

## S A F E T Y N O T E S

APRIL, 2016



## EMS LEVY Ballot Measure

When people first think of a Fire Department, they imagine firefighters racing to strategically aim water at a blazing building. While that is one critical component of a firefighter's job, all Spokane Fire Department firefighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) and about 80 Spokane Firefighters are also Paramedics.

Across the nation, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) incidents account for a high percentage of fire department responses. Last year 87% of Spokane Fire Department's calls for service were medical in nature. In 2015, Spokane firefighters responded to 33,880 EMS incidents, or an average of 93 per day. Medical calls for help are our most frequent incidents.

What many people in the community may not realize is that EMS delivery by the Spokane Fire Department is partially funded through a 6-year voter approved EMS levy. The current EMS Levy expires at the end of this year and the decision of whether to renew it is before voters on the April 26<sup>th</sup> special election. This ballot question has been placed before voters every 6 years since 1980.

Despite the increasing number of EMS calls throughout the years, the EMS Levy renewal is set at the same rate as it was in 1993, which is 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This amounts to \$50 per year (or about \$4.17/ month) for a property assessed at \$100,000. If passed the EMS Levy will generate approximately \$8 million a year for the next six years to help continue to fund emergency medical service responses provided by the Spokane Fire Department.

What are the consequences if the EMS Levy is not renewed? Spokane Fire Department will likely not be able to

continue paramedic services and would need to lay off as many as 90 firefighters. This reduction of staffing could place apparatus out of service and probably result in fire station closures.

For additional information about the EMS Levy, visit [www.SpokaneFire.org](http://www.SpokaneFire.org). Thank you for taking the time to make an informed vote and for helping others consider the facts of this levy.



## FIRE ALARM QUESTIONS

***Q. If you have a building that is monitored by a fire alarm company, what should you do when the system alarms and you KNOW there is no actual fire?***

A. You must wait until the Fire Department arrives so **they** can examine the system, check the building and silence the alarms. There may be a smoldering fire hidden behind the walls or ceiling. Or there may be a system problem within the monitoring unit that your supplier will need to address as soon as possible.

***Q. What do you tell tenants when they are angry at multiple false alarms?***

A. Thank them for their patience as the alarm service tries to correct the problem! Acknowledge the inconvenience of a fire exit response in the middle of the night. Remind everyone of the bottom line in the old “Boy who cried Wolf!” story. When the Wolf **did** come to the neighborhood, no one was prepared and the wolf was free to eat the whole flock! False alarms reduce our enthusiasm for the correct response to a potential threat. But the potential threat of fire in a multi-family complex is a constant reality.

***Q What should residents do when a simple pull alarm sounds in an unsprinklered and unmonitored building?***

A. They should immediately go outside and one person should call 9-1-1 to report the address and situation.

***Q. What should residents do when a monitored fire alarm sounds?***

A. If the resident is able to evacuate the building and go to the common meeting or gathering place, they should do so immediately. They should close doors behind them to keep any fire confined.

If the resident is not able to physically exit their room and building, and their building is protected with a sprinkler system, they should get themselves ready to exit, unlock their own door (so that it does not have to be forced open in a possible search), and remain with their walker or wheelchair near their door and ready to respond to a firefighter request. If they become trapped and perceive smoke coming into their room, they should call 9-1-1 and report their situation and their exact location.

If the building is not sprinklered, residents in walkers or wheelchairs should move towards the exit stairs or place of refuge near the exit stairs. It is “fire-wise” for residents with mobility concerns to live on the first floor of a multi-story building.

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