

# ThePulse

Summer 2018



## Saving Lives with Property Taxes

We know that no one likes property taxes. But Washington state law leaves very few other options for funding the services provided by fire protection districts such as North Kitsap Fire & Rescue and Poulsbo Fire Department. Not only are property taxes

unpopular, they're volatile and the rules for establishing rates are difficult to understand. When property values are in decline for an extended time, tax revenues fall as well. However, when property values are recovering, initiative-imposed caps prevent tax revenues from recovering

at the same pace. The complexity and instability of property taxes continue to challenge fire district leaders' efforts to maintain levels of service; we are still working to recover from the real estate crash that started a decade ago. Why?

Continued inside

### Inside:

- Emergency Medical Information Card
- How to Fit a Helmet
- Much More

The Pulse, published jointly at least once every year, is one of many cooperative efforts between your two local fire departments.

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FIRE & RESCUE**

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# Property Taxes

Continued from front

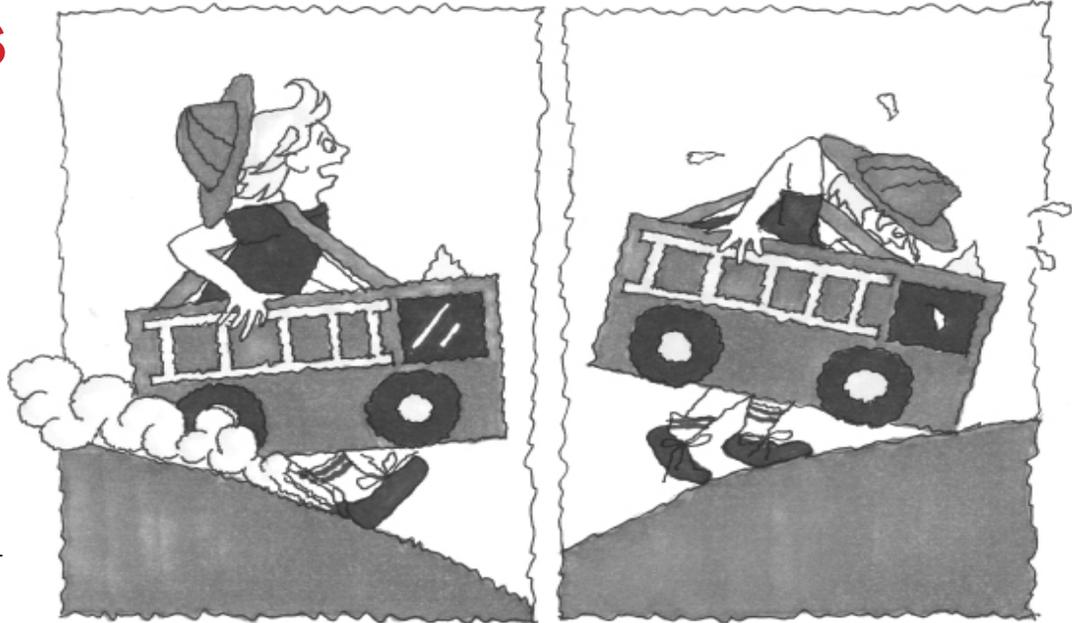
Poulsbo Fire Department and North Kitsap Fire & Rescue receive no on-going funding from federal, state or county governments. While other governments like those of cities and counties have access to other forms of taxation such as the sales tax, fire protection districts do not. As independent agencies governed by locally-elected fire commissioners, the majority of the districts' funding comes from local property taxes. User fees for ambulance transports and contracts-for-service are examples of the very limited range of non-tax revenue sources.



**Fire districts depend on the property tax for 80 - 85% of their operating revenues.**

Under state law, fire districts are authorized to collect property taxes of up to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. With voter approval, agencies can levy up to \$0.50 more to provide emergency medical response. The community has enthusiastically supported emergency medical services (EMS) levies since they were first introduced in the mid-1980s. Due to voter-approved initiatives, the total amount collected from the fire and EMS levies cannot exceed 101% of the highest amount collected previously on existing properties except under certain narrow circumstances. These caps are applied to each levy's total collection but each property owner experiences different increases or decreases due to variations in individual properties' assessed valuations and other factors.

During normal economic conditions, the total assessed valuation of properties in the fire districts rises annually. Levy rates



**There are no brakes on revenue losses when property values fall but, when property values recover, caps keep revenue from recovering at the same rate.**

are adjusted downward to keep a district's total collections on existing properties within the 101% limitation. In the first year that a property comes onto the tax rolls, it is referred to as "new construction." The revenue from new construction isn't subject to the 101% limitation, and is calculated separately at the previous year's levy rate(s).

But during the real estate downturn that started in 2008, property values plummeted along with the amount of new construction. As the districts' assessed valuations fell and expenses continued to increase, levy rates were raised to provide 101% of the previous year's total levy necessary to help meet rising costs. When the levy rates reached their respective statutory limits

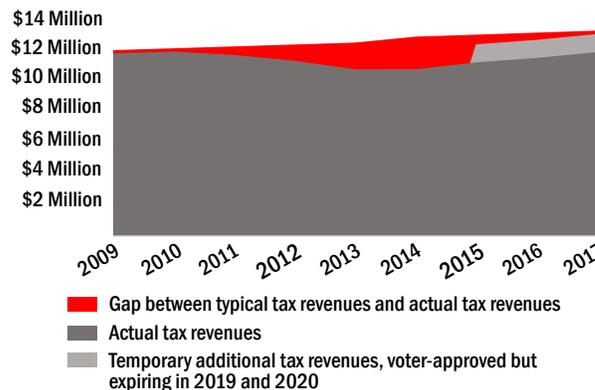
and property values continued to drop, districts took in less in tax revenue, too. Between 2009 and 2014, North Kitsap Fire & Rescue and Poulsbo Fire Department received a combined \$6.1 million less in tax revenues than they would have received in a normal economy. Most property owners saw flat or declining fire tax bills. At the same time, expenses were increasing. To continue providing the same levels of service under these circumstances, the districts implemented broad austerity measures that included wage freezes, deferred apparatus replacement, aggressive pursuit of federal grants, use of reserve accounts and deferral of many of the capital investments necessary to protect the public's facilities.

We don't like asking for taxes but, to continue current levels of service, it's what we've had to do. In 2014, the districts received the approval of voters for additional temporary funding to help with the recovery. As the graph to the left shows, these funds didn't restore what was lost and many of the deferred needs remain unresolved. In 2019 and 2020, the temporary funds will end and the districts are preparing new proposals for voters' consideration in the fall of 2018.

If you have questions, please ask; we have much more information than there's room to share here.

**When real estate values plummeted, so did fire district revenues; between 2009 - 2014, the districts collected \$6.1 million less in taxes than in a normal economy.**

Fire Districts' Combined Property Tax Revenues, 2009 - 2017



# How to Fit a Bike Helmet

Bike helmets can reduce the chance of brain injury by more than 80% – but only when properly fit and worn. Here are some tips to help ensure that the helmets protecting you and your family have the best chance of doing their job:

1. Place helmet on the head, level and with no more than two fingers width between the bottom edge of the helmet and the eyebrow.

2. Check that the helmet is in contact with the head. If not, tighten the retention ring or add thicker pads.

3. Adjust the slides for the helmet straps on both sides,

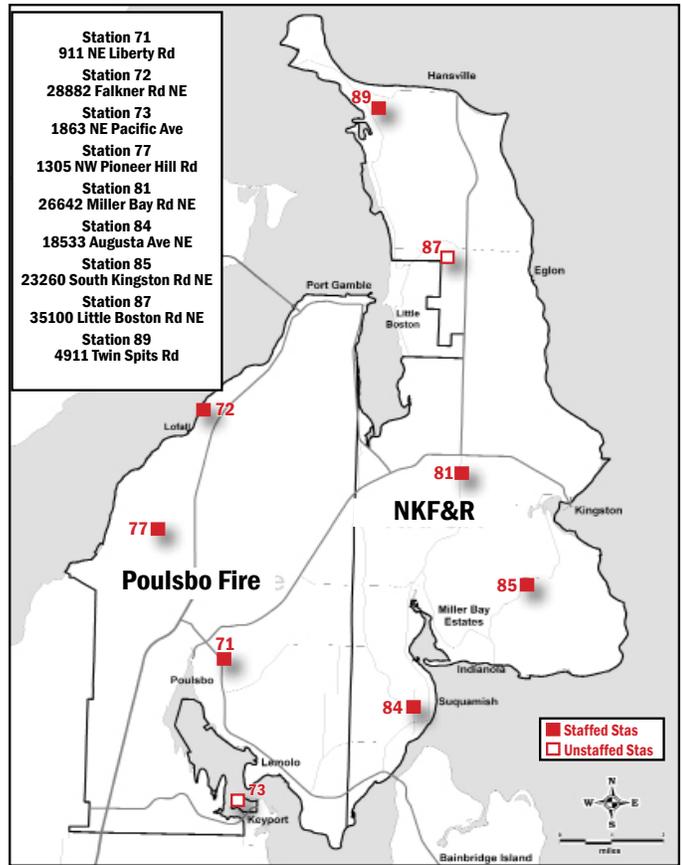
forming a “V” just below and slightly in front of the wearer’s ears.

4. Buckle the helmet below the chin. Tighten the straps until only two fingers can fit between it and the underside of the wearer’s chin.

5. Check the fit. When the

wearer opens the mouth, the helmet should dip slightly. If it doesn’t, the chin strap is too loose.

Need help fitting, fine-tuning or replacing a helmet? Contact your fire department at (360) 779-3997 or (360)297-3619 for an appointment!



**Outdoor Burn Ban Information**  
**(360)297-4888**

## Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attack and Stroke

According to the American Heart Association, heart and blood vessel disease are our nation’s number one killer.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, while some start slowly. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is underway:

**Chest discomfort** – Pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or comes and goes.

**Discomfort in other areas of the upper body** – Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, the neck, the jaw or the stomach.

**Shortness of breath**

**Other signs** – Cold sweats, nausea or lightheadedness.



Learn the signs and symptoms of stroke, and get help even if the symptoms go away:

**Face drooping** – One side of the face droops or is numb. The person’s smile is uneven.

**Arm weakness** – One arm is weak or numb. When the person raises both arms, one drifts downward.

**Speech difficulty** – Speech may be slurred. The person may be unable to speak or hard to understand. Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, and see if it’s repeated correctly.

**Other signs** – Sudden numbness or weakness of the leg; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; sudden severe headache with no known cause.

**See the  
Emergency  
Medical  
Information Card  
on reverse**

**If you suspect heart attack or stroke,  
call 911 immediately**

# Staying on Top of Water Safety

With summer (swimming and boating season) upon us, we want to remind you of the resources available to help keep everyone safe on and in the water. We are members of Safe Kids Kitsap, a coalition of local safety advocates. The organization has partnered with multiple agencies to improve the availability of life jackets across the county through loaner boards. However, while the kiosks will greatly improve children's safety, prevention experts say that it will take more than readily-accessible life jackets to end childhood drownings.



According to Safe Kids Worldwide, about 800 children lose their lives in drowning incidents across the nation every year. Younger

children are more likely to drown in bathtubs, buckets, ponds or pools. Kids 0 - 4 years old suffer more than half of all drowning deaths.

Older children are more likely to drown in natural bodies of water such as lakes, rivers and the ocean. Readily available life jackets are one important solution to the problem, but effective drowning prevention also requires attentive adult supervision as well as swimming lessons.

Life jackets are especially important for boaters of all ages when operating in cold waters such as Puget Sound. Here, the frigid temperatures can render muscles inoperable and disable even an expert swimmer in as little as fifteen minutes. Earlier this spring, an experienced mariner quickly found himself unable to muster the strength to get back aboard after falling into the chilly waters of Liberty Bay. His dinghy

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(360)779-2681**

had overturned next to his anchored yacht, and he wasn't wearing a life jacket. He was rescued in the nick of time by Poulsbo's law enforcement officers and firefighters when observant witnesses on shore called 9-1-1 to summon help.

Get more info about life jacket loaners, low-cost life jackets to own and water safety by calling Poulsbo Fire at (360)779-3997 or NKF&R at (360)297-3619.

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<b>EMERGENCY MEDICAL INFORMATION</b>	Patient's Name:			Patient's Date of Birth:			
	Emergency Contact Name:			Contact's Phone:			
	Relationship with Patient:			Alt Phone:			
	Post any <b>ADVANCED DIRECTIVES</b> with this form: <input type="checkbox"/> Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Hospital "Do Not Resuscitate" Order			<b>ALLERGIES (Check all are known):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No Known Allergies <input type="checkbox"/> Latex <input type="checkbox"/> Demerol <input type="checkbox"/> Codeine <input type="checkbox"/> Morphine <input type="checkbox"/> Insect Stings <input type="checkbox"/> Penicillin <input type="checkbox"/> Aspirin <input type="checkbox"/> Sulfis <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
<b>MEDICAL CONDITIONS (Check all that apply):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> No Medical Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Pacemaker <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> Angina <input type="checkbox"/> Stroke <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Attack <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes/hypoglycemia <input type="checkbox"/> Hepatitis <input type="checkbox"/> Seizures <input type="checkbox"/> Fractures <input type="checkbox"/> Bleeding/Clothing Disorder <input type="checkbox"/> COPD/Emphysema <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer <input type="checkbox"/> High Blood Pressure							
<b>MEDICATIONS:</b>							
Name		Dose	Per Day	Name		Dose	Per Day