

NEVADA COUNTY CONSOLIDATED FIRE DISTRICT
SPECIAL BALLOT MEASURE
FOR FIRE SUPPRESSION, PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE SERVICES
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District?

The Nevada County Consolidated Fire District (NCCFD) is a special district and the first responder agency for fire protection and emergency medical and rescue response to the rural, unincorporated communities surrounding Grass Valley and Nevada City. The NCCFD serves a population of 35,000 residents spread over 150 square miles and responds to over 5,250 emergency 911 calls each year.

NCCFD provides fire and emergency medical response services to our community, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from 6 strategically located fire stations, with 32 well-trained, professional firefighters. All firefighters are certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or Paramedics. Each of the District's fire engines is staffed with 2 firefighters.

Why is this new funding needed?

The cost of providing emergency services has been increasing while the District's revenues have not kept pace. Additionally, economic conditions over the past 4 years have resulted in severe changes to the financial viability of the District because:

- Revenue from property taxes has decreased by \$225,000 due to devaluation of property values throughout the county.
- Workers Compensation Insurance costs have increased by \$155,000.
- Income from Fire Protection Mitigation fees has decreased by \$185,000 annually since 2006 due to the dramatic downturn in the construction of new homes and commercial buildings.

What has the District done to reduce costs?

NCCFD has a very strong record of conservative financial management. Over the past 3 years, the District has:

- Reduced overhead and administrative costs by not hiring a new Battalion Chief to fill the position that was vacated through attrition.
- Reduced firefighting staff to the bare minimum necessary to maintain current service levels by not hiring 3 firefighter positions that became open through attrition.
- All District employees have foregone cost-of-living salary increases for the past 4 years
- The Firefighters have experienced a pay cut in their salaries of 7%.
- All District employees now share in the cost of their medical insurance premiums
- The District is now closing 3 fire stations on a part-time basis (brown-outs) to reduce costs.

How much money will be raised with this new funding measure?

The proposed measure would generate approximately \$850,000 per year.

How much is this special ballot measure?

The annual rates for each parcel of property are based on the property type. The yearly rates are as follows:

- Residential Dwelling Unit \$52.00 per year
- Residential Dwelling Units (if more than 1 unit) \$39.00 for each additional unit, per year
- Mobile Home Unit \$39.00 for each unit per year
- Unimproved Property (Vacant/bare land) \$26.00 per parcel, per year
- Commercial, Industrial, Office, Recreational - No Sprinklers \$0.04 per sq ft of building area, per year
- Commercial, Industrial, Office, Recreational - With Sprinklers \$0.02 per sq ft of building area, per year

Are there any exemptions from the tax?

All taxable parcels will have to pay the tax if the Fire Suppression, Protection and Emergency Medical Response Services ballot measure passes. Tax exempt properties are not subject to the tax.

How will the special tax measure revenues be spent?

The funding from the proposed measure would ensure the District maintains current levels of services:

- Keep all existing fire stations open and stop the brown-outs
- Preserve rapid emergency response times to all emergency calls
- Preserve local emergency medical response and rescue services
- Maintain current protection from wildland fires
- Prevent laying off a number of critically needed firefighting personnel

How long will the tax last?

The proposed parcel tax, which is initially proposed for the fiscal year 2012-13, will be continued on an annual basis. The proposed funding measure will be needed in future years to provide ongoing emergency medical and fire suppression services to our community.

Can the amount of the tax be adjusted for inflation in future years?

Yes. The proposed funding measure includes an annual consumer price index (CPI) annual increase not to exceed 3% per year, which will keep revenues in line with the costs of providing emergency services to our community. The CPI annual increase will not be implemented without a public hearing and the authorization by the District's Board of Directors.

What will happen if this parcel tax measure does not pass?

Without additional funding the District will be forced to reduce emergency services further through:

- Significant staff reductions
- Permanent fire station closures
- Longer emergency response times
- Decreased emergency medical response services
- Increased threat from wildfire
- Likely increase in insurance rates for many homes and commercial buildings
- Decrease from 6 fully staffed and available Engine Companies to 4 Engine Companies

Will any of this money go to the County or State for other needs?

No. If this measure is approved, all funds raised by the proposed tax measure will stay local and must only be used to maintain and improve the emergency services provided by the District. By law, neither the County, State, nor any other agency can take or use these funds for other purposes unlike certain property taxes.

Will there be public accountability and fiscal controls?

If this measure is approved, the funds from the special tax will be kept separate from other District funds. Public accountability and fiscal controls will include the following:

- All the funds raised would be spent to maintain emergency services
- There will be annual audits
- An annual public meeting
- An annual Tax Report

Why is this being decided by an all-mailed election?

The District decided to conduct this election via mail to maximize participation and allow voters to focus on the single issue of maintaining current levels of fire and emergency medical services in the Nevada County Consolidated response area. The District must know the outcome of the election before the end of May in order to plan for what level of service the voters want the District to provide in the next fiscal year that starts in July.

Who is allowed to vote in the Fire Suppression, Protection and Emergency Medical Response Services ballot measure election?

Everyone who is registered to vote in the areas served by the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District will receive a mailed ballot to be returned by the March 6, 2012 election date, and every registered voter will be able to vote for or against the proposed Fire Suppression, Protection and Emergency Medical Response Services ballot measure.

What if I own property in the District, but I'm not registered to vote here?
Only those who are registered to vote in the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District are able to vote for or against the proposed Fire Suppression, Protection and Emergency Medical Response Services measure. For more information about how to register to vote, please contact the Nevada County Registrar of Voters at (530) 265-1298.

NCCFD Fire Suppression, Protection and Emergency Medical Response Services special ballot timeline:

- February 6, 2012 Ballots mailed.
- March 6, 2012 Election Date: Voted ballots must be received by this date.
- March 15, 2012 Ballot results announced at the monthly NCCFD Board meeting.