

REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is a Regional Fire Authority?

A: A Regional Fire Authority (RFA) is a special purpose district established by voters in a service area that provides funding for fire and emergency medical services. State law provides the framework for fire districts, cities, and other local government jurisdictions to consider forming a RFA as a means to gain service efficiencies while retaining local control. A RFA can be made up of cities, fire districts, port districts, municipal airports, or Indian tribes or a combination of the entities (to date neither ports, tribes or airports have participated in the formation of an RFA). Creation of a RFA is authorized by state law ([Title 52.26, Revised Code of Washington](#)).

Q: How is an RFA created?

A: A RFA is created by a vote of the people in the proposed service area. Depending on the proposed funding for the RFA, the vote required is either a simple majority or 60% approval of all those voting in the proposed service area.

Q: Why create an RFA?

A: A RFA provides an opportunity to eliminate duplication and achieve cost savings and efficiencies in the delivery of fire and emergency service by consolidating separate fire agencies into a regional service provider. Population and calls for service in the City of Everett and Fire District 4 have grown faster than firefighter staffing level for many years. This is expected to continue in the coming years. A RFA would consolidate resources, create opportunities for efficiencies and provide dedicated funding at more sustainable levels to maintain and enhance fire and emergency medical services in the entire area over time.

Q: Who else has created a RFA?

A: There are currently thirteen RFAs in the state of Washington, including three in Snohomish County: South County Regional Fire Authority, North County Regional Fire Authority, and Marysville Regional Fire Authority.

Q: What happens to the firefighters in the City and Districts—will they still be providing service to my community? Yes. If the RFA is approved by voters, firefighters and all other staff from the Everett Fire Department and Fire District 4 may become employees of the RFA.

Q: Who is putting together the plan for how the proposed RFA will operate?

A: By state law, an RFA Planning Committee comprised of three elected officials from each participating jurisdiction is created to develop a detailed operating and finance plan. The Planning Committee is advisory to the Mayor and City Council of Everett and the Fire District 4 Board of Commissioners. The Planning Committee is supported by a team of staff from the three agencies and an independent facilitator. The Committee will make recommendations and develop a draft plan that will outline how the RFA will be funded, staffing and service levels, and how it will be governed.

Q: What is the timeline for the RFA Plan?

A: The Planning Committee will be meeting in April 2021 to explore the feasibility of an RFA including the two agencies. At the end of April or early May, the Planning Committee will determine whether to recommend moving forward into a planning phase. The Committee will forward their recommendation

to the City Council and District 4 Board of Commissioners for their consideration. If both agencies agree to proceed, the Planning Committee will proceed with planning for an RFA.

The RFA Plan development is anticipated to take 8-10 months. Development of the plan will include multiple public outreach opportunities, and ongoing check-ins with the City Council and Board of Commissioners. Once the Plan is completed, it must then be approved by the City Council and Board of Commissioners and placed before the voters for approval. A public education effort will be conducted after the Plan is approved so that voters can be well informed. The earliest date at which the participating agencies currently anticipate going to the voters is August 2022.

Q: How is the RFA funded?

A: This question will be answered by the Planning Committee. Under state law, an RFA can either be funded by property taxes or a combination of property taxes and a benefit charge. A benefit charge is not a tax; it is a fee based on the benefit of having fire and emergency medical services. The benefit charge is not a per call charge and is not based on property values. Instead, the charge is based on the size, use and risk of structures located on property. The Planning Committee will be considering a range of options; if it decides to recommend a benefit charge, it will determine what formula components should be included in a benefit charge. RFA's can also charge various fees for services provided to other jurisdictions, or to individuals receiving services.

Q: How much will the RFA cost me?

A: Costs cannot be firmly estimated until an RFA Plan is completed. Impacts on taxpayers will vary, depending on the funding plan proposed (including primarily property values and the type of structures on the property).

Q: How can I stay informed of the RFA planning process?

A: All RFA Planning Committee meetings will be open to the public (but will not include public comment). Public outreach will also be conducted as the RFA Plan is developed to answer questions and get input. Meeting materials and summaries from Planning Committee meetings will also be posted on the RFA website <http://everettwa.gov/fireRFA>. You can also submit questions and comments through the website.

Q: How is the RFA governed? Do we lose control of our Fire services?

A: The governance of the RFA is yet to be determined. The RFA Planning Committee will be reviewing a wide range of governance options and will provide recommendations to the Everett City Council and Fire District 4 Commissioners. Regardless of the RFA Plan details, all governing board members will be elected officials that must be registered voters residing within the RFA boundaries.

Q: I live in Snohomish. What will happen to my fire service if the RFA is approved? The City of Snohomish is within the jurisdictional boundaries of Fire District 4. If the RFA is ultimately submitted to voters and approved, the City would receive fire and emergency medical services directly from the RFA as the fire district would transfer all fire protection and emergency medical service responsibilities to the RFA.