



NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts:

[Rachael Doniger](#), Everett Fire PIO, (425) 512-3758

[Chief Ryan Shaughnessy](#), Tulalip Bay - Snohomish County Fire District 15, (360) 322-2453

[Chief Don Waller](#), Snohomish County Fire District 4, (360) 568-2141

Committee formed to explore Regional Fire Authority with Everett Fire, Tulalip Bay Fire, and Snohomish County Fire District 4

Snohomish County - The Everett Fire Department, Snohomish County Fire District 4, which serves the City of Snohomish and surrounding unincorporated areas, and Snohomish County Fire District 15 – Tulalip Bay Fire Department, which serves the unincorporated Marysville – Tulalip area, have formed a planning committee to explore a new Regional Fire Authority (RFA).

An RFA is a special purpose district established by voters in a service area that provides funding for fire and emergency medical services (EMS). State law provides the framework for cities, towns and fire districts to consider forming an RFA to consolidate operations into one fire department while retaining local control. An RFA can be made up of cities, fire districts or a combination of the two. The creation of an RFA is authorized by state law ([Title 52.26, Revised Code of Washington](#)).

An RFA is a way for cities and fire districts to gain service efficiencies through consolidation while retaining local control. Some of the benefits to an RFA include opportunities to:

- Consolidate duplicate administrative staff functions. It should be noted there is no plan for any staff member from any agency to lose their job; however, there may be a modification or change in job duties.
- Consolidate supply purchasing efforts.
- Standardize training, tactics, and procedures across the service area.
- Consolidate services to provide fire and EMS services, including paramedic response.
- Additional service opportunities such as a Community Paramedic Program, Fire Marshal services, and greater public education and outreach efforts may exist.
- Provide sustainable and stable funding for services.

The purpose of the planning committee is to determine if the formation of a fire authority would be in the best interest of the residents in all three jurisdictions. Fundamental questions the planning committee will be tasked with developing answers to are:

- What would a board of governance look like for the proposed RFA?
- What efficiencies can be enjoyed by all via regionalization?
- What services would a new RFA offer to its citizens?
- What levy rates and fees would be charged to pay for those services?
- What is the comparative impact of proposed taxes and fees when compared to existing taxes and fees?

The committee, made up of members of governance from all three agencies, will hire a third-party consultant to assist with the process. The consultant's cost is estimated at \$37,000 in 2021, with additional costs assessed in 2022 and 2023. The costs will be split between the three agencies and are estimated not to exceed \$75,000 across the three-year planning process.

Funding options for an RFA include any tax or benefit charge available to a fire district, including fire levies, EMS levies, excess levies, benefit charges, and bonds for capital purchase. RFAs may collect up to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value each year to provide fire service for properties within their boundaries. Benefit service charges are considered a service fee and are permitted in place of the last fifty cents of property tax-funded fire levy revenue. Finally, non-tax revenue, such as transport fees, contracts and other assessments are available as possible funding sources.

The funding mechanism for the RFA is built directly into the RFA Plan. Thus, when the RFA is eventually placed before the voters at an agreed upon election, if the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism that requires a simple majority (ad valorem taxes at up to \$1.50 per \$1,000) then the approval of the RFA Plan by the voters requires a simple majority (50% plus 1 voter). If the RFA Plan includes a funding mechanism that requires a super majority (60% or greater, such as via the Benefit Charge) then the approval of the RFA Plan by the voters requires a super majority.

This process is complex, with many variables to consider. It is estimated that the entire process, including voter approval and implementation, would take three years.

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