

Fire and Rescue Funding Discussion FAQs

Q: Is the county looking at abolishing local fire departments?

A: No. The county is not looking at abolishing the local fire departments or exploring a county wide fire department. The county is only looking at the funding method used to fund fire services. At this stage, the commissioners have seen a presentation of all options currently allowed under NC law and have authorized staff to invite the fire departments and citizens to submit pros and cons and input on each funding method to aid in their discussion and decision on whether to change the funding method.

Q: If the funding method changes, how will this affect my local fire department?

A: Changing the funding method should not change anything about how a fire department operates.

Q: Will this change who serves my home for fire service or how my local fire department operates?

A: This does not change the response areas or how any fire department in the county operates. Each fire department would continue to remain their own separate entity with the same volunteers, board structures, ways of operating, etc. Commissioners are exploring only how the funding is collected from citizens and whether all citizens should pay the same rate for fire services. The County would continue to contract with each fire department and review and approve the budget request for funding as it always has.

Q: Would this change anything about my fire insurance?

A: No. Insurance ratings would not be impacted by changing the funding method. The NC Office of the Fire Marshall has confirmed that they do not use funding method to evaluate insurance ratings and they do not have a preference over one funding method vs. another.

Q: Who sets my fire district tax?

A: Commissioners are charged with this responsibility. Currently each fire department submits a budget for review and, once approved, commissioners set the tax rate based on the valuation of property in each district. In FY 18, the tax rate varied for citizens from 4.79-13.78 cents depending on what district they lived in because the real property valuations by district range from \$55 million- \$1.67 billion.

Q: Is this a new tax?

A: No- citizens already pay fire taxes. This is only looking at whether citizens should continue to pay varying rates or the same rate.

Q: Will my taxes increase or decrease?

A: This varies by funding method. See the pros and cons options to see what happens with the tax rate based on the funding options.

