



## Frequently ask questions (FAQ's) for the Bryan County Fire Tax

### What will it cost me on average per year?

- The average retail sale per capita in Bryan County was \$8,075 (<http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/states/40/40013.html>, (Revised 2007). Using that figure, the average person in Bryan County will pay just under \$21 a year for improved fire protection.

### What is the fire tax going to do for me?

- Increase the capabilities of the local fire departments.
- Increase the capabilities of the 911 dispatch center.
- Provide the money that firefighters need to have access to better training, firefighting equipment, vehicles, and protective gear for an increase in firefighter safety.
- Increase the ability of the fire department to seek ways to lower the ISO rating in their community which will help lower the insurance rates on businesses, homes, and all buildings with insurance.
- Allow for a peace of mind knowing that the fire departments are being funded in a manner so they can provide the better coverage to the citizen's in their area.
- Allow the fire departments to get EMS training and buy EMS supplies needed to provide first responder services to rural areas with extended EMS response times due to the distance from an ambulance.

### Who gets the money?

- 90% will be equally distributed to all of the 18 Bryan County Fire Departments:

Achille Caddo	Durant	Philadelphia	West Bryan County (Mead)	
Albany	Calera	Freeny Valley	Roberta	Yuba
Bennington	Cartwright	Kemp	Silo	Bokchito
Colbert	Lakewood	Wade		
- 5% to the Bryan County Communications Center (911 Dispatch Center).
- 5% to the Bryan County Fire Chiefs Association.

### How is the money going to get spent?

- Training new and current firefighters.
- Purchase of new and up-to-standard equipment.
- New construction or renovation of fire department buildings.
- Fuel costs / Maintenance / Tires /
- New protective clothing.
- Communications equipment for both the firefighters and the 911 Dispatching Center.
- New fire trucks.
- Personnel expenses **not to** include salaries.

### Why do we need a fire tax?

- Though the funding for fire departments continues to decline each year (state and local budgets are decreasing and the amount of grant money being issued declines), the cost of equipment and the cost of operating a fire department continue to rise.
- Without the tax money, many departments will not have the funds or the resources to properly protect the people of their district or the firefighters.
- Without the tax, the fire departments will not be able to expand to keep up with the rising populations, increased number of businesses, and the continued economic growth of our county.

**Have the fire departments in Bryan County had an increase in calls?**

- Yes, on average there has been an increase in call volume ranging from 200-300% for each fire department.

**Does the State or local government give the local fire departments any money?**

- The State of Oklahoma gives an annual operations grant. This year the grant is estimated to be around \$4000 per fire department. It has been as low as \$2500 per fire department in the last 5 years.
- Some local cities have annual budgets for their fire department.
- Bryan County does not have a consistent means of income for the fire departments.

**How do the Fire Departments get money now?**

- Fundraisers (held by each individual department)
- City funding where applicable
- Membership Drives
- State and Federal Grants.

**Does the Fire Department only run on Fire Calls?**

- No, many of the Fire Departments run on medical calls, Hazardous Materials Incidents, vehicle accidents, gas leaks, any type of rescue, and any other event that requires some type of emergency assistance (downed power lines, road hazards, etc.)
- With recent floods your local fire departments were sandbagging, rescuing stranded motorists and did whatever needed to be done to keep many houses from getting flooded.
- Several departments from Bryan County responded to the tornadoes in Tushka, Denison, and Lone Grove to assist with Search and Rescue.

**Why does the Bryan County Communications Center need money?**

- Currently the Bryan County Fire Departments do not pay any fees for the dispatching of fire & rescue related emergencies. Currently both Police and EMS pay annual fees for dispatch services.
- The Fire Tax will fund the purchase and maintenance of the Fire/EMS Dispatch Console at the Bryan County Communications Center.
- The Fire Tax money will go towards operating the Bryan County Fire/EMS dispatch console and radio channel. This will require the purchase of radio equipment both at the Communication Center and at the radio transmission sites.
- This money will be used to increase the capabilities of the dispatch center and could help lower some communities ISO rating which would help lower some home & business owner's insurance rates.

**Why does the Bryan County Fire Chiefs Association need money?**

- The Bryan County Fire Chiefs Association (BCFCA) was established to allow the Bryan County Fire Chiefs to facilitate better communication between county fire departments and local and state government and to help the departments address the need for better fire protection in Bryan County.
- The BCFCA will use the money to support canteen and rehab services for firefighters on extended incidents currently funded by private funds and the budget of the Durant/Bryan County Emergency Management. The BCFCA will assist Emergency Management with these expenses so that private funds and individual departments do not have to foot the bill alone.
- The BCFCA will assist in county wide training and will help offset the cost of training materials and bringing instructors from Oklahoma State University, Texas, and other States. Materials and expendable items will be purchased from the BCFCA funds rather than from the fire departments funds to ease the expenses of the departments.
- The BCFCA will help offset the cost of medical supplies for Fire Departments that respond to medical emergencies in their district. The BCFCA will also use the money for any fees that may occur with using a doctor for their Medical Director.
- Currently there are no fire departments in Bryan County that completely meet NFPA standards. The BCFCA will use these funds to help every Bryan County Fire Department be more in compliance with these standards.

**How much does a new fire truck cost?**

- The cost depends on the size of the truck and what special options the fire department adds to the vehicle prior to delivery. Here are some average costs.

Pumper truck	\$350,000 – \$550,000
Wildland Firefighting Truck	\$50,000 – \$80,000
Water Tanker	\$90,000 – \$180,000
Rescue Truck	\$50,000 – \$450,000

**How much does it cost to outfit one firefighter?**

- It cost, on average, about \$7285 to outfit one firefighter to fight a house fire in accordance with the National Fire and Protection Agency (NFPA) standards. Here is a list of the average equipment and average cost.

Fire Helmet	\$225
Firefighter Jacket	\$1000
Firefighter Pants	\$800
Fire Boots	\$200
Nomex Hood	\$25
Firefighting Gloves	\$60
2-way Radio	\$385
Air Pack	\$5000
Flashlight	\$50
Total for 1 Firefighter	\$7745

A minimum of 6 firefighters are needed per the NFPA to safely fight a structure fire. This makes the cost of protective equipment for 1 department total more than \$46,400 just to fight one structure fire. The average fire department in Bryan County has about 10 to 15 firefighters. If 1 fire department averaged 10 firefighters and only had 4 air packs they

would need an estimated \$42,000 to protect their firefighters. This is the initial cost. These costs do not include maintenance and replacement cost for damaged equipment.

**If the fire tax doesn't pass how will it affect me?**

- Many of the fire departments in Bryan County run medical calls with the Ambulance Services. This assistance may be reduced or eliminated due to rising operational and fuel costs if other funding isn't secured.
- In areas of growth that grow faster than the Fire Protection, you could see an increase in your ISO ratings which would cause an increase in business and home owners insurance.
- Many Departments would not be able add additional firefighters to their roster due to not having the money to properly protect the new firefighters.
- Some departments may not be able to recover from budget cuts and rising costs, and therefore will be unable to respond to calls or possibly even close indefinitely.
- As equipment becomes older and more susceptible to breakdowns, some departments will have to choose which fire truck or piece of equipment can be fixed or repaired first due to a lack of funds.
- Many departments will have to raise membership dues or downsize to lower costs.

**If passed will I still have to pay a membership to my local fire department?**

- Memberships are voluntary for each fire department depending on the district you live in.
- Most Fire Departments have said they will not have membership drives if passed.
- On average the people that pay their dues will save \$5-25 a year compared to average retail sales per person in Bryan County.

**If I don't pay for a membership but I pay this tax will the fire departments bill me?**

- Each fire department reserves the right to bill insurance companies. The process of billing an individual is different for each department. Each fire department and community will have to address the issue of a change in the current billing practices with their City Council or Board of Directors.

**Is there any accountability of the money once collected?**

- All Money collected will go to the Oklahoma Tax Commission then to the Bryan County Treasures office.
- The Treasures will then set each department up its own account.
- All Departments will have a Purchase ordered issued from the Bryan County Clerks Office in order to use any of the money.