

## Basic Life Support Allocation Model

**Background:** During the 2021/22 Levy Planning sessions teams began strategizing a method to provide increased financial support to the Basic Life Support (BLS) programs for the county Fire Departments and Districts. Challenges in 2021 and previous years include:

- Fire Departments began BLS transports in 2000 when the system migrated to a tiered response plan.
- Districts/Departments were left to fund their own BLS service.
- 20 years later the response/call load has significantly increased.
- All but 3 districts gave up local EMS levies.
- In 2021, the Levy discontinued paying the “gap” to .50 for those 3 districts.
- In 2021, Local Fire Levies Lid Lifts failed.
- The rural districts report significant issues with volunteerism and part-paid programs.
- The rural districts report they don’t have enough money to pay for Firefighter/EMT’s.

The allocation is used to help offset costs of providing EMS services. Agencies use the allocation to pay for a variety of EMS-specific (per RCW 84.52.069) items including personnel, structures, equipment and supplies.

### Allocation Amount

**Table D: Amount Received**

Agency Name	Amount \$
Acme Fire District 16	\$ 29,951.33
Bellingham Fire Dept	\$ 1,807,892.97
District 4	\$ 187,714.86
District 8	\$ 212,780.26
Everson Fire District 1	\$ 189,314.99
Glacier District 19	\$ 9,692.86
Lynden Fire Department	\$ 370,753.42
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue	\$ 697,958.93
Point Roberts Fire District 5	\$ 30,870.67
South Bay District 18	\$ 47,934.97
South Whatcom Fire Authority	\$ 293,269.80
Whatcom County Fire District 11	\$ 51,402.62
Whatcom County Fire District 14	\$ 321,029.33
Whatcom County Fire District 17	\$ 71,148.21
Whatcom County Fire District 7	\$ 678,284.79
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 5,000,000.00</b>

### Agency Budgets

Agency	Annual BLS Expenses
Whatcom County Fire District # 1	\$ 1,279,067.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 5	
Whatcom County Fire District # 7	\$ 6,600,000.00
Bellingham Fire	
Whatcom County Fire District # 8	\$ 24,825,062.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 11	\$ 141,381.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 14	\$ 1,193,302.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 16	\$ 139,711.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 17	\$ 89,400.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 18	\$ 16,711.00
Whatcom County Fire District # 19	\$ 69,941.00
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue	
Whatcom County Fire District # 4	\$ 1,226,622.00
South Whatcom Fire Authority	\$ 1,858,935.00
Lynden Fire Department	\$ 1,748,757.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 39,188,889.00</b>

**BLS Allocation and 2023 – 2029 Levy Planning** – The EOB will be asking to place an EMS Levy Renewal on the November 2022 ballot. The EMS Levy Planning committees are working to finalize a draft plan for the next 6-year Levy Plan that will include a recommendation for a BLS allocation. This work is ongoing now however it is recognized that the EMS Levy fund priorities are to support the Advanced Life Support system while at the same time understanding that the BLS programs are the foundation of the EMS system. Another component of this planning is to understand where the EMS Levy fund can help direct efficiencies and collaborations within the BLS response system.



February 4, 2022

Commissioner Graham,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to how BLS funds would improve the 911 response for North Whatcom Fire and Rescue (NWFR) taxpayers. NWFR has seen a dramatic increase in call volume over the past decade, primarily in the northwest corner of our district. This area encompasses the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, and Semiahmoo. These communities are currently served by Station 61 in Blaine and Station 63 in Birch Bay. In 2019, NWFR hired Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) to conduct a master plan. The study results showed that NWFR has a significant amount of concurrent medical aid calls in the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, and Semiahmoo. Based on the data in the study in 2019, there was concurrent medical aid calls 38% of the time in this geographic area. This percentage has only increased in recent years. With 26.25% of medical aid calls being BLS transports and long transport times to St. Joseph Hospital, our BLS units can be out of service for up to two hours at a time.

With a northern border that is Canada and a western border that is the Salish Sea, mutual aid is limited. We often must rely on WCFD7 or Lynden Fire, another department with a high concurrent aid call volume, or Station 69 in Laurel (located at Guide Meridian and Laurel Road), to assist with the third or fourth call that is coinciding in the Blaine, Birch Bay or Semiahmoo area. While multiple calls happening may not necessitate further funding, we cannot answer our publics' calls for assistance in a timely manner due to the long transport times that BLS patients require. When we first started transporting BLS patients in Whatcom County, the saying was, "If you transport BLS, it allows an ALS unit to remain available for a greater emergency."

In District 21 alone, we have seen a 52% increase in annual 911 calls since 2011. In the combined NWFR / District 4 service area, calls for service (including auto aid calls into other jurisdictions) have increased 71% since 2010. This increase in call volume has occurred with **no increase in service levels nor any additional BLS units placed in service.**

The funding that NWFR would receive would be immediately used to equip and staff an additional BLS unit, the first in the northwest part of the county in over 20 years. This unit would be in service at Station 62, in the Semiahmoo community, and will increase our ability to transport residents during times when we are receiving concurrent calls without relying on other departments' resources. This unit would be staffed by two FF/EMT's, initially for 12 hours a day, with the distinct possibility of expanding to 24 hours a day. While it will initially be staffed with overtime, a total of 4 FTE's will eventually need to be hired to staff this unit. An additional ambulance and its associated equipment will also need to be procured.

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Four entry level FTE's	\$511,367.04
Ambulance	\$250,000.00
Station Upgrades	\$50,000.00

Total costs to place this unit into service and staffed for one year are \$811,367.04. The money disbursed to NWFR would directly benefit the taxpayers who have funded the EMS levy over the past six years.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jason Van der Veen  
Fire Chief  
North Whatcom Fire & Rescue

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September 21, 2021

WCEMS Council  
Attention Mike Hilley  
800 E. Chestnut St.  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Mike Hilley,

With the passage of House Bill 1310 – 2021-22 concerning permissible uses of force by law enforcement and correctional officers on July 25, 2021, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue has seen a call increase of nearly twenty percent. The Whatcom County Fire Commissioner's Board anticipates fire service call volumes to increase by as much as 16,000 across the county in 2022 due to this new Bill.

Prior to this legislation, over the past ten years, North Whatcom Fire and Rescue was already experiencing a call increase of nearly 52 percent and a call concurrency rate of 35 percent. As you can see, we are already approaching our maximum capacity with existing resources.

The NWFR Board has serious concerns about the district's ability to manage this increase in call volume without impacting both our personnel and citizens. In addition, the added workload to B-76, a shared resource between multiple districts, is now having to screen and more frequently respond to calls to alleviate the burden on our already taxed staff.

In addition, House Bill 1310 places responders in potentially dangerous situations since law enforcement has decreased their response to specific types of welfare checks and mental health issues.

We are not saying that these types of calls for help do not deserve attention. However, we do need to address this unfunded mandate with proper training and resources for the health and welfare of all.

The City of Bellingham is currently working on adding a critical response team comprised of EMTs and a social worker that will respond to calls law enforcement will no longer respond to ahead of an aid unit. The NWFR Board believes this type of resource would be beneficial county-wide.

The NWFR Board of Commissioners respectfully requests that the county consider adding additional resources now, to help mitigate the extra risk and call volume enlisted by this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Ansell".

Bruce Ansell, Chairman  
North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

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January 24, 2022

Whatcom County EOB, Finance, and County Council  
311 Grand Ave  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Whatcom County EOB, Finance, and Council Members:

The fire commissioners and fire chiefs representing Whatcom County voted unanimously to request financial assistance for funding needs of all county fire agencies with regards to emergency medical services.

Over the past sixteen years, fire agencies in Whatcom County have taken on additional transport responsibilities in support of previously overburdened Advanced Life Support services. Increased call volumes, longer transport out of service times, less participation by volunteers, failed levy lid lift proposals have all stretched existing resources to a breaking point. We are struggling to fund our BLS response and desperately need financial assistance.

In addition, with the passage of House Bill 1310 – 2021-22 concerning permissible uses of force by law enforcement and correctional officers on July 25, 2021, many Whatcom County Fire agencies have seen a call increase of nearly twenty percent. The Whatcom County Fire Commissioner's Board anticipates fire service call volumes to increase significantly across the county in 2022 due to this new Bill. The Board has serious concerns about the ability to manage this increase in call volume without impacting both our personnel and citizens.

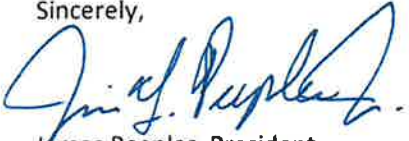
It has been reported that there is currently a 21-million-dollar surplus of EMS funds. This surplus is partially due to the delays in implementing a 5<sup>th</sup> medic unit and additional revenues from GEMT that were not anticipated. The planning committee for the first levy estimated that we needed 12 million in reserves to have a healthy fund balance. We believe it is difficult to ask the voters to renew the levy at the end of 2022 with an existing 9-million-dollar surplus.

The Whatcom County Fire Commissioner's Association is unanimously in favor of the following:

- 1) Allocate 5 million dollars countywide immediately to help mitigate the BLS funding gap.
- 2) Include a BLS funding component in future EMS levy proposals to the voters.
- 3) Supporting a minimum 29-cent levy reset to help fund BLS in the future.
- 4) Earmark EMS levy funding for EMS purposes only.

The Whatcom County Fire Commissioners respectfully requests that the county allocate additional funding now, to help mitigate the extra costs associated with providing basic life support services county wide. We believe the EMS fund surplus can reasonably support this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Peebles".

James Peebles, President  
Whatcom County Fire Commissioners Association

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mel Blankers".

Mel Blankers, President  
Whatcom County Fire Chiefs Association