



## Levy 27-135 Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Purpose of the levy?

The SW Polk Board of Directors has identified the need to increase our response capabilities throughout the SW Polk Fire District. The Board decided to ask voters for a local option levy to provide additional firefighter/paramedics and emergency medical technicians. The area in most need of response time improvement is the Bridgeport area south of Dallas and east of Falls City. If passed, the district's volunteer firefighter and EMTs would be supported by career responders on duty 24/7.

### What services does SW Polk Provide?

SW Polk has historically provided fire, wildland, hazmat, basic rescue services, and quick response to medical incidents. We have recently been approved by the County and State of Oregon to provide ambulance transport service. This allows SW Polk to transport patients at the request of the agency which holds the Ambulance Service Area, or perform facility transfers when requested by local hospitals.

### What is the impact on response time?

Our new fire stations are dispersed throughout our response areas; Bridgeport, Rickreall, and Salt Creek. In 2020, our response time in Bridgeport for fire and emergency medical services was 25 minutes 90% of the time. With this new staffing we anticipate that response time to be decreased significantly. For more information on response time in 2020, please see our [annual report](#) online at [swpolkfd.org](http://swpolkfd.org).

### How have fire districts changed in the last 10 years?

Most agencies have recently recognized an approximate 20% increase in call volume. This is partially due to the recent pandemic and wildland fires. This has caused all agencies to rely more on each other for support. For example, recently both Dallas Fire & EMS and Falls City Fire Department have aided SW Polk on fire and medical incidents. SW Polk, likewise, has responded to Dallas and Falls City incidents.

### What are the external factors affecting fire districts?

The Board of Director's have recognized, that in addition to the increase in fire and medical incidents, recent pandemic and increased wildland fires are external factors affecting fire districts today. Many agencies are finding themselves strained to meet call volume increases. Additional responders are needed to support our volunteer base and current career staff.

### How does increasing career staff impact volunteers?

Hiring career staff increases the percentage of time the citizens receive a guaranteed response. During those times, it relieves the volunteers from the need to respond to minor incidents that now can be handled by on-duty crews. The district relies on volunteer and career staff for major and large-scale incidents and concurrent incidents.

### What have been recent changes in our insurance office rating (ISO)?

SW Polk Fire District recently completed an Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) process. This process

lowers or improves the fire district ISO rating. The lower the ISO rating equates to lower fire insurance premiums for SW Polk citizens. Adding new resources, like the three new fire stations, helps to lower fire insurance premiums for citizens.

### **How long will the levy last?**

Most Oregon local option levy measures have a 5-year financial commitment. The proposed levy is a 5-year local option levy.

### **When is election day?**

Election day occurs on the primary election date of May 17, 2022.

### **What if I'm not registered to vote?**

The last day to register to vote is April 26, 2022. You can register online on the Oregon Secretary of State [website](#).

### **How much will the levy cost?**

The proposed levy will not exceed \$0.81 cents per \$1,000 assessed value. For a property assessed at \$200,000 the levy cost would be approximately **\$162/year**, or about **\$13.50/month**. That's like buying two cups of specialty coffee or one movie ticket per month.

### **What is the current fire district permanent tax rate?**

SW Polk Fire District citizens pay a permanent tax rate of \$0.8612 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.

### **What is assessed value?**

The assessed value of a property is what is used to calculate your Oregon property taxes. Every year, each county assessor determines your property's **real market value** (RMV) and **maximum assessed value** (MAV). You are taxed at the lesser of the two, which is your **assessed value** (AV). It can be found on your annual property tax statement.

### **Five years ago, SW Polk voters approved a bond measure, what did it do?**

In 2017 the citizens approved a bond measure which generated funds to build three new stations, purchase three new fire engines, and replace aging non-compliant safety equipment. This bond fulfilled the capital projects necessary to provide faster service delivery to our citizens through a distribution of response resources. The approved bond measure was not to exceed \$0.69 per \$1,000. SW Polk has managed to average about \$0.59 per \$1,000 annually, for repayment of the bonded debt service.

### **What other funding options have been considered?**

The district has been applying for various public and private grants. SW Polk has received many of these grants, including a \$5000 Special District's grant for security and a \$228,936 Ford Family Foundation grant. SW Polk has submitted many other grant requests, including requesting assistance from Polk County American Rescue Plan Act funds. The SW Polk Board has also recently sold aging fire vehicles and voted to surplus the old Rickreall fire station.