



Northshore Fire Department

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  northshorefiredepartment



Woodinville Fire & Rescue

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northshore & Woodinville Fire Merger: Less Cost, Better Service for Residents

KENMORE, Wash. – The Northshore Fire Department is asking its voters to approve merging with Woodinville Fire & Rescue during the April 27, 2021 Special Election. If approved by voters, property owners in Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, and Woodinville would immediately see an improvement in emergency services and pay less in taxes starting in 2022.

If the merger passes, Northshore property owners would save a projected \$0.11 per \$1,000 of assessed property value or 8.5% of the effective tax rate. Woodinville property owners would save a projected \$0.07 per \$1,000 or 5.6%. These are conservative estimates prepared by an independent third-party financial firm and are based on the most current data available. More efficient use of emergency personnel also could save taxpayers on overtime costs, which were nearly \$1.8 million for both agencies in 2020. If the agencies were combined in the month of February, overtime savings alone would have exceeded \$22,000.

Another benefit of merging is improved emergency services for residents and businesses. There would still be the same number of emergency personnel responding from local stations. However, operating as one agency would allow for more efficient deployment of emergency personnel and resources. There would be opportunities to place an additional fire engine or aid unit in service on certain days. For example, were the agencies combined in February 2021, there would have been at least one additional emergency response apparatus in service 20 out of 28 days, or 71 percent of the time.

Northshore residents also could see a savings in ambulance transport costs. Currently, Northshore routinely utilizes a for-profit private ambulance company for emergency medical transports, which charges patients a fee for transport services. Woodinville offers emergency medical transport at no additional cost to the patient. Fire Commissioners for both agencies agree, should the merger be approved by the voters, the new agency would adopt Woodinville's practice and extend no-cost patient transports to the Northshore service area.

"Merging our two fire districts means better service for less cost," said Northshore Interim Fire Chief Greg Ahearn. "This merger is in the best interest of the people we serve, and that's what we are focused on."

Chief Ahearn also serves as Fire Chief for Woodinville Fire & Rescue. The agencies have been sharing some administrative personnel and departments since February 2020 under an interlocal agreement.

Smaller fire agencies throughout King and Snohomish counties are partnering together to provide residents with better service and cost efficiencies. Northshore and Woodinville Fire are both strong operationally and financially and fund emergency services with a fire levy and fire benefit charge.

The merger initiative is scheduled for the April 27, 2021 Special Election. Because the Northshore Fire Department would merge into Woodinville Fire & Rescue, Northshore voters are the ones who vote on the proposal. If the merger is approved by voters, the new agency would have a name that reflects both service areas.

More information on the proposed merger can be found on the fire districts' websites at www.northshorefire.com or www.wf-r.org. Fire Chief Greg Ahearn also welcomes questions about the proposed merger at GAhearn@northshorefire.com.

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Northshore Fire Department provides fire and emergency medical services to approximately 37,000 people over 10 square miles, including the cities of Lake Forest Park and Kenmore. Its emergency call volumes average 3,600 a year.

Woodinville Fire & Rescue provides fire and emergency medical services to approximately 37,000 people over 30 square miles. Its emergency call volumes average 4,000 a year.