

This non-partisan report was prepared by volunteer members of the League of Women Voters of Lane County.

Measure 20-378
Lane Fire Authority Levy

Official Title: Five Year Local Option Levy for General Operations

Question: Shall the District impose \$0.55 per \$1000 of assessed value for general operations for five years beginning 2026-2027? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.

Referral: This measure was referred to voters by the Lane Fire Authority (District).

Financial Impact

The current levy, passed by voters in 2021, is \$0.35 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This measure would increase property tax by \$0.20 per \$1,000 of assessed value for five years beginning in 2026-2027, by renewing the current \$0.35 levy and increasing it by \$0.20 cents to *a total of* \$0.55 per \$1000. This would be an increase of \$47.20 per year, \$3.93/month, for a property with an assessed value of \$236,000.

Note: Assessed value (AV) is the value used to calculate property tax. It is shown on the property tax statement. It is NOT the same as real market value (RMV), which is the market price of the home

The proposed rate of \$0.55 per \$1,000 would raise between approximately \$1,744,426 and \$1,963,366 per year for 5 years, for a total of approximately \$9,261,392.

Probable Result Of A “Yes” Vote

Lane Fire Authority would continue its current level of operations despite price increases, would increase staffing levels by two firefighters to reduce response times, and would provide housing to accommodate volunteer firefighters. Taxes would increase.

Probable Result Of A “No” Vote

A “No” vote would remove the current levy of \$.35 per \$1000 of assessed value, resulting in a reduction of 17% in the budget for Lane Fire Authority, necessitating a reduction of fire and ambulance staff and an increase in emergency response times. Taxes for this district would decrease.

Background

Lane Fire Authority was formed from the consolidation of a number of volunteer fire departments from small cities into Lane County Fire District No. 1; further consolidation with Lane Rural Fire/Rescue resulted in the Lane Fire Authority in 2012. Santa Clara RFPD entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Lane Fire Authority in 2018. The consolidations resulted in efficiencies of scale with more fiscal stability and effectiveness. Current funding for the special district is based on dedicated property taxes at a rate of \$2.04 per \$1,000 of

assessed valuation and a levy of \$0.35 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, which was needed because expenses for personnel and equipment had risen more rapidly than the property tax revenue.

The consolidation of the different fire districts has resulted in a structure with 15 fire “agencies”/stations, from Walton in the west, to the Alderwood Station near Low Pass in the north, to the Fox Hollow station in the southern part of the district, and encompassing the Irving, Alvadore and Franklin areas. The special district covers 282 square miles. Lane Fire Authority is the largest special district in Lane County and probably the second to third largest in Oregon, based on geographical size.

The operations of the Fire Authority are heavily weighted in the area of medical response and ambulance transport; in 2025, there were 5,110 calls for medical response and transport compared to 103 fire responses, 422 responses to motor vehicle accidents, and 1,298 good intent or false alarm calls. The ambulance service area is much larger, at 425 square miles, and includes Junction City, the majority of Harrisburg, portions of the Monroe Fire District that sits in Lane County, Lake Creek Fire District, portions of Santa Clara, and Eugene/Springfield when needed through auto/mutual aid. Ambulance calls are supported by general fund revenues and per-transport fees.

Proposal

The addition of \$0.20 to the current levy would allow maintenance of service at the current level by providing additional funding to meet the increasing costs of personnel and equipment. In addition, the funding would create positions for two additional firefighters to bolster response to all calls across the district. In Lane Fire Authority’s South Battalion area (Bailey Hill, Lorane Highway, Spencer Creek, down to Gillespie corners) the call volume continues to increase every year. Five years ago, it was 250 to 260 calls a year; currently it is over 377 calls a year.

In order to add resident volunteer firefighters to that area, the Authority will need housing for the 24-hour shifts. Neither the Spencer Creek station, centrally located in that area, nor any other South Battalion area station, has the infrastructure for housing volunteers or resident firefighters for these shifts. This will require enhancements to the station, like restrooms and living quarters. With enhancements to the station to allow it to house volunteers or resident volunteers, the ability to enhance the volunteer force by providing housing is increased. This will enhance the response level and take pressure off the Veneta and Irving stations on a 24/7 basis.

Response time is crucial in both fire and medical emergencies, and response time depends on staffing. Although the Lane Fire Authority structure allows the deployment of fire engines and ambulances from one fire agency to others as needed, without the funding of this levy, personnel will almost certainly need to be cut. The Fire Authority has already recognized this possibility by not approving vacation leave after June 30 when the current levy funding will run out to make sure that they are able to respond to emergencies if staffing changes. After the

May election results, Lane Fire Authority will approve vacation requests submitted after June 30 based on the staffing capacity available given the levy election outcome.

Supporters Say

- Having adequate staffing for firefighters is a crucial aspect of our safety, particularly with increasing danger from wildfires and an aging population requiring more medical services.
- Insurance costs are affected by the availability of reliable fire protection resources, and having a fire district that has good response times has the potential for savings on insurance costs.

Opponents Say

- The District should submit this levy request without an increase and find ways to increase efficiency.
- People on fixed incomes are unable to afford additional taxes.

Editors' Notes:

From LWV Lane County (!): <https://lwwlc.org/blog/lane-fire-authority-five-year-local-option-levy-for-general-operations-20-375-2025/> So this was proposed in 2025 and failed in the November election.

<https://kval.com/news/local/lane-fire-authority-to-place-levy-renewal-and-increase-on-may-19-ballot> "If approved, the funding would support two additional firefighter positions and the installation of a modular staffing building at Station 109 on Spencer Creek Road."

https://www.kezi.com/news/local/voters-to-decide-on-lane-fire-levy-increase-this-may/article_2d9a8c4f-49f4-4e5f-8719-6848f5525745.html

<https://lookouteugene-springfield.com/story/latest-news/2025/11/17/rural-fire-districts-evaluate-next-steps-following-levy-defeats/>

https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3585797/File/Government/County%20Departments/Assesment%20and%20Taxation/2025-2026-Tax-Documents/2025%20Median%20AV%20year%20over%20year%20by%20district.pdf gives the 2025 median assessed value for Lane County as \$235,623.