

Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District – Proposed Five-Year Operating Levy

What the measure would do: This measure would create a new five-year property tax levy at the same rate used in recent years. If approved, this levy would allow the Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District (the “District”) to continue providing emergency communications services at the current level.

This levy would replace the levy that expired in 2024. This levy is proposed at the same rate approved by voters in 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2018. The rate is slightly lower than the rate originally approved by voters in 1998.

About the District’s services:

The District is the sole 9-1-1 call answering and dispatch center for the 16 public safety agencies based in Columbia County, including every fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement agency for all cities and unincorporated areas of the County. “Dispatch” means receiving emergency calls and sending appropriate responders.

The District manages around 70,311 calls annually and maintains the communication systems used by first responders.

The District also provides technology coordination with the Oregon State Police and Oregon Department of Forestry.

How levy funds would be used: If approved, levy funds will support operations and maintenance of 9-1-1 communications, including:

- 24-hour staffing of the dispatch center,
- Training for dispatchers,
- Operation and maintenance of the countywide radio and data communications system used by first responders (police, fire, and medical).

Levy rate and example cost:

- **Rate:** The proposed rate is 29 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.
- **Example:** For a home valued at \$300,000, this means about \$87 per year, or \$7.25 per month. “Assessed value” is the value the county uses to calculate property taxes, which may differ from market value.

Other District funding (not part of this measure):

- **Permanent Tax Base:** There is a permanent tax base rate of 25.54 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value that is not on the ballot and not included in the levy. For a \$300,000 home, this is about \$77 per year, or \$6.50 per month. If the levy is approved, the levy and tax base combined would cost approximately \$164 per year, or \$13.75 per month for a \$300,000 home.
- **Additional Funding:** The District also receives state and federal grants to enhance emergency communication systems and support up-to-date services, including location services for wireless calls, text-to-9-1-1 capabilities, emergency public notification systems, and related radio and data communications infrastructure.

Citizen Representation and Accountability:

The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors elected from different geographic zones in the county. The Board is advised by a statutory Advisory Committee composed of the county sheriff and the chief of each law enforcement agency, fire district, and emergency medical service in the county. The Board also appoints five citizen members, one from each zone, to serve with the Board on the District's Budget Committee.