to respond to emergencies. These positions are vital to maintaining our current staffing levels, including the third station currently located at the airport, and ensuring the new fire station in Garwood remains operational once it opens.

Specifically, the levy will:

1. **Retain 12 SAFER-funded Firefighters and Paramedics**
2. **Maintain a Third Engine Company: Essential for providing advanced life support and fire response across the district.**
3. **Staff the New Garwood Fire Station: Currently under construction, this station will enhance response times and coverage once it becomes operational.**
4. **Add 8 Additional Firefighters: To meet the increasing demand from a growing population.**
5. **Hire Additional Administrative Personnel: To support the expanded workforce and operations.**

Notable Accomplishments Since the Addition of SAFER Grant Positions:

- **Response Time Reduction: Over two minutes shaved off response times to priority incidents, improving outcomes in critical situations.**
- **Decreased Reliance on Mutual Aid: With enhanced staffing, the district now handles more incidents independently, reducing the burden on neighboring departments.**
- **Increased CPR Saves: More personnel on scene means faster, more effective emergency medical care.**
- **Reduced Fire Losses: Complying with NFPA standards has lowered fire damage totals by enabling a more robust and timely response.**
- **Improved Vehicle Maintenance: More engines in operation have reduced wear and tear on individual vehicles, enhancing overall readiness and longevity.**

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Challenges Without the Levy:

If the levy does not pass, the district faces severe setbacks, including:

- **Layoffs of 12 Firefighters: This will eliminate an entire engine company, reducing coverage in key areas like Hayden and Rathdrum.**
- **Closure of the New Garwood Fire Station: The $4 million station, currently funded by impact fees, will not be staffed, potentially requiring a refund of these fees to developers.**
- **Increased Homeowner Insurance Costs: Reduced training hours could negatively impact the district's ISRB rating, leading to higher insurance premiums for residents.**
- **Cuts to Public Programs: Vital community programs may face budget reductions, impacting public safety and education.**

Background on Growth and Demand:

- **Call Volume: The district's call volume has nearly doubled from 3,243 in 2005 to 6,036 in 2023, reflecting the region's rapid growth.**
- **Population Increase: The population served by the district has grown by 50% from 24,000 in 2005 to 36,000 in 2023, further stretching resources.**
- **Staffing Evolution: The district has increased its suppression workforce from 29 firefighters in 2005 to 51 in 2023, all while maintaining fiscal responsibility without tax increases.**

Get Involved:

The Northern Lakes Fire District invites community members to learn more and get involved by attending regular commission meetings, emailing Fire Chief Pat Riley at admin@northernlakesfire.com, visiting the district's website, and participating in upcoming town hall meetings (details to be announced).

This levy is not just about maintaining current operations—it's about ensuring the Northern Lakes Fire District can continue to protect the community with the highest standards of service. Your support is vital to keeping our community safe.

Contact: Pat Riley
Fire Chief, FSCEO

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