



Clallam County Fire District 3 Fire Chief Ben Andrews. Sequim Gazette file photo by Matthew Nash

Guest Opinion: Fire District 3 seeks to improve communications with residents

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Clallam County Fire District 3 is developing a long-range financial plan. The first steps are to clearly identify and evaluate all sources of revenue and forecast future service demands.

Early in this process, we learned that many in our community did not know how fire and emergency medical services are funded, how many services the fire district provides, and just how busy our crews are. We are working hard to share information about these issue through a newsletter, our website (www.ccf3.org) and social media (Twitter — [@ClallamFire3](https://twitter.com/ClallamFire3)) (Facebook — [ClallamFD3](https://www.facebook.com/ClallamFD3)).

The fire district primarily funds emergency medical services and fire suppression through two property tax levies. Over time, these levy rates fall as property values rise, which limits the fire district to roughly the same amount of revenue per year plus a one-percent increase allowed by law.

The one-percent increase in revenue is not keeping up with the cost to provide service or even inflation which is currently three to four percent per year.

In 2017, Clallam County Fire District 3 responded to 7,224 emergency calls, that is about 20 responses a day. Call volumes for the fire district have increased 33-percent in seven years. EMS accounts for 85-percent of those calls, which is not surprising since the median age in our area is 59.

Higher call volumes mean added costs for personnel, apparatus maintenance, equipment and medical supplies. The fire district is now directing all its resources into responding to calls, which leaves nothing to hire additional staff, replace apparatus, and improve or expand its facilities.

In addition to responding to higher call volumes, we want to continue to be financially solvent in the future. That's why Fire District 3 is considering asking voters to approve a lid lift for its general levy during the November General Election.

Voters originally approved a general levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2004. Since that time, it has fallen to \$1.26. If approved by voters, the 24-cent lid lift would be an additional \$60 per year (\$5 per month) for the owner of a \$250,000 home.

Funding would be used to maintain emergency service levels, improve staffing where possible, train personnel, and fund some facility and apparatus needs.

Our Board of Commissioners will hold a series of public meetings to explain this issue in June, and we hope you will participate in these discussions as they unfold. We will share those dates and times when they are scheduled. Thank you for considering our request.

Ben Andrews is fire chief for Clallam County Fire District 3. The fire district provides a 24-hour fire and emergency medical response to 30,000 people with a combination of volunteer, part-time, and full-time personnel.



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