

Explanatory Statement

Columbia 9-1-1 Measure XX

District overview

Columbia 9-1-1 is the sole provider of emergency dispatch and communications for Columbia County. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days each year, providing every resident with access to emergency fire, police, and medical services in their time of need. In 2023, the district handled 100,066 total calls and requests for service with an average emergency call answer time of 5.38 seconds — ranking it among Oregon’s top performing 9-1-1 agencies.

Levy overview

Columbia 9-1-1 has relied on a levy to fund emergency services since it was first approved by voters in 1998. This levy maintains the same tax rate as the past 25 years, providing five years of continued funding for 9-1-1 operations. If approved, it will ensure 24-hour 9-1-1 center operations and coordination with every police, fire, and emergency medical agency in Columbia County. It would also fund maintenance of essential communication equipment for emergency and disaster response, like wildfires and earthquakes. This levy is referred to the people by an independently elected board of directors accountable to citizens of Columbia County.

Why do we need a levy?

Every 9-1-1 district in Oregon relies on levies to fund essential services. In Columbia County, demands for services have increased, and the cost of maintaining aging equipment continues to grow. The district prides itself on efficiency, maintaining high standards without increasing tax rates. Without this levy, 9-1-1 district revenue would be cut by more than 42% compared to 2023-24, severely impacting operations and emergency services for residents and first responders.

What does the levy pay for?

The levy funds basic 9-1-1 services and emergency communications for all of Columbia County, including 9-1-1 center operations, coordination, and dispatch services for all first responders in the county. Dispatchers routinely provide lifesaving instructions to callers, including CPR, bleeding control, choking, and childbirth. The levy also funds basic maintenance of emergency communications equipment, along with planning and coordination with state and regional partners for disasters and large-scale emergencies.

How much would it cost?

If reauthorized, the levy will provide annual funding of approximately \$1.9 million to the district at a cost of \$0.29 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, or \$29 annually for a property with a tax

assessed value of \$100,000. Please note that assessed values for homes are typically much lower than market values.

What happens if the levy does not pass?

If the levy does not pass, the district will exhaust its limited reserves within a year. 2025-26 district revenue would be cut by 42% compared to 2023-24. This will result in the elimination of dispatcher positions, significantly longer wait times for callers, and delays in providing emergency response in both urban and rural areas. In addition, emergency communications equipment for wildfire and disaster response would not be maintained, raising the likelihood of a significant system failure.

Submitted by:

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