SOUTH KING FIRE

February 23rd, 2026

By Electronic Communication

To: Condominium Owners within Jurisdiction

From: Fire Chief, Ryan Woodey
Executive Director, Joe Ganem

Re: Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) Rates on Condos

At a Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners on Tuesday, February 17th, 2026, several condominium owners spoke to the Board about the FBC rates set for 2026. These owners specifically wanted to know what caused the significant rate increase compared to the previous year. Additionally, those attending the meeting did not have a clear understanding of the petition hearing process or its purpose.

This memo serves to address questions that were raised and improve overall communication regarding the FBC and annual petition process.

South King Fire is required by RCW 52.18.070 to allow District property owners an opportunity to petition for adjustments to their annually established FBC rate, which is determined by predefined criteria. For example, property owners may contest the square footage calculation of their structures based on county records or building plans. Additionally, building owners may have implemented fire alarm monitoring or recently installed sprinkler systems that have not been documented. The District receives these petitions, reviews the submissions, and decides upon any changes, exclusions, or exemptions in accordance with previously adopted Board guidelines. The hearing conducted on February 17th provided the Board with a summary of the petitions and identified those eligible for modification, along with the total dollar amount related to the changes. Formal approval of these modifications required the Board to pass a motion authorizing the adjustments.

While the hearing itself is not intended as the venue for submitting documentation or advocating for changes — those actions occur during the petition period — it provided an opportunity to gather valuable insights from both the process and the condo owners' input. The District has committed to enhancing communication efforts so that property owners are better informed about the petition period and hearing procedures. Additionally, staff will review the established formula factors, provide education to the new Board regarding the FBC formula factors, and

present any proposed changes or recommendations to the Board for consideration in future collection years.

For further details, please refer to the attached supplement.

Sincerely,

Joe Ganem IV
Executive Director
South King Fire

CC: District Property Owners
Condominium Owners
Board of Commissioners

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SUPPLEMENTAL

Fire Benefit Charge - Condominiums

1. Why did the FBC go up 24% for condos?

The Fire Benefit Charge is derived from the necessary resources to deliver fire services. Condominiums are classified as "Multi-unit". These types of structures have higher fire risk ratings, higher occupancy loads, and more complex firefighting needs. See questions 2 and 3 for more details.

Other Factors:

- Fire can spread faster
- More people can be impacted
- Greater property loss potential
- More complicated Rescue Operations

2. Why do condos pay more than single family homes?

The fire risk and required resources are greater in condominiums than in a single-family home.

When we look at the more common causes of house fires, cooking accidents are at the top of the list, heaters are the second. In a condominium, with the higher occupancy loads, and the concentration of the cooking equipment and heating equipment, the fire risk is higher.

3. If our square footage didn't go up, why did our FBC go up?

South King Fire has seen 50% increase in call volume over the last 10 years; this has required us to staff more units to continue to deliver a reliable service that meets the needs of our growing community.

The Fire Benefit Charge is calculated based upon the number of resources required to operate a fire department. The following service enhancements were included in the 2026 budget:

- Twelve (12) new entry-level firefighters to even out budgeted shift staffing to 40 per shift.
- Four (4) new firefighters to fill vacancies due to retirements and internal movements.

- Two (2) day-shift Battalion Chiefs to support and provide coverage to the BC's Office and foster succession opportunities.
- One (1) EMS Officer position (upon successful negotiation with Local #2024) to oversee EMS functions related to patient care and reporting standards.
- One (1) unfilled position, a civilian Public Educator, to assist with community outreach.
- One (1) Human Resources Coordinator and one (1) HR Analyst/Benefits Admin to assist with a larger district workforce, hiring processes, and compliance needs part of a divisional restructure increasing from a three (3) person division to four (4).
- One (1) GIS Specialist to replace a part-time position due to retirement and a changing reliance on GIS work in the fire service.
- Firefighter CBA compensation increases include a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), of 2.3%, deferred compensation at 4.75% of First-Class Firefighter (FF1), Officer and specialty rank pay.
- Represented civilian support personnel will a 2.3% COLA, deferred compensation at 4.75% of FF1.
- Qualified non-represented personnel will receive a 2.3% COLA, and a deferred compensation increase equivalent to 4.75% of FF1.
- Expected increases in L&I rates for 2026.
- Commissioner compensation and meeting rates per RCW 52.14.10.

Other funded projects and initiatives include:

- Fire Officer Development Program.
- Strategic Planning & Standards of Cover.
- L&I Leave Management.
- Legislative Advocate - Grant writing to assist in securing alternative funding
- Major Software & System Upgrades – Website Modernization, Daily Shift-Staffing
- Network infrastructure component upgrades - Station alerting and apparatus connectivity.
- Exposure Reduction Initiative – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & vehicle exhaust mitigation.
- Fire Station Maintenance & Improvements.

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The Fire Benefit Charge assists to fund the following capital projects:

- SCBA Equipment for firefighters
- A Jet Anchor (GPS) for our Marine Vessel
- Vehicles to support District business
- Network Infrastructure Upgrades
- Mobile Radios
- Station Improvements:
    - Nederman Exhaust System (exposure reduction).
    - Driveway Replacement (hazard for tripping for community).
    - Sprinkler Head Replacements.
    - Bunkroom Maintenance (living quarters).
    - Training Station Enhancements.

2025 FBC vs. 2026 FBC

2025 Collection: $18,998,013

2026 Collection: $22,231,523

Example - Explanation of Cost

Condominium has a square footage of 1442 and a growing assessed value over the last three years.

Before the FBC (SKF collected **Regular Property Tax** up to a **$1.50**/$1,000 of Assessed Value (AV) + a **Maintenance and Operations (M&O)** levy of **$.13**/$1,000 + **Capital Bond $.10**/$1,000) = **Total Fire Levy** of approx. **$1.73**/$1,000 of AV.

Year	2024	2025	2026
Assessed Value	$519,000.00	$ 567,000.00	$587,000.00
Property Tax	$ 897.87	$ 980.91	$ 1,015.51

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With the FBC (**Regular Property Tax** collection dropped to up to **$1.00**/$1,000 + **Capital Bond** that was refinanced **$.08**/$1,000) = **Total Fire Levy** of **$1.08**/$1,000 + **FBC**

Year	2025	2026
Assessed Value	$ 567,000.00	$ 587,000.00
Property Tax	$ 612.36	$ 633.96
FBC	$ 623.76	$ 772.34
Total	$ 1,236.12	$ 1,406.30

Resources:

Fire Benefit Charge | South King Fire, WA - Official Website

https://www.nfpa.org/news-blogs-and-articles/blogs/2020/12/17/most-home-fires-result-from-five-general-causes