



# CANBY FIRE DISTRICT

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February 6, 2023

**RE: An open letter from Canby Fire District Chief Jim Davis**

Dear Community Member:

I serve as your Chief at the Canby Fire District. We are your first responders to medical, rescue, and fire emergencies across a 54 square mile area that includes the cities of Canby, Barlow and surrounding suburban and rural areas.

Our operations are funded primarily through property taxes. The District has a permanent property tax rate of \$1.54 per-thousand of assessed value. We are currently also funded by a 5-year local option levy at a rate of \$0.45 per-thousand. This 45-cent local option levy has been approved by voters twice, most recently in 2020. It funds 6 of our 18 firefighters, allowing us to provide better, faster response in “concurrent call” situations – when emergency calls overlap, requiring an additional response team. Since we asked voters to renew our local option levy in 2020, the rate of increase for emergency medical calls in the District has accelerated. We have therefore decided to return to our voters this May and request approval of a new 5-year levy, that would *replace* the current levy.

On January 25, the Board of Directors for the Canby Fire District unanimously passed a Resolution to ask the voters to approve a replacement Fire/EMS levy that would increase the rate from 45 cents to 95 cents per thousand of tax-assessed value (for most homes, assessed value is much lower than real market value). The replacement levy would fund a total of 12 firefighter/medics, an increase of 6 firefighter/medics over what the District’s existing levy funds. Here is why we are making this request:

In the 8 years since the current levy rate was originally approved, emergency calls have increased 56%, from 2,284 in 2014 to 3,568 in 2022, with the great majority of calls being medical emergencies. During the same period the percentage of time that calls overlap rose from 30% to 47%. If the 5-year replacement levy is approved, we will be able to provide these key benefits to our community:

- **Faster medical response when calls overlap.** Canby Fire would be able to maintain two response teams at the Main Station and one at the North Station, 24/7. Having three teams on duty 24/7 would help maintain fast response by reducing the need for out-of-district responders when calls overlap.
- **Fire response capability from North Station.** Currently, the North Station is staffed with 2 firefighter/medics 24/7. However, safety standards require that at least 3 firefighters respond to fire emergencies, limiting the station’s ability to respond to fires.

The levy would ensure 3 firefighter/medics are assigned to North Station allowing response to both medical and fire emergencies.

- **Improved fire response District-wide.** Currently, when 2 medical calls overlap, our fire engines do not have adequate staffing for immediate fire response, resulting in delays waiting for assistance from neighboring districts. While our neighboring districts do a great job providing mutual aid when needed, they can't respond as quickly as we can from within the district and, for many fire and medical emergencies, seconds really do count. If the levy passes, we would have enough staffing for a fire engine response while 2 medical calls are active.

There would be other benefits as well – including the ability to provide a faster response to wildland fires because additional personnel would allow us the ability to move brush fire vehicles to the scene and start fire suppression action faster.

The replacement levy would cost the average homeowner in the District about \$262 per year compared to the \$113 annual cost of the levy it would replace.

As the May election day approaches, we promise to do our very best to provide to our community with all the information you may require before voting.

We are forever grateful for your support and the opportunity to serve you. Thank you.

*Jim Davis*

Jim Davis  
Fire Chief  
Canby Fire District