

Title 52

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

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Chapter 52.02 RCW FORMATION

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52.02.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board. Actions taken under chapter 52.02 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 41.]

52.02.020 Districts authorized—Health clinic services. (1) Fire protection districts for the provision of fire prevention services, fire suppression services, emergency medical services, and for the protection of life and property are authorized to be established as provided in this title.

(2) In addition to other services authorized under this section, fire protection districts that share a common border with Canada and are surrounded on three sides by water or are bounded on the north by Bremerton, on the west by Mason county, on the south by Pierce county, and on the east by the Puget Sound or are in Pierce county and surrounded by Case Inlet, Drayton Passage, Pitt Passage, and Carr Inlet, may also establish or participate in the provision of health clinic services.

(3) Fire protection districts may provide training, expend resources, and enter into interlocal agreements to mitigate the injuries and reduce the level of harm and occurrence in calls they respond to. Examples of trainings are those that may directly or indirectly address worker and workplace safety, teach first aid, prevent injuries, and reduce industrial-related accidents. [2021 c 19 § 1; 2020 c 94 § 1; 2010 c 136 § 1; 2005 c 281 § 1; 2003 c 309 § 1; 1991 c 360 § 10; 1984 c 230 § 1; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 5; 1959 c 237 § 1; 1947 c 254 § 1; 1945 c 162 § 1; 1943 c 121 § 1; 1941 c 70 § 1; 1939 c 34 § 1; Rem. Supp. 5654-101. Formerly RCW 52.04.020.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.02.030 Petition—Certification. (1) For the purpose of the formation of a fire protection district, a petition designating the boundaries of the proposed district, by metes and bounds, or by describing the lands to be included in the proposed district by United States townships, ranges and legal subdivisions, signed by not less than ten percent of the registered voters who reside within the boundaries of the proposed district who voted in the last general municipal election, and setting forth the object for the creation of the proposed district and alleging that the establishment of the proposed district will be conducive to the public safety, welfare, and convenience, and will be a benefit to the property included in the proposed district, shall be filed with the county auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the proposed district is located, accompanied by an obligation signed by two or more petitioners, agreeing to pay the cost of the publication of the notice required by this title. The organization of any fire protection district previously formed is hereby

approved and confirmed as a legally organized fire protection district in the state of Washington.

(2) The county auditor shall, within thirty days from the date of filing the petition, examine the signatures and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. If the proposed fire protection district is located in more than one county, the auditor of the county in which the largest portion of the proposed fire protection district is located shall be the lead auditor and shall transmit a copy of the petition to the auditor or auditors of the other county or counties within which the proposed fire protection district is located. Each of these other auditors shall certify to the lead auditor both the total number of registered voters residing in that portion of the proposed fire protection district that is located in the county and the number of valid signatures of such voters who have signed the petition. The lead auditor shall certify the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. The books and records of the auditor shall be prima facie evidence of the truth of the certificate. No person having signed the petition is allowed to withdraw his or her name after the filing of the petition with the county auditor.

(3) If the petition is found to contain a sufficient number of signatures of registered voters residing within the proposed district, the county auditor shall transmit the petition, together with the auditor's certificate of sufficiency, to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the proposed fire protection district is located. [1990 c 259 § 12; 1989 c 63 § 1; 1984 c 230 § 2; 1963 ex.s. c 13 § 1; 1947 c 254 § 2; 1939 c 34 § 2; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-102. Prior: 1933 c 60 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.04.030.]

52.02.035 Petition—Notice of sufficiency. The county auditor who certifies the sufficiency of the petition shall notify the person or persons who submitted the petition of its sufficiency or insufficiency within five days of when the determination of sufficiency or insufficiency is made. Notice shall be by certified mail and additionally may be made by telephone. If a boundary review board exists in the county or counties in which the proposed fire protection district is located and the petition has been certified as being sufficient, the petitioners shall file notice of the proposed incorporation with the boundary review board or boards. [1989 c 63 § 2.]

52.02.040 Petition—Public hearing. (1) A public hearing on the petition shall be held by the county legislative authority of the county in which the proposed fire protection district is located if: (a) No boundary review board exists in the county; (b) jurisdiction by the boundary review board over the proposal has not been invoked; or (c) the boundary review board fails to take action on the proposal over which its jurisdiction has been invoked within the time period that the board must act or a proposal is deemed to have been approved. If such a public hearing is held by the county legislative authority, the hearing shall be held not less than twenty nor more than forty days from the date of receipt of the petition with the certificate of sufficiency from the county auditor if there is no boundary review board in the county, or not more than one hundred days from when the notice of the proposal was submitted to the boundary review board if the jurisdiction of the boundary review board was not invoked, or

not less than forty days after the date that the boundary review board that has had its jurisdiction invoked over the proposal must act if the proposal is deemed to have been approved. The hearing by the county legislative authority may be completed at the scheduled time or may be adjourned from time to time as may be necessary for a determination of the petition, but such adjournment or adjournments shall not extend the time for considering the petition more than twenty days from the date of the initial hearing on the petition.

(2) If the proposed fire protection district is located in more than one county, a public hearing shall be held in each of the counties by the county legislative authority or boundary review board. Joint public hearings may be held by two or more county legislative authorities, or two or more boundary review boards, on the proposal. [1989 c 63 § 3; 1984 c 230 § 3; 1939 c 34 § 3; RRS § 5654-103. Prior: 1933 c 60 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.04.040.]

52.02.050 Public hearing—Notice—Publication and posting. Notice of the public hearing by the county legislative authority on such a proposal shall be published for three consecutive weeks in the official paper of the county prior to the date set for the hearing and shall be posted for not less than fifteen days prior to the date of the hearing in each of three public places within the boundaries of the proposed district. The notices shall contain the time, date, and place of the public hearing. [1989 c 63 § 4; 1984 c 230 § 4; 1939 c 34 § 4; RRS § 5654-104. Prior: 1933 c 60 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.04.050.]

52.02.060 Hearing—Inclusion and exclusion of land. At the time and place of the hearing on the petition or at any adjournment thereof, the county legislative authority shall consider the petition and shall receive evidence as it deems material in favor of or opposed to the formation of the district or to the inclusion or exclusion of any lands. No lands outside of the boundaries of the proposed district as described in the petition may be included within the district without a written petition describing the land, executed by all persons having an interest of record in the lands, and filed with the proceedings on the petition. No land within the boundaries described in the petition, except that land which the county legislative authority finds will receive no benefits from the proposed district, may be excluded from the district. [1984 c 230 § 5; 1947 c 254 § 3; 1939 c 34 § 5; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-105. Prior: 1933 c 60 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.04.060.]

52.02.070 Action on petition—Resolution—Election—District name when located in more than one county. The county legislative authority has the authority to consider the petition and, if it finds that the lands or any portion of the lands described in the petition, and any lands added thereto by petition of those interested, will be benefited and that the formation of the district will be conducive to the public safety, welfare, and convenience, it shall make a finding by resolution; otherwise it shall deny the petition. The county legislative authority shall consider only those areas located within the county when considering the petition. If the county legislative authority approves the petition, it shall designate the name and number of the district, fix the boundaries of the district that are located within the county, and

direct that an election be held within the proposed district for the purpose of determining whether the district shall be organized under this title and for the purpose of the election of its first fire commissioners.

Where a proposed fire protection district is located in more than a single county, the fire protection district shall be identified by the name of each county in which the proposed fire protection district is located, listed alphabetically, followed by a number that is the next highest number available for a fire protection district in the one of these counties that has the greatest number of fire protection districts. An election on a proposed fire protection district that is located in more than one county shall not be held unless the proposed district has been approved by the county legislative authorities, or boundary review boards, of each county within which the proposed district is located. [1989 c 63 § 5; 1984 c 230 § 6; 1939 c 34 § 6; RRS § 5654-106. Prior: 1933 c 60 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.04.070.]

52.02.080 Election. The election on the formation of the district and to elect the initial fire commissioners shall be conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in which the proposed district is located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. This election shall be held at the next general election date according to RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330, that occurs after the date of the action by the boundary review board, or county legislative authority or authorities, approving the proposal. [2006 c 344 § 32; 1989 c 63 § 6; 1984 c 230 § 7; 1939 c 34 § 7; RRS § 5654-107. Formerly RCW 52.04.080.]

Elections: Title 29A RCW.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.02.110 Declaration of election results—Resolution. If three-fifths of all the votes cast at the election were cast in favor of the ballot proposition to create the proposed fire protection district, the county legislative authority of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the proposed district is located shall by resolution declare the territory organized as a fire protection district under the name designated and shall declare the candidate for each fire commissioner position who receives the highest number of votes for that position to be an initial fire commissioner of the district. [1989 c 63 § 7; 1984 c 230 § 10; 1941 c 70 § 2; 1939 c 34 § 10; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 5654-110. Formerly RCW 52.04.110.]

52.02.140 Appeal. Any person or entity having a substantial interest and feeling aggrieved by any finding, determination, or resolution of the county legislative authority in the proceedings for the organization of a fire protection district under this title, may appeal within five days after the action of the county legislative authority to the superior court of the county, in the same manner as provided by law for appeals from the orders and determinations of the county legislative authority. [1984 c 230 § 13; 1939 c 34 § 13; RRS § 5654-113. Formerly RCW 52.04.140.]

Appeal from board's action: RCW 36.32.330.

52.02.150 Organization conclusive. After the expiration of five days from the approval of the resolution of the

county legislative authority declaring the district to be organized, and the filing of the certified copies of the resolution of the county legislative authority with the county auditor and the county assessor, the creation of the district is complete and its legal existence cannot thereafter be questioned by any person by reason of a defect in the proceedings for the organization of the district. [1984 c 230 § 14; 1939 c 34 § 14; RRS § 5654-114. Formerly RCW 52.04.150.]

52.02.160 Petition alternative, resolution—Adoption requirements—Public hearing—Voter approval—General fund reduction. (1) As an alternative to the petition method of formation for fire protection districts provided in this chapter, the legislative authority of a city or town may by resolution, subject to the approval of the voters, establish a fire protection district with boundaries that are the same as the corporate boundaries of the city or town for the provision of fire prevention services, fire suppression services, and emergency medical services, and for the protection of life and property within the city or town.

(a) Any resolution adopted by a city or town under this section to establish a fire protection district must, at a minimum:

(i) Contain a financing plan for the fire protection district. As part of the financing plan, the city or town may propose the imposition of revenue sources authorized by this title for fire protection districts, such as property taxes, as provided in chapter 52.16 RCW, or benefit charges, as provided in chapter 52.18 RCW; and

(ii) Set a date for a public hearing on the resolution.

(b) The financing plan in the resolution adopted by the city or town must contain the following information regarding property taxes that will be imposed by the fire protection district and city or town subsequent to the formation of the district:

(i) The dollar amount the fire protection district will levy in the first year in which the fire protection district imposes any of the regular property taxes in RCW 52.16.130, 52.16.140, or 52.16.160;

(ii) The city's or town's highest lawful levy for the purposes of RCW 84.55.092, reduced by the fire protection district's levy amount from (b)(i) of this subsection. This reduced highest lawful levy becomes the city's or town's highest lawful levy since 1986 for subsequent levy limit calculations under chapter 84.55 RCW; and

(iii) The estimated aggregate net dollar amount impact on property owners within the city or town based on the changes described in (b)(i) and (ii) of this subsection (1).

(c) If a city or town proposes the initial imposition of a benefit charge as a revenue source for the fire protection district under (a) of this subsection, the resolution adopted by the city or town must comply with the requirements of RCW 52.18.030.

(d) Notice of public hearing on a resolution adopted by a city or town must be published for three consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or town, and must be posted for at least fifteen days prior to the date of the hearing in three public places within the boundaries of the proposed fire protection district. All notices must contain the time, date, and place of the public hearing.

(2)(a) A resolution adopted under this section is not effective unless approved by the voters of the city or town at a general election. The resolution must be approved:

(i) By a simple majority of the voters of the city or town; or

(ii) If the resolution proposes the initial imposition of a benefit charge, by sixty percent of the voters of the city or town.

(b) An election to approve or reject a resolution forming a fire protection district, including the proposed financial plan and any imposition of revenue sources for the fire protection district, must be conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in which the proposed district is located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. If a resolution forming a fire protection district provides that the fire protection district will be governed by a board of fire commissioners, as permitted under RCW 52.14.140, then the initial fire commissioners must be elected at the same election where the resolution is submitted to the voters authorizing the creation of the fire protection district. The election must be held at the next general election date, according to RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330, occurring after the date of the public hearing on the resolution adopted by the city or town legislative authority. The ballot title must include the information regarding property taxes that is required to be in the financing plan of the resolution under subsection (1)(b) of this section.

(c) If a ballot proposition on the resolution is approved by voters, as provided in (a) of this subsection, the county legislative authority shall by resolution declare the fire protection district organized under the name designated in the ballot proposition.

(d) Nothing contained in this chapter may be construed to alter a municipal airport fire department or affect any powers authorized under *RCW 14.08.120(2). If a question arises as to whether this chapter modifies the affairs of municipal airports in any way, the answer is no.

(3) A city or town must reduce its general fund regular property tax levy by the total combined levy of the fire protection district as proposed by the district in accordance with subsection (1)(b)(i) of this section. The reduced levy amount of the city or town must occur in the first year in which the fire protection district imposes any of the property taxes in RCW 52.16.130, 52.16.140, or 52.16.160 and must be specified in the financing plan and ballot proposition as provided in this section. If the fire protection district does not impose all three levies under RCW 52.16.130, 52.16.140, and 52.16.160 when it begins operations, the city must further reduce its general fund regular property tax levy if the district initially imposes any of the levies in subsequent years, by the amount of such levy or levies initially imposed in a subsequent year. [2017 c 328 § 1.]

*Reviser's note: RCW 14.08.120 was amended by 2020 c 96 § 1, changing subsection (2) to subsection (1)(b).

52.02.170 Ambulance service as public utility—Limitations—Definition. (1) A fire protection district may establish an ambulance service to be operated as a public utility. However, the fire protection district may not provide for the establishment of an ambulance service utility that would compete with any existing private ambulance service unless

the fire protection district determines that the area served by the fire protection district, or a substantial portion of that area, is not adequately served by an existing private ambulance service.

(2) In determining the adequacy of an existing private ambulance service, the fire protection district must take into consideration objective generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service, which must be published by the fire protection district. If a fire protection district makes a preliminary conclusion that an existing private ambulance service is inadequate, the fire protection district must allow a minimum of sixty days for the private ambulance service to meet the generally accepted medical standards and accepted levels of service. If the fire protection district makes a second preliminary conclusion of inadequacy within a twenty-four month period, the fire protection district may immediately issue a call for bids or establish its own ambulance service utility and is not required to afford the private ambulance service another sixty-day period to meet the generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service.

(3) A private ambulance service that is not licensed by the department of health, or has had its license denied, suspended, or revoked, is not entitled to a sixty-day period to demonstrate adequacy, and the fire protection district may immediately issue a call for bids or establish an ambulance service utility.

(4) A private ambulance service that abandons service in the area served by the fire protection district, or a substantial portion of the area served by the fire protection district, is not entitled to a sixty-day period to demonstrate adequacy, and the fire protection district may immediately issue a call for bids or establish an ambulance service utility. If a fire protection district becomes aware of an intent to abandon service at a future date, the fire protection district may immediately issue a call for bids or establish an ambulance service utility to avoid an interruption in service.

(5) For purposes of this section, "fire protection district" means a fire protection district established by the legislative authority of a city or town pursuant to RCW 52.02.160. [2017 c 328 § 2.]

52.02.180 Transfer of fire protection and emergency services from fire department to fire protection district—Procedure. (1) Except as provided otherwise in the resolution adopted by the legislative authority of a city or town establishing a fire protection district under RCW 52.02.160, all powers, duties, and functions of the city or town fire department pertaining to fire protection and emergency services of the city or town are transferred to the fire protection district on its creation date.

(2)(a) The city or town fire department must transfer or deliver to the fire protection district:

(i) All reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material in the possession of the city or town fire department pertaining to fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties;

(ii) All real property and personal property including cabinets, furniture, office equipment, motor vehicles, and other tangible property employed by the city or town fire department in carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties; and

(iii) All funds, credits, or other assets held by the city or town fire department in connection with fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties.

(b) Any appropriations made to the city or town fire department for carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties of the city or town must be transferred and credited to the fire protection district.

(c) Whenever any question arises as to the transfer of any personnel, funds, books, documents, records, papers, files, equipment, or other tangible property used or held in the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties and functions transferred to the fire protection district, the legislative authority of the city or town must make a determination as to the proper allocation.

(3) All rules and all pending business before the city or town fire department pertaining to the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties transferred must be continued and acted upon by the fire protection district, and all existing contracts and obligations remain in full force and must be performed by the fire protection district.

(4) The transfer of powers, duties, functions, and personnel of the city or town fire department do not affect the validity of any act performed before creation of the fire protection district.

(5) If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of the transfers, the treasurer for the city or town fire department must certify the apportionments.

(6)(a) Subject to (c) of this subsection, all employees of the city or town fire department are transferred to the fire protection district on its creation date. Upon transfer, unless an agreement for different terms of transfer is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the fire protection district, an employee is entitled to the employee rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled as an employee of the city or town fire department, including rights to:

(i) Compensation at least equal to the level at the time of transfer;

(ii) Retirement, vacation, sick leave, and any other accrued benefit;

(iii) Promotion and service time accrual; and

(iv) The length or terms of probationary periods, including no requirement for an additional probationary period if one had been completed before the transfer date.

(b) If a city or town provides for civil service in its fire department, the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the fire protection district must negotiate regarding the establishment of a civil service system within the fire protection district.

(c) Nothing contained in this section may be construed to alter any existing collective bargaining unit or the provisions of any existing collective bargaining agreement until the agreement has expired or until the bargaining unit has been modified as provided by law. [2017 c 328 § 5.]

(2021 Ed.)

Chapter 52.04 RCW ANNEXATION

Sections

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Merger of part of district with adjacent district: RCW 52.06.090.

52.04.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board. Actions taken under chapter 52.04 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 42.]

52.04.011 Annexation of territory by election method—Procedure—Indebtedness—Election dispensed with, when. (1) A territory located within reasonable proximity to a fire protection district and not within the boundaries of a city, town, or other fire protection district may be annexed to the fire protection district by petition of fifteen percent of the qualified registered electors residing within the territory proposed to be annexed. Such territory may be located in a county or counties other than the county or counties within which the fire protection district is located. The petition shall be filed with the fire commissioners of the fire protection district and if the fire commissioners concur in the petition they shall file the petition with the county auditor of the county within which the territory is located. If this territory is located in more than one county, the original petition shall be filed with the auditor of the county within which the largest portion of the territory is located, who shall be designated as the lead auditor, and a copy shall be filed with the auditor of each other county within which such territory is located. Within thirty days after the date of the filing of the petition the auditor shall examine the signatures on the petition and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. If this territory is located in more than one county, the auditor of each other county who receives a copy of the petition shall examine the signatures and certify to the lead auditor the number of valid signatures and the number of registered voters residing in that portion of the territory that is

located within the county. The lead auditor shall certify the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures.

After the county auditor has certified the sufficiency of the petition, the county legislative authority or authorities, or the boundary review board or boards, of the county or counties in which such territory is located shall consider the proposal under the same basis that a proposed incorporation of a fire protection district is considered, with the same authority to act on the proposal as in a proposed incorporation, as provided under chapter 52.02 RCW. If the proposed annexation is approved by the county legislative authority or boundary review board, the board of fire commissioners shall adopt a resolution requesting the county auditor to call a special election, as specified under RCW 29A.04.330, at which the ballot proposition is to be submitted. No annexation shall occur when the territory proposed to be annexed is located in more than one county unless the county legislative authority or boundary review board of each county approves the proposed annexation.

(2) The county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which such territory is located have the authority and duty to determine on an equitable basis, the amount of any obligation which the territory to be annexed to the district shall assume to place the property owners of the existing district on a fair and equitable relationship with the property owners of the territory to be annexed as a result of the benefits of annexing to a district previously supported by the property owners of the existing district. If a boundary review board has had its jurisdiction invoked on the proposal and approves the proposal, the county legislative authority of the county within which such territory is located may exercise the authority granted in this subsection and require such an assumption of indebtedness. This obligation may be paid to the district in yearly benefit charge installments to be fixed by the county legislative authority. This benefit charge shall be collected with the annual tax levies against the property in the annexed territory until fully paid. The amount of the obligation and the plan of payment established by the county legislative authority shall be described in general terms in the notice of election for annexation and shall be described in the ballot proposition on the proposed annexation that is presented to the voters for their approval or rejection. Such benefit charge shall be limited to an amount not to exceed a total of fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That the special election on the proposed annexation shall be held only within the boundaries of the territory proposed to be annexed to the fire protection district.

(3) On the entry of the order of the county legislative authority incorporating the territory into the existing fire protection district, the territory shall become subject to the indebtedness, bonded or otherwise, of the existing district. If the petition is signed by sixty percent of the qualified registered electors residing within the territory proposed to be annexed, and if the board of fire commissioners concur, an election in the territory and a hearing on the petition shall be dispensed with and the county legislative authority shall enter its order incorporating the territory into the existing fire protection district. [2018 c 28 § 1; 2015 c 53 § 73; 1999 c 105 § 1; 1989 c 63 § 8; 1984 c 230 § 22; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 49; 1965 ex.s. c 18 § 1; 1959 c 237 § 3; 1947 c 254 § 5; 1945 c

162 § 2; 1941 c 70 § 3; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-116a. Formerly RCW 52.08.060.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.04.021 Annexation by petition method—Alternative to election method. The method of annexation provided for in RCW 52.04.031, 52.04.041, and 52.04.051 shall be an alternate method to that specified in RCW 52.04.011. [1984 c 230 § 23; 1965 c 59 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.08.065.]

52.04.031 Annexation by petition method—Petition—Signers—Content. A petition for annexation of an area located within reasonable proximity to a fire district shall be in writing, addressed to and filed with the board of fire commissioners of the district to which annexation is desired. Such territory may be located in a county or counties other than the county or counties within which the fire protection district is located. It must be signed by the owners, according to the records of the county auditor or auditors, of not less than sixty percent of the area of land included in the annexation petition, shall set forth a legal description of the property and shall be accompanied by a plat which outlines the boundaries of the property to be annexed. The petition shall state the financial obligation, if any, to be assumed by the area to be annexed.

For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" has the same meaning as in RCW 52.26.020. [2018 c 28 § 4; 1999 c 105 § 2; 1989 c 63 § 9; 1984 c 230 § 24; 1965 c 59 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.08.066.]

52.04.041 Annexation by petition method—Hearing—Notice. If the petition for annexation filed with the board of commissioners complies with the requirements of law, the board may accept the petition, fix a date for public hearing, and publish notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the area proposed to be annexed and also post the notice in three public places within the area proposed for annexation. The notice shall specify the time and place of the hearing and invite interested persons to attend. The expense of publication of the notice shall be paid by the district. [1984 c 230 § 25; 1965 c 59 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.08.067.]

52.04.051 Annexation by petition method—Resolution providing for annexation. After the hearing, the board of fire commissioners shall determine by resolution whether the area shall be annexed. It may annex all or any portion of the proposed area but may not include in the annexation property not described in the petition. The proposed annexation shall be subject to action by the county legislative authority, as provided under RCW 52.04.011, to the same extent as if the annexation were done under the election method of annexation. If the area proposed to be annexed under this procedure is reduced, the annexation shall occur only if the owners of not less than sixty percent of the remaining area have signed the petition. After adoption of the resolution a copy shall be filed with the county legislative authority or authorities within which the territory is located. [1989 c 63 § 10; 1984 c 230 § 26; 1965 c 59 § 4. Formerly RCW 52.08.068.]

52.04.056 Withdrawal or reannexation of areas. (1)

As provided in this section, a fire protection district may withdraw areas from its boundaries, or reannex areas into the fire protection district that previously had been withdrawn from the fire protection district under this section.

(2) The withdrawal of an area shall be authorized upon:

(a) Adoption of a resolution by the board of fire commissioners requesting the withdrawal and finding that, in the opinion of the board, inclusion of this area within the fire protection district will result in a reduction of the district's tax levy rate under the provisions of RCW 84.52.010; and (b) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the withdrawal, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which the area is located approving the withdrawal, if the area is located outside of a city or town. A withdrawal shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the resolutions are adopted, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the second resolution.

The authority of an area to be withdrawn from a fire protection district as provided under this section is in addition, and not subject, to the provisions of RCW 52.04.101.

The withdrawal of an area from the boundaries of a fire protection district shall not exempt any property therein from taxation for the purpose of paying the costs of redeeming any indebtedness of the fire protection district existing at the time of the withdrawal.

(3) An area that has been withdrawn from the boundaries of a fire protection district under this section may be reannexed into the fire protection district upon: (a) Adoption of a resolution by the board of fire commissioners proposing the reannexation; and (b) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the reannexation, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties within which the area is located approving the reannexation, if the area is located outside of a city or town. The reannexation shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the adoption of the second resolution occurs, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the second resolution. Referendum action on the proposed reannexation may be taken by the voters of the area proposed to be reannexed if a petition calling for a referendum is filed with the city or town council, or county legislative authority or authorities, within a thirty-day period after the adoption of the second resolution, which petition has been signed by registered voters of the area proposed to be reannexed equal in number to ten percent of the total number of the registered voters residing in that area.

If a valid petition signed by the requisite number of registered voters has been so filed, the effect of the resolutions shall be held in abeyance and a ballot proposition to authorize the reannexation shall be submitted to the voters of the area at the next special election date according to RCW 29A.04.330. Approval of the ballot proposition authorizing the reannex-

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ation by a simple majority vote shall authorize the reannexation. [2006 c 344 § 33; 1989 c 63 § 11; 1987 c 138 § 3.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.04.061 Annexation of proximate city or town—

Procedure—Definition. (1) A city or town located within reasonable proximity to a fire protection district may be annexed to such district if at the time of the initiation of annexation the population of the city or town is 300,000 or less. The legislative authority of the city or town may initiate annexation by the adoption of an ordinance stating an intent to join the fire protection district and finding that the public interest will be served thereby. If the board of fire commissioners of the fire protection district shall concur in the annexation, notification thereof shall be transmitted to the legislative authority or authorities of the counties in which the city or town and the district are situated.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively. [2017 c 326 § 1; 2010 c 136 § 2; 2009 c 115 § 1; 1999 c 105 § 3; 1985 c 313 § 1; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.04.170.]

52.04.071 Annexation of proximate city or town—

Election. The county legislative authority or authorities shall by resolution call a special election to be held in the city or town and in the fire protection district at the next date according to RCW 29A.04.321, and shall cause notice of the election to be given as provided for in RCW 29A.52.355.

The election on the annexation of the city or town into the fire protection district shall be conducted by the auditor of the county or counties in which the city or town and the fire protection district are located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The results thereof shall be canvassed by the canvassing board of the county or counties. No person is entitled to vote at the election unless he or she is a qualified elector in the city or town or unless he or she is a qualified elector within the boundaries of the fire protection district. The ballot proposition shall be in substantially the following form:

"Shall the city or town of be annexed to and be a part of fire protection district?

YES
NO "

If a majority of the persons voting on the proposition in the city or town and a majority of the persons voting on the proposition in the fire protection district vote in favor thereof, the city or town shall be annexed and shall be a part of the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 2; 2011 c 10 § 82; 2009 c 115 § 2; 2006 c 344 § 34; 1984 c 230 § 16; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.04.180.]

Notice to registered poll voters—Elections by mail—2011 c 10: See note following RCW 29A.04.008.

Elections: Title 29A RCW.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.04.081 Annexation of proximate city or town—

Annual tax levies—Limitations. The annual tax levies

authorized by chapter 52.16 RCW shall be imposed throughout the fire protection district, including any city or town annexed thereto. Any city or town annexed to a fire protection district is entitled to levy up to three dollars and sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation less any regular levy made by the fire protection district or by a library district under RCW 27.12.390 in the incorporated area: PROVIDED, That the limitations upon regular property taxes imposed by chapter 84.55 RCW apply. [2017 c 326 § 3; 2009 c 115 § 3; 1984 c 230 § 17; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 4. Formerly RCW 52.04.190.]

52.04.091 Additional territory annexed by city to be part of district. When any city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district under RCW 52.04.061 and 52.04.071, thereafter, any territory annexed by the city shall also be annexed and be a part of the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 4; 2009 c 115 § 4; 1989 c 76 § 1.]

52.04.101 Withdrawal by annexed city or town—Election. The legislative body of such a city or town which has annexed to such a fire protection district may, by resolution, present to the voters of such city or town a proposition to withdraw from said fire protection district at any general election held at least three years following the annexation to the fire protection district. If the voters approve such a proposition to withdraw from said fire protection district, the city or town shall have a vested right in the capital assets of the district proportionate to the taxes levied within the corporate boundaries of the city or town and utilized by the fire protection district to acquire such assets. [2017 c 326 § 5; 2009 c 115 § 5; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.04.200.]

52.04.111 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees. (1) When any city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district under RCW 52.04.061 and 52.04.071, any employee of the fire department of such city, code city, or town who: (a) Was at the time of annexation employed exclusively or principally in performing the powers, duties, and functions which are to be performed by the fire protection district; (b) will, as a direct consequence of annexation, be separated from the employ of the city, code city, or town; and (c) can perform the duties and meet the minimum requirements of the position to be filled, then such employee may transfer his or her employment to the fire protection district as provided in this section and RCW 52.04.121 and 52.04.131.

(2) For purposes of this section and RCW 52.04.121 and 52.04.131, employee means an individual whose employment with a city, code city, or town has been terminated because the city, code city, or town was annexed by a fire protection district for purposes of fire protection. [2017 c 326 § 6; 2010 c 8 § 15001; 2009 c 115 § 6; 1986 c 254 § 10.]

52.04.121 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees—Rights and benefits. (1) An eligible employee may transfer into the fire protection district civil service system, if any, or if none, then may request transfer of employment under this section by filing a written request with the board of fire commissioners of the fire protection district and by giving written notice to the legislative

authority of the city, code city, or town. Upon receipt of such request by the board of fire commissioners the transfer of employment shall be made. The employee so transferring will: (a) Be on probation for the same period as are new employees of the fire protection district in the position filled, but if the transferring employee has already completed a probationary period as a firefighter prior to the transfer, then the employee may only be terminated during the probationary period for failure to adequately perform assigned duties, not meeting the minimum qualifications of the position, or behavior that would otherwise be subject to disciplinary action; (b) be eligible for promotion no later than after completion of the probationary period; (c) receive a salary at least equal to that of other new employees of the fire protection district in the position filled; and (d) in all other matters, such as retirement, vacation, and sick leave, have all the rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled as an employee of the fire protection district from the beginning of employment with the city, code city, or town fire department: PROVIDED, That for purposes of layoffs by the annexing fire agency, only the time of service accrued with the annexing agency shall apply unless an agreement is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the annexing and annexed fire agencies and the annexing and annexed fire agencies. The city, code city, or town shall, upon receipt of such notice, transmit to the board of fire commissioners a record of the employee's service with the city, code city, or town which shall be credited to such employee as a part of the period of employment in the fire protection district. All accrued benefits are transferable provided that the recipient agency provides comparable benefits. All benefits shall then accrue based on the combined seniority of each employee in the recipient agency.

(2) As many of the transferring employees shall be placed upon the payroll of the fire protection district as the district determines are needed to provide services. These needed employees shall be taken in order of seniority and the remaining employees who transfer as provided in this section and RCW 52.04.111 and 52.04.131 shall head the list for employment in the civil service system in order of their seniority, to the end that they shall be the first to be reemployed in the fire protection district when appropriate positions become available: PROVIDED, That employees who are not immediately hired by the fire protection district shall be placed on a reemployment list for a period not to exceed thirty-six months unless a longer period is authorized by an agreement reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the annexing and annexed fire agencies and the annexing and annexed fire agencies. [2017 c 326 § 7; 2009 c 115 § 7; 1994 c 73 § 4; 1986 c 254 § 11.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.04.131 Annexation of city, code city, or town—Transfer of employees—Notice—Time limitation. When a city, code city, or town is annexed to a fire protection district and as a result any employee is laid off who is eligible to transfer to the fire protection district pursuant to this section and RCW 52.04.111 and 52.04.121, the city, code city, or town shall notify the employee of the right to transfer and the employee shall have ninety days to transfer employment to

the fire protection district. [2017 c 326 § 8; 2009 c 115 § 8; 1986 c 254 § 12.]

52.04.141 Annexation of contiguous territory not in same county. Any attempted annexation in 1987 and thereafter by a fire protection district of contiguous territory, that is located in a county other than the county in which the fire protection district was located, is validated where the annexation would have occurred if the territory had been located in the same county as the fire protection district. The effective date of such annexations occurring in 1987 shall be February 1, 1988, for purposes of establishing the boundaries of taxing districts for purposes of imposing property taxes as provided in RCW 84.09.030.

Any reference to a county official of the county in which a fire protection district is located or proposed to be located shall be deemed to refer to the appropriate county official of each county in which the fire protection district is located or proposed to be located. [1988 c 274 § 12.]

Purpose—Severability—1988 c 274: See notes following RCW 84.52.010.

52.04.151 Annexation of territory not in same county—District name. Any fire protection district located in a single county that annexes territory in another county shall be identified by the name of each county in which the fire protection district is located, listed alphabetically, followed by a number that is the next highest number available for a fire protection district in the one of these counties that has the greatest number of fire protection districts. [1989 c 63 § 12.]

52.04.161 Newly incorporated city or town deemed annexed by district—Withdrawal. If the area of a newly incorporated city or town is located in one or more fire protection districts, the city or town is deemed to have been annexed by the fire protection district or districts effective immediately on the city's or town's official date of incorporation, unless the city or town council adopts a resolution during the interim transition period precluding the annexation of the newly incorporated city or town by the fire protection district or districts. The newly incorporated city or town shall remain annexed to the fire protection district or districts for the remainder of the year of the city's or town's official date of incorporation, or through the following year if such extension is approved by resolution adopted by the city or town council and by the board or boards of fire commissioners, and shall be withdrawn from the fire protection district or districts at the end of this period, unless a ballot proposition is adopted by the voters providing for annexation of the city or town to one fire protection district or providing for the fire protection district or districts to annex only that area of the city or town located within the district. Such election shall be held pursuant to RCW 52.04.071 where possible, provided that in annexations to more than one fire protection district, the qualified elector shall reside within the boundaries of the appropriate fire protection district or in that area of the city located within the district.

If the city or town is withdrawn from the fire protection district or districts, the maximum rate of the first property tax levy that is imposed by the city or town after the withdrawal

is calculated as if the city or town never had been annexed by the fire protection district or districts. [2003 c 253 § 1; 1993 c 262 § 1.]

52.04.171 Annexation of property subject to excess levy—Repayment of voter-approved indebtedness. All property located within the boundaries of a city, or town annexing into a fire protection district, which property is subject to an excess levy by the city or town for the repayment of voter-approved indebtedness for fire protection related capital improvements incurred prior to the effective date of the annexation, is exempt from voter-approved excess property taxes levied by the annexing fire protection district for the repayment of indebtedness issued prior to the effective date of the annexation. [2017 c 326 § 9; 2010 c 63 § 1.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.04.181 Final report—Fees assessed for fire protection—Findings—Annexation of parcels by local fire districts—Authority—Procedure. (1) On September 13, 2017, the joint legislative audit and review committee distributed the 17-06 final report: Fees assessed for forest fire protection. The report identified more than twenty thousand parcels of land that do not pay the forest fire protection assessment or a local fire district levy but are likely still protected by the department of natural resources or a local fire district.

The legislature finds that fire protection services at the state and local level are vital to the preservation of public and personal property throughout the state. The legislature further finds that fire protection resources are very limited in carrying out the substantial duties that fire protection services are asked to perform. Therefore, properties that benefit from fire protection should be required to contribute to the operation and maintenance of such essential services.

(2)(a) A local fire district may propose to annex any parcel or parcels having all boundaries of the property wholly within the external boundary of the requesting local fire district if such parcel or parcels are not presently being assessed a local fire district levy.

(b) Prior to annexing a parcel or parcels under this section the local fire district must:

(i) Verify with the county assessor that the parcel or parcels have all boundaries of the property wholly within the external boundary of the requesting local fire district and are not presently assessed a local fire district levy;

(ii) Notify the owner of record of each parcel in writing no less than sixty days prior to conducting a public hearing that the local fire district is seeking to annex the parcel; and

(iii) Hold at least one public hearing on the proposed annexation.

(3) Following the hearing, the local fire district must determine by resolution whether any parcel will be annexed. After adoption of the resolution, the local fire district must send a copy to the county legislative authority, the county assessor, and the owner of record of any parcel proposed to be annexed. The resolution must include a list of all parcels proposed to be annexed.

(4) Within thirty days of notification of the resolution, the owner of record of a parcel proposed to be annexed may appeal the proposed annexation to the county legislative authority. Issues raised under appeal may include compliance

with the process established under this section, whether the parcel is presently being assessed a local fire district levy, whether the levied amount is consistent with local fire district levy amounts, whether the local fire district actually has the resources to provide the parcel or parcels with timely service. The county legislative authority may address multiple appeals at the same hearing. The decision of the county legislative authority or its designee is not appealable.

(5) If the proposed annexation is upheld or no appeal is made within thirty days of notification of the resolution, the county legislative authority must approve the proposed annexation of any parcel or parcels of land submitted under subsection (3) of this section into the local fire district. The order must include a description of the property to be annexed and the effective date of the annexation. The order is not subject to referendum.

(6) A notice of intention must be filed with the boundary review board created under RCW 36.93.030. However, the jurisdiction of the board may not be invoked as described in RCW 36.93.100 for annexations under this section.

(7) Any local fire district levy to be imposed on a parcel annexed in accordance with this section may not be assessed until the next tax assessment cycle following the annexation.

(8) Annexations of a parcel or parcels of land under this section must be initiated by January 1, 2021.

(9) For the purposes of this section, "local fire district" means a fire district, regional fire protection service authority, city, or town.

(10) The annexation process established under this section is not exclusive and does not limit annexation through other statutory authorities. [2019 c 178 § 1.]

in the manner provided in this title. The fire protection districts may be located in different counties. The district desiring to merge with another district, or the district from which it is proposed that a portion of the district be merged with another district, shall be called the "merging district." The district into which the merger is to be made shall be called the "merger district." The merger of any districts under chapter 52.06 RCW is subject to potential review by the boundary review board or boards of the county in which the merging district, or the portion of the merging district that is proposed to be merged with another district, is located.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "reasonable proximity" means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively. [2017 c 326 § 10; 1989 c 63 § 13; 1984 c 230 § 57; 1947 c 254 § 12; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151a. Formerly RCW 52.24.010.]

52.06.020 Petition—Contents. To effect such a merger, a petition to merge shall be filed with the board of the merger district by the commissioners of the merging district. The commissioners of the merging district may sign and file the petition on their own initiative, and they shall file a petition when it is signed by ten percent of the registered voters resident in the merging district who voted in the last general municipal election and presented to the board of commissioners. The petition shall state the reasons for the merger, state the terms and conditions under which the merger is proposed, and request the merger. [1990 c 259 § 13; 1984 c 230 § 58; 1947 c 254 § 13; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151b. Formerly RCW 52.24.020.]

52.06.030 Action on petition—Special election. The board of the merger district may, by resolution, reject or approve the petition as presented, or it may modify the terms and conditions of the proposed merger, and shall transmit the petition, together with a copy of its resolution to the merging district.

If the petition is approved as presented or as modified, the board of the merging district shall send an elector-signed petition, if there is one, to the auditor or auditors of the county or counties in which the merging district is located, who shall within thirty days examine the signatures and certify to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. If the merging district is located in more than one county, the auditor of the county within which the largest portion of the merging district is located shall be the lead auditor. Each other auditor shall certify to the lead auditor the number of valid signatures and the number of registered voters of the merging district who reside in the county. The lead auditor shall certify as to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the signatures. No signatures may be withdrawn from the petition after the filing. A certificate of sufficiency shall be provided to the board of the merging district, which shall adopt a resolution requesting the county auditor or auditors to call a special election, as provided in RCW 29A.04.330, for the purpose of presenting the question of merging the districts to the voters of the merging district.

If there is no elector-signed petition, the merging district board shall adopt a resolution requesting the county auditor or auditors to call a special election in the merging district, as

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52.06.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board. Actions taken under chapter 52.06 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 43.]

52.06.010 Merger of districts authorized—Review—Definition. (1) A fire protection district may merge with another fire protection district located within a reasonable proximity, on such terms and conditions as they agree upon,

specified under RCW 29A.04.330, for the purpose of presenting the question of the merger to the electors. [2015 c 53 § 74; 1989 c 63 § 14; 1984 c 230 § 59; 1947 c 254 § 14; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151c. Formerly RCW 52.24.030.]

52.06.050 Vote required—Status after favorable vote. The board of the merging district shall notify the board of the merger district of the results of the election. If a majority of the votes cast at the election favor the merger, the respective district boards shall adopt concurrent resolutions, declaring the districts merged, under the name of the merger district. Thereupon the districts are merged into one district, under the name of the merger district; the merging district is dissolved without further proceedings; and the boundaries of the merger district are thereby extended to include all the area of the merging district. Thereafter the legal existence cannot be questioned by any person by reason of any defect in the proceedings had for the merger. [1995 c 79 § 1; 1947 c 254 § 16; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151e. Formerly RCW 52.24.050.]

52.06.060 Merger by petition. If three-fifths of all the qualified electors in the merging district sign the petition to merge, no election on the question of the merger is necessary and the auditor, or lead auditor if the merging district is located in more than a single county, shall return the petition, together with a certificate of sufficiency to the board of the merging district. The boards of the respective districts shall then adopt resolutions declaring the districts merged in the same manner and to the same effect as if the merger had been authorized by an election. [1989 c 63 § 15; 1984 c 230 § 61; 1947 c 254 § 17; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151f. Formerly RCW 52.24.060.]

52.06.070 Obligations of merged districts. None of the obligations of the merged districts or of a local improvement district located in the merged districts may be affected by the merger and dissolution, and all land liable to be assessed to pay any of the indebtedness shall remain liable to the same extent as if the districts had not been merged and any assessments previously levied against the land shall remain unimpaired and shall be collected in the same manner as if the districts had not merged. The commissioners of the merged district shall have all the powers of the two districts to levy, assess, and cause to be collected all assessments against any land in both districts that may be necessary to pay for the indebtedness thereof, and until the assessments are collected and all indebtedness of the districts paid, separate funds shall be maintained for each district as were maintained before the merger: PROVIDED, That the board of the merged district may, with the consent of the creditors of the districts merged, cancel any or all assessments previously levied, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the merger, so that the lands in the respective districts bear their fair and proportionate share of the indebtedness. [1984 c 230 § 62; 1947 c 254 § 18; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151g. Formerly RCW 52.24.070.]

52.06.080 Delivery of property and funds. The commissioners of the merging district shall, upon completion of the merger, transfer, convey, and deliver to the merged dis-

trict all property and funds of the merging district, together with all interest in and right to collect any assessments previously levied. [1984 c 230 § 63; 1947 c 254 § 19; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151h. Formerly RCW 52.24.080.]

52.06.085 Board membership upon merger of districts—Subsequent boards—Creation of commissioner districts. (1) Whenever two or more fire protection districts merge, the board of fire commissioners of the merged fire protection district shall consist of all of the fire commissioners of the districts that are merging, including a person who is elected as a fire commissioner of one of the merging districts at that same election that the ballot proposition was approved authorizing the merger, who shall retain the same terms of office they would possess as if the merger had not been approved. The number of members on the board of the merged district shall be reduced to either three or five members as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section, depending on whether the district has chosen to eventually have either a three-member or a five-member board under RCW 52.14.020.

(2) The number of members on the board of the merged district shall be reduced by one whenever a fire commissioner resigns from office or a vacancy otherwise occurs on the board, until the number of remaining members is reduced to the number of members that is chosen for the board eventually to have. The reduction of membership on the board shall not be considered to be a vacancy that is to be filled until the number of remaining members is less than the number of members on the board that is chosen for the board eventually to have.

(3) At the next three district general elections after the merger is approved, the number of fire commissioners for the merged district that are elected shall be as follows, notwithstanding the number of fire commissioners whose terms expire:

(a) In the first election after the merger, only one position shall be filled, whether the new fire protection district be a three-member district or a five-member district.

(b) In each of the two subsequent elections, one position shall be filled if the new fire protection district is a three-member district and two positions shall be filled if the new fire protection district is a five-member district.

Thereafter, the fire commissioners shall be elected in the same manner as prescribed for such fire protection districts of the state.

(4) A ballot proposition to create commissioner districts may be submitted to the voters of the fire protection districts proposed to be merged at the same election the ballot proposition is submitted authorizing the merging of the fire protection districts. The procedure to create commissioner districts shall conform with RCW 52.14.013, except that: (a) Resolutions proposing the creation of commissioner districts must be adopted by unanimous vote of the boards of fire commissioners of each of the fire protection districts that are proposed to be merged; and (b) commissioner districts will be authorized only if the ballot propositions to authorize the merger and to create commissioner districts are both approved. A ballot proposition authorizing the creation of commissioner districts is approved if it is approved by a simple majority vote of the combined voters of all the fire protec-

tion districts proposed to be merged. The commissioner districts shall not be drawn until the number of commissioners in the fire protection district has been reduced under subsections (1) through (3) of this section to either three or five commissioners. After this reduction of fire commissioners has occurred the commissioner districts shall be drawn and used for the election of the successor fire commissioners. [1994 c 14 § 1; 1992 c 74 § 1; 1985 c 7 § 118; 1977 ex.s. c 121 § 1; 1971 c 55 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.24.085.]

52.06.090 Merger of part of district with a district within reasonable proximity. A part of one district may be transferred and merged with a district located within reasonable proximity if the area can be better served by the merged district. To effect such a merger, a petition, signed by a majority of the commissioners of the merging district or signed by not less than fifteen percent of the qualified electors residing in the area to be merged, shall be filed with the commissioners of the merging district, if signed by electors, or with the commissioners of the merger district if signed by commissioners of the merging district. If the commissioners of the merging district approve the petition, the petition shall be presented to the commissioners of the merger district. If the commissioners of the merger district approve the petition, an election shall be called in the area to be merged.

In the event that either board of fire district commissioners does not approve the petition, the partial merger must not proceed.

A majority of the votes cast is necessary to approve the transfer. [2018 c 28 § 2; 2014 c 25 § 1; 1989 c 63 § 16; 1984 c 230 § 64; 1965 ex.s. c 18 § 2; 1963 c 42 § 1; 1953 c 176 § 5. Formerly RCW 52.24.090.]

52.06.100 Merger of part of district with adjacent district—When election unnecessary. If the partial merger petition has been approved by the commissioners of the merging district and the merger district and if three-fifths of the qualified electors in the area to be merged sign a petition to merge the districts, no election on the question of the merger is necessary, in which case the auditor or lead auditor shall return the petition, together with a certificate of sufficiency, to the board of the merger district. The board of the merger district shall then adopt a resolution declaring the portion of the district merged in the same manner and to the same effect as if the same had been authorized by an election. [2014 c 25 § 2; 1989 c 63 § 17; 1984 c 230 § 65; 1953 c 176 § 6. Formerly RCW 52.24.100.]

52.06.110 Transfer of employees. When any portion of a fire protection district merges with another fire protection district, any employee of the merging district who (1) was at the time of merger employed exclusively or principally in performing the powers, duties, and functions which are to be performed by the merger district (2) will, as a direct consequence of the merger, be separated from the employ of the merging district, and (3) can perform the duties and meet the minimum requirements of the position to be filled, then such employee may transfer employment to the merger district as provided in this section and RCW 52.06.120 and 52.06.130.

For purposes of this section and RCW 52.06.120 and 52.06.130, employee means an individual whose employment with a fire protection district has been terminated because the fire protection district merged with another fire protection district for purposes of fire protection. [1986 c 254 § 13.]

52.06.120 Transfer of employees—Rights and benefits. (1) An eligible employee may transfer into the merger district by filing a written request with the board of fire commissioners of the merger district and by giving written notice to the board of fire commissioners of the merging district. Upon receipt of such request by the board of the merger district the transfer of employment shall be made. The employee so transferring will (a) be on probation for the same period as are new employees of the merger district in the position filled, but if the transferring employee has already completed a probationary period as a firefighter prior to the transfer, then the employee may only be terminated during the probationary period for failure to adequately perform assigned duties, not meeting the minimum qualifications of the position, or behavior that would otherwise be subject to disciplinary action, (b) be eligible for promotion no later than after completion of the probationary period, (c) receive a salary at least equal to that of other new employees of the merger district in the position filled, and (d) in all other matters, such as retirement, vacation, and sick leave, have, all the rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled to as an employee of the merger district from the beginning of employment with the merging district: PROVIDED, That for purposes of layoffs by the merger fire agency, only the time of service accrued with the merger agency shall apply unless an agreement is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the merging and merger fire agencies and the merging and merger fire agencies. The board of the merging district shall, upon receipt of such notice, transmit to the board of the merger district a record of the employee's service with the merging district which shall be credited to such employee as a part of the period of employment in the merger district. All accrued benefits are transferable provided that the recipient agency provides comparable benefits. All benefits shall then accrue based on the combined seniority of each employee in the recipient agency.

(2) As many of the transferring employees shall be placed upon the payroll of the merger district as the merger district determines are needed to provide services. These needed employees shall be taken in order of seniority and the remaining employees who transfer as provided in this section and RCW 52.06.110 and 52.06.130 shall head the list for employment in order of their seniority, to the end that they shall be the first to be reemployed in the merger district when appropriate positions become available: PROVIDED, That employees who are not immediately hired by the fire protection district shall be placed on a reemployment list for a period not to exceed thirty-six months unless a longer period is authorized by an agreement reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the employees of the merging and merged fire agencies and the merging and merged fire agencies. [1994 c 73 § 5; 1986 c 254 § 14.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.06.130 Transfer of employees—Notice—Time limitation. If, as a result of merging of districts any employee is laid off who is eligible to transfer to the merger district under this section and RCW 52.06.110 and 52.06.120, the merging district shall notify the employee of the right to transfer and the employee shall have ninety days to transfer employment to the merger district. [1986 c 254 § 15.]

52.06.140 Merger of districts located in different counties—District name. A merger fire protection district located in a single county, that merged with a merging fire protection district located in another county or counties, shall be identified by the name of each county in which the fire protection district is located, listed alphabetically, followed by a number that is the next highest number available for a fire protection district in the one of these counties that has the greatest number of fire protection districts.

This section does not apply to partial mergers under RCW 52.06.090. [2014 c 25 § 3; 1989 c 63 § 18.]

52.06.150 Merger of districts located in same county—District name. A fire protection district resulting from the merger of two or more fire protection districts located in the same county shall be identified by the name of the county and the number of the merger fire protection district. However, the fire protection district resulting from such a merger shall be identified by the number of the merging district or one of the merging districts if a resolution providing for this number change is adopted by the board of fire commissioners of the district resulting from the merger or if resolutions providing for this number change are adopted by each of the boards of fire commissioners of the districts proposed to be merged. [1992 c 74 § 3.]

**Chapter 52.08 RCW
WITHDRAWAL**

Sections

- 52.08.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board.
- 52.08.011 Withdrawal authorized.
- 52.08.021 Withdrawal by incorporation of part of district.
- 52.08.025 City may not be included within district—Exceptions—Withdrawal of city.
- 52.08.035 City withdrawn to determine fire and emergency medical protection methods—Contracts—Joint operations—Sale, lease, etc., of property.
- 52.08.041 Taxes and assessments unaffected.
- 52.08.051 Commissioners residing in territory withdrawn—Vacancy created.

Special purpose districts, expenditures to recruit job candidates: RCW 42.24.170.

52.08.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board. Actions taken under chapter 52.08 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 44.]

52.08.011 Withdrawal authorized. Territory within a fire protection district may be withdrawn from the district in the same manner provided by law for withdrawal of territory from water-sewer districts, as provided by chapter 57.28 RCW. [1999 c 153 § 61; 1984 c 230 § 54; 1955 c 111 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.22.010.]

Withdrawal or reannexation of areas: RCW 52.04.056.

(2021 Ed.)

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.08.021 Withdrawal by incorporation of part of district. The incorporation of any previously unincorporated land lying within a fire protection district shall operate to automatically withdraw such lands from the fire protection district. [1959 c 237 § 5; 1955 c 111 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.22.020.]

52.08.025 City may not be included within district—Exceptions—Withdrawal of city. Effective January 1, 1960, every city or town, or portion thereof, which is situated within the boundaries of a fire protection district shall become automatically removed from such fire protection district, and no fire protection district shall thereafter include any city or town, or portion thereof, within its boundaries except as provided for in RCW 52.02.020, 52.04.061, 52.04.071, 52.04.081, 52.04.101, and 52.04.161.

However, if the area which incorporates or is annexed includes all of a fire protection district, the fire protection district, for purposes of imposing regular property taxes, shall continue in existence: (1)(a) Until the first day of January in the year in which the initial property tax collections of the newly incorporated city or town will be made, if a resolution is adopted under RCW 52.04.161 precluding annexation of the city or town to the district; (b) until the city or town is withdrawn from the fire protection district, if no such resolution is adopted and no ballot proposition under RCW 52.04.161 is approved; or (c) indefinitely, if such a ballot proposition is approved; or (2) until the first day of January in the year the annexing city or town will collect its property taxes imposed on the newly annexed area. The members of the city or town council or commission shall act as the board of commissioners to impose, receive, and expend these property taxes. [1993 c 262 § 2; 1986 c 234 § 35; 1985 c 7 § 119; 1979 ex.s. c 179 § 6; 1959 c 237 § 6. Formerly RCW 52.22.030.]

52.08.035 City withdrawn to determine fire and emergency medical protection methods—Contracts—Joint operations—Sale, lease, etc., of property. A city or town encompassing territory withdrawn under chapter 52.08 RCW shall determine the most effective and feasible fire protection and emergency medical protection for the withdrawn territory, or any part thereof, and the legislative authority of the city or town and the commissioners of the fire protection district may, without limitation of any other powers provided by law:

- (1) Enter into contracts to the same extent as fire protection districts and cities and towns may enter into contracts under authority of *RCW 52.12.031(3), and
- (2) Sell, purchase, rent, lease, or exchange property of every nature. [1984 c 230 § 55; 1959 c 237 § 8. Formerly RCW 52.22.040.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 52.12.031 was amended by 2019 c 402 § 1, changing subsection (3) to subsection (4).

52.08.041 Taxes and assessments unaffected. The provisions of RCW 57.28.110 shall apply to territory withdrawn from a fire protection district under the provision of

chapter 52.08 RCW. [1985 c 7 § 120; 1959 c 237 § 7. Formerly RCW 52.22.050.]

52.08.051 Commissioners residing in territory withdrawn—Vacancy created. Fire protection district commissioners residing in territory withdrawn from a fire protection district shall be replaced in the manner provided for the filling of vacancies in RCW 52.14.050. [1984 c 230 § 56; 1959 c 237 § 9. Formerly RCW 52.22.060.]

Chapter 52.10 RCW DISSOLUTION

Sections

52.10.001	Actions subject to review by boundary review board.
52.10.010	Dissolution—Election method.

52.10.001 Actions subject to review by boundary review board. Actions taken under chapter 52.10 RCW may be subject to potential review by a boundary review board under chapter 36.93 RCW. [1989 c 84 § 45.]

52.10.010 Dissolution—Election method. Fire protection districts may be dissolved by a majority vote of the registered electors of the district at an election conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in which the district is located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The proceedings for dissolution may be initiated by the adoption of a resolution by the board of commissioners of the district calling for the dissolution. The dissolution of the district shall not cancel outstanding obligations of the district or of a local improvement district within the district, and the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district was located may make annual levies against the lands within the district until the obligations of the districts are paid. When the obligations are fully paid, all moneys in district funds and all collections of unpaid district taxes shall be transferred to the expense fund of the county. Where the fire protection district that was dissolved was located in more than one county, the amount of money transferred to the expense fund of each county shall be in direct proportion to the amount of assessed valuation of the fire protection district that was located in each county at the time of its dissolution. [1989 c 63 § 19; 1984 c 230 § 15; 1939 c 34 § 46; RRS § 5654-146. Formerly RCW 52.04.155.]

Dissolution of special purpose districts: Chapters 36.96 and 53.48 RCW.

Chapter 52.12 RCW POWERS—BURNING PERMITS

Sections

52.12.011	Status.
52.12.021	General powers.
52.12.031	Specific powers—Acquisition or lease of property or equipment—Contracts—Association of districts—Group life insurance—Building inspections—Fire investigations.
52.12.036	Community revitalization financing—Public improvements.
52.12.041	Eminent domain.
52.12.051	Condemnation proceedings.
52.12.061	Contracts, promissory notes, deeds of trust, and mortgages for purchase of property—Limit on indebtedness—Election, when.
52.12.071	Liability insurance for officials and employees.
52.12.101	Burning permits authorized—Resolution.

52.12.102	Burning permits—Resolution to be published and posted.
52.12.103	Burning permits—Issuance—Contents.
52.12.104	Burning permits—Duties of permittee.
52.12.105	Burning permits—Penalty.
52.12.106	Burning permits—Penalty.
52.12.108	Burning permits—Liability for fire suppression costs.
52.12.111	Use of equipment and personnel beyond district boundaries—Governmental function.
52.12.121	Use of equipment and personnel outside district—Duty of firefighter deemed duty for district—Benefits not impaired.
52.12.125	Reimbursement for fire suppression costs on state lands—Limitations.
52.12.131	Emergency medical services—Establishment and collection of charges.
52.12.135	Interlocal agreements for ambulance services.
52.12.140	Hazardous materials response teams.
52.12.150	Setting fires for firefighter instruction—When burning permit not required—Notice, inspection required.
52.12.160	Firefighting services for unprotected lands.

Association of fire commissioners to furnish information to legislature and governor: RCW 44.04.170.

52.12.011 Status. Fire protection districts created under this title are political subdivisions of the state and shall be held to be municipal corporations within the laws and Constitution of the state of Washington. A fire protection district shall constitute a body corporate and possess all the usual powers of a corporation for public purposes as well as all other powers that may now or hereafter be specifically conferred by law. [1984 c 230 § 18; 1967 c 164 § 5; 1939 c 34 § 15; RRS § 5654-115. Formerly RCW 52.08.010.]

Purpose—Severability—1967 c 164: See notes following RCW 4.96.010.

Tortious conduct of political subdivisions, municipal corporations, and quasi municipal corporations, liability for damages: Chapter 4.96 RCW.

52.12.021 General powers. Fire protection districts have full authority to carry out their purposes and to that end may acquire, purchase, hold, lease, manage, occupy, and sell real and personal property, or any interest therein, to enter into and to perform any and all necessary contracts, to appoint and employ the necessary officers, agents, and employees, to sue and be sued, to exercise the right of eminent domain, to levy and enforce the collection of assessments and special taxes in the manner and subject to the limitations provided in this title against the lands within the district for district revenues, and to do any and all lawful acts required and expedient to carry out the purpose of this title. [1984 c 230 § 19; 1939 c 34 § 16; RRS § 5654-116. Formerly RCW 52.08.020.]

52.12.031 Specific powers—Acquisition or lease of property or equipment—Contracts—Association of districts—Group life insurance—Building inspections—Fire investigations. Any fire protection district organized under this title may:

(1) Lease, acquire, own, maintain, operate, and provide fire and emergency medical apparatus and all other necessary or proper facilities, machinery, and equipment for the prevention and suppression of fires, the providing of emergency medical services and the protection of life and property;

(2) Enter into an interlocal agreement with any local jurisdiction to maintain and repair any vehicle or equipment owned and used exclusively by such county, city, town, school district, or other political subdivision of the state of Washington. As used in this subsection, "local jurisdiction"

means any county, city, town, school district, or other political subdivision of the state of Washington;

(3) Lease, acquire, own, maintain, and operate real property, improvements, and fixtures for housing, repairing, and maintaining the apparatus, facilities, machinery, and equipment described in subsection (1) of this section;

(4) Contract with any governmental entity under chapter 39.34 RCW or private person or entity to consolidate, provide, or cooperate for fire prevention protection, fire suppression, investigation, and emergency medical purposes. In so contracting, the district or governmental entity is deemed for all purposes to be acting within its governmental capacity. This contracting authority includes the furnishing of fire prevention, fire suppression, investigation, emergency medical services, facilities, and equipment to or by the district, governmental entity, or private person or entity;

(5) Encourage uniformity and coordination of fire protection district operations. The fire commissioners of fire protection districts may form an association to secure information of value in suppressing and preventing fires and other district purposes, to hold and attend meetings, and to promote more economical and efficient operation of the associated fire protection districts. The commissioners of fire protection districts in the association shall adopt articles of association or articles of incorporation for a nonprofit corporation, select a chair, secretary, and other officers as they may determine, and may employ and discharge agents and employees as the officers deem convenient to carry out the purposes of the association. The expenses of the association may be paid from funds paid into the association by fire protection districts: PROVIDED, That the aggregate contributions made to the association by a district in a calendar year shall not exceed two and one-half cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation;

(6) Enter into contracts to provide group life insurance for the benefit of the personnel of the fire districts;

(7) Perform building and property inspections that the district deems necessary to provide fire prevention services and pre-fire planning within the district and any area that the district serves by contract in accordance with RCW 19.27.110: PROVIDED, That codes used by the district for building and property inspections shall be limited to the applicable codes adopted by the state, county, city, or town that has jurisdiction over the area in which the property is located. A copy of inspection reports prepared by the district shall be furnished by the district to the appropriate state, county, city, or town that has jurisdiction over the area in which the property is located: PROVIDED, That nothing in this subsection shall be construed to grant code enforcement authority to a district. This subsection shall not be construed as imposing liability on any governmental jurisdiction;

(8) Determine the origin and cause of fires occurring within the district and any area the district serves by contract. In exercising the authority conferred by this subsection, the fire protection district and its authorized representatives shall comply with the provisions of RCW 43.44.050;

(9) Perform acts consistent with this title and not otherwise prohibited by law. [2019 c 402 § 1; 2010 c 8 § 15002; 1995 c 369 § 65; 1986 c 311 § 1; 1984 c 238 § 1; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 48; 1963 c 101 § 1; 1959 c 237 § 2; 1947 c 254

(2021 Ed.)

§ 6; 1941 c 70 § 4; 1939 c 34 § 20; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-120. Formerly RCW 52.08.030.]

Hospitalization and medical insurance authorized: RCW 41.04.180.

Use of city fire apparatus beyond city limits: RCW 35.84.040.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.12.036 Community revitalization financing—Public improvements. In addition to other authority that a fire protection district possesses, a fire protection district may provide any public improvement as defined under RCW 39.89.020, but this additional authority is limited to participating in the financing of the public improvements as provided under RCW 39.89.050.

This section does not limit the authority of a fire protection district to otherwise participate in the public improvements if that authority exists elsewhere. [2001 c 212 § 17.]

52.12.041 Eminent domain. The taking and damaging of property or property rights by a fire protection district to carry out the purposes of its organization are declared to be for a public use. A district organized under this title may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire property or property rights either inside or outside the district, for the use of the district. A district exercising the power of eminent domain shall proceed in the name of the district in the manner provided by law for the appropriation of real property or of real property rights by private corporations. [1984 c 230 § 20; 1939 c 34 § 18; RRS § 5654-118. Formerly RCW 52.08.040.]

Eminent domain: State Constitution Art. 1 § 16 (Amendment 9); chapter 8.20 RCW.

52.12.051 Condemnation proceedings. A fire protection district may unite in a single action, proceedings to condemn property which is held by separate owners. Two or more condemnation suits instituted separately may also, in the discretion of the court, upon a motion of an interested party, be consolidated into a single action. In these cases, the jury shall render separate verdicts for each tract of land in different ownership. A finding of the jury or decree of the court as to damages shall not in any manner be construed to abridge or destroy the right of the district to levy and collect taxes for district purposes against the uncondemned land situated within the district. The title acquired by a fire protection district in condemnation proceedings shall be the fee simple title or a lesser estate as designated in the decree of appropriation. [1984 c 230 § 21; 1939 c 34 § 19; RRS § 5654-119. Formerly RCW 52.08.050.]

52.12.061 Contracts, promissory notes, deeds of trust, and mortgages for purchase of property—Limit on indebtedness—Election, when. Fire protection districts may execute executory conditional sales contracts, installment promissory notes secured by a deed of trust, or mortgages with a governmental entity or a private party for the purchase or sale of any real or personal property, or property rights: PROVIDED, That the purchase price specified in a contract or promissory note to purchase property does not result in a total indebtedness in excess of three-eighths of one percent of the value of the taxable property in the fire protection district: PROVIDED FURTHER, That if a proposed pur-

chase contract or promissory note would result in a total indebtedness in excess of that amount, a proposition to determine whether that contract or promissory note may be executed shall be submitted to the voters for approval or rejection in the same manner that bond issues for capital purposes are submitted to the voters: AND PROVIDED FURTHER, That a fire protection district may jointly execute contracts, promissory notes, deeds of trust, or mortgages authorized by this section with any governmental entity.

The term "value of the taxable property" shall have the meaning set forth in RCW 39.36.015. [1984 c 230 § 27; 1970 ex.s. c 42 § 29; 1965 c 21 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.08.080.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.12.071 Liability insurance for officials and employees. The board of commissioners of each fire district may purchase liability insurance with limits it deems reasonable for the purpose of protecting its officials and employees against liability for personal or bodily injuries and property damage arising from their acts or omissions while performing or in good faith purporting to perform their official duties. [1984 c 230 § 28; 1973 c 125 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.08.090.]

52.12.101 Burning permits authorized—Resolution. In any district in which the commissioners have adopted and published a resolution assuming the authority of issuing burning permits, a person, firm, or corporation shall not start, permit, or cause to be started or permitted an open fire on any land within a fire protection district, without a written permit issued by the district under terms and conditions as the district establishes by resolution. A fire district shall not assume authority to issue a burning permit for a fire on any forest or cut over land, except as otherwise provided by law. A fire district shall have the authority to revoke a permit issued by the district for the protection of life or property or to prevent or abate the nuisances caused by such burning. [1987 c 21 § 1; 1984 c 229 § 1; 1947 c 254 § 20; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151i. Formerly RCW 52.28.010.]

52.12.102 Burning permits—Resolution to be published and posted. The commissioners of a district may adopt a resolution authorizing the district to issue fire permits and establishing the terms and conditions under which the permit shall be issued. Notice of the resolution shall be published once a week for three consecutive weeks in a newspaper published in the county and of general circulation in the district and post it in three public places in the district. The affidavit of publication by the publisher and of the clerk of the district of the posting shall be filed in the records of the district. Ten days after the posting and the last publication, the resolution shall take effect. [1984 c 229 § 2; 1947 c 254 § 21; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151j. Formerly RCW 52.28.020.]

52.12.103 Burning permits—Issuance—Contents. Burning permits may be issued upon request, by the persons authorized by the commissioners when the issuing officer deems it appropriate. The permit shall designate the premises and the exact location where the fire may be started and permitted, the nature of the material to be burned, the time limit of the permit, and may contain any special requirements and

conditions pertaining to the fire and the control of the fire as the issuing officer deems appropriate. [1984 c 229 § 3; 1947 c 254 § 22; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151k. Formerly RCW 52.28.030.]

52.12.104 Burning permits—Duties of permittee. The permittee shall comply with the terms and conditions of the permit, and shall maintain a responsible person in charge of the fire at all times who shall maintain the fire under control, not permit it to spread to other property or structures, and extinguish the fire when the authorized burning is completed or when directed by district personnel. The possession of a permit shall not relieve the permittee from liability for damages resulting from the fire for which the permittee may otherwise be liable. [1984 c 229 § 4; 1947 c 254 § 23; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151l. Formerly RCW 52.28.040.]

Crimes relating to fires: Chapter 9A.48 RCW.

Liability for fire damage: RCW 4.24.040, 4.24.050, 4.24.060, 76.04.495, 76.04.750.

52.12.105 Burning permits—Penalty. The violation of or failure to comply with any provision of this chapter pertaining to fire permits, or of any term or condition of the permit, is a misdemeanor. [1947 c 254 § 24; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151m. Formerly RCW 52.28.050.]

52.12.106 Burning permits—Penalty. The violation of or failure to comply with any provision of this chapter pertaining to fire permits, or of any term or condition of the permit, is a misdemeanor. [1984 c 229 § 5.]

52.12.108 Burning permits—Liability for fire suppression costs. If a person starts a fire without a permit or if a permit holder fails to comply with any provision of this chapter pertaining to fire permits, or of any term or condition of the permit, and as a result of that failure the district is required to suppress a fire, the person or permit holder is liable to the district to reimburse it for the costs of the fire suppression services. [1984 c 229 § 6.]

52.12.111 Use of equipment and personnel beyond district boundaries—Governmental function. A fire protection district may permit, under conditions prescribed by the fire commissioners of the district, the use of its equipment and personnel beyond the boundaries of the district. Any use made of the equipment or personnel under this section shall be deemed an exercise of a governmental function of the district. [1984 c 230 § 77; 1980 c 43 § 1; 1969 c 88 § 2. Formerly RCW 52.36.025.]

52.12.121 Use of equipment and personnel outside district—Duty of firefighter deemed duty for district—Benefits not impaired. If a firefighter engages in any duty outside the boundaries of the district the duty shall be considered as part of the duty as firefighter for the district, and a firefighter who is injured while engaged in duties outside the boundaries of the district shall be entitled to the same benefits that the firefighter or the firefighter's dependents would be entitled to receive if the injury occurred within the district. [1984 c 230 § 78; 1969 c 88 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.36.027.]

52.12.125 Reimbursement for fire suppression costs on state lands—Limitations. Fire protection districts in proximity to land protected by a state agency are encouraged to enter into mutually beneficial contracts covering reciprocal response arrangements. In the absence of such a contractual agreement, a fire protection district that takes immediate action on such land outside of its jurisdictional boundaries, if such immediate response could prevent the spread of the fire onto lands protected by the district, shall be reimbursed by the state agency for its reasonable fire suppression costs that are incurred until the responsible agency takes charge, but in no event shall the costs exceed a twenty-four hour period. A fire protection district suppressing a fire on such lands shall as soon as practicable notify the responsible agency. The state agency shall not be responsible to pay such reimbursement if it is not so notified.

Reasonable efforts shall be taken to protect evidence of the fire's origin. The state agency shall not be responsible to pay such reimbursement if reasonable efforts are not taken to protect such evidence.

Requests for reimbursement shall be submitted within thirty days of the complete suppression of the fire. Reasonable costs submitted for reimbursement include all salaries and expenses of personnel, equipment, and supplies and shall take into consideration the amount of compensation, if any, paid by the fire protection district to its firefighters. [1986 c 311 § 2.]

52.12.131 Emergency medical services—Establishment and collection of charges. Any fire protection district which provides emergency medical services, may by resolution establish and collect reasonable charges for these services in order to reimburse the district for its costs of providing emergency medical services. [1984 c 230 § 81; 1975 c 64 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.36.090.]

52.12.135 Interlocal agreements for ambulance services. (1) A rural fire protection district organized under this title may enter into a contract pursuant to chapter 39.34 RCW with a contiguous city for the furnishing by the city to the fire protection district or districts of emergency medical services in the form of ambulance services, provided that the contract may not provide for the establishment of any ambulance service that would compete with any existing, private ambulance service. The fire protection district or districts may impose a monthly utility service charge on each developed residential property located in the portion of the fire protection district or districts served pursuant to the contract in an amount equal to the amount imposed by the city on similar city developed residential property. Developed residential property includes single-family residences, apartments, manufactured homes, mobile homes, and trailers available for occupancy for a continuous period greater than thirty days. A fire protection district or districts may contract with the contiguous city or with any other governmental entity pursuant to chapter 39.34 RCW for the billing and collection services related to the monthly utility service charge for ambulance service. A city providing ambulance services to a fire protection district or districts under a contract entered into pursuant to this subsection may charge individuals actually using the

ambulance services reasonable rates and charges for the ambulance services.

(2) For purposes of this section, "rural" means a population density within the fire protection district or districts as a whole of ten or fewer persons per square mile. [2003 c 209 § 1.]

52.12.140 Hazardous materials response teams. Fire protection districts may cooperate and participate with counties, cities, or towns in providing hazardous materials response teams under the county, city, or town emergency management plan provided for in RCW 38.52.070. The participation and cooperation shall be pursuant to an agreement or contract entered into under chapter 39.34 RCW. [1986 c 278 § 49.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.12.150 Setting fires for firefighter instruction—When burning permit not required—Notice, inspection required. Without obtaining a permit issued under RCW 70A.15.5090, fire protection district firefighters may set fire to structures located outside of urban growth areas in counties that plan under the requirements of RCW 36.70A.040, and outside of any city with a population of ten thousand or more in all other counties, for instruction in methods of firefighting, if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) In consideration of prevailing air patterns, the fire is unlikely to cause air pollution in areas of sensitivity downwind of the proposed fire location;

(2) The fire is not located in an area that is declared to be in an air pollution episode or any stage of an impaired air quality as defined in RCW 70A.15.6010 and 70A.15.3580;

(3) Nuisance laws are applicable to the fire, including nuisances related to the unreasonable interference with the enjoyment of life and property and the depositing of particulate matter or ash on other property;

(4) Notice of the fire is provided to the owners of property adjoining the property on which the fire will occur, to other persons who potentially will be impacted by the fire, and to additional persons in a broader manner as specifically requested by the local air pollution control agency or the department of ecology;

(5) Each structure that is proposed to be set on fire must be identified specifically as a structure to be set on fire. Each other structure on the same parcel of property that is not proposed to be set on fire must be identified specifically as a structure not to be set on fire; and

(6) Before setting a structure on fire, a good-faith inspection is conducted by the fire agency or fire protection district conducting the training fire to determine if materials containing asbestos are present, the inspection is documented in writing and forwarded to the appropriate local air authority or the department of ecology if there is no local air authority, and asbestos that is found is removed as required by state and federal laws. [2021 c 65 § 58; 2000 c 199 § 1; 1994 c 28 § 1.]

Explanatory statement—2021 c 65: See note following RCW 53.54.030.

52.12.160 Firefighting services for unprotected lands. (1) The definitions in this section apply throughout

this section and RCW 4.24.780 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Fire protection service agency" or "agency" means any local, state, or federal governmental entity responsible for the provision of firefighting services, including fire protection districts, regional fire protection service authorities, cities, towns, port districts, the department of natural resources, and federal reservations.

(b) "Fire protection jurisdiction" means an area or property located within a fire protection district, a regional fire protection service authority, a city, a town, a port district, lands protected by the department of natural resources under chapter 76.04 RCW, or on federal lands.

(c) "Firefighting services" means the provision of fire prevention services, fire suppression services, emergency medical services, and other services related to the protection of life and property.

(d) "Improved property" means property upon which a structure is located, including bridges and agricultural structures as defined in RCW 19.27.015.

(e) "Property" means land, structures, or land and structures.

(f) "Unimproved property" has the same meaning as "unimproved lands" in RCW 76.04.005.

(g) "Unprotected land" means improved property located outside a fire protection jurisdiction.

(2)(a) In order to facilitate the provision of firefighting services to unprotected lands, property owners of unprotected lands are encouraged, to the extent practicable, to form or annex into a fire protection jurisdiction or to enter into a written contractual agreement with a fire protection service agency or agencies for the provision of firefighting services. Any written contractual agreement between a property owner and a fire protection service agency must include, at minimum, a risk assessment of the property as well as a capabilities assessment for the district.

(b) Property owners of unprotected land who choose not to form or annex into a fire protection jurisdiction or to enter into a written contractual agreement with a fire protection agency or agencies for the provision of firefighting services, do so willingly and with full knowledge that a fire protection service agency is not obligated to provide firefighting services to unprotected land.

(3) In the absence of a written contractual agreement, a fire protection service agency may initiate firefighting services on unprotected land outside its fire protection jurisdiction in the following instances: (a) Service was specifically requested by a landowner or other fire service protection agency; (b) service could reasonably be believed to prevent the spread of a fire onto lands protected by the agency; or (c) service could reasonably be believed to substantially mitigate the risk of harm to life or property by preventing the spread of a fire onto other unprotected lands.

(4)(a) The property owner or owners shall reimburse an agency initiating firefighting services on unprotected land outside its fire protection jurisdiction for actual costs that are incurred that are proportionate to the fire itself. Cost recovery is based upon the Washington fire chiefs standardized fire service fee schedule.

(b) If a property owner fails to pay or defaults in payment to an agency for services rendered, the agency is entitled to

pursue payment through the collections process outlined in RCW 19.16.500 or through initiation of court action. [2012 c 14 § 1; 2011 c 200 § 1.]

Chapter 52.14 RCW COMMISSIONERS

Sections

52.14.010	Number—Qualifications—Insurance—Compensation and expenses—Service as volunteer firefighter.
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52.14.020	Number of commissioners in district—Terms of first appointees.
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52.14.130	Low bidder claiming error—Prohibition on later bid for same project.
52.14.140	Governance authority of fire protection district.

52.14.010 Number—Qualifications—Insurance—Compensation and expenses—Service as volunteer firefighter. (1) The affairs of the district shall be managed by a board of fire commissioners composed initially of three registered voters residing in the district, except as provided otherwise in RCW 52.14.015, 52.14.020, and 52.14.140.

(2)(a) Each member of an elected board of fire commissioners shall each receive one hundred four dollars per day or portion thereof, not to exceed nine thousand nine hundred eighty-four dollars per year, for time spent in actual attendance at official meetings of the board or in performance of other services or duties on behalf of the district. Members serving in an ex officio capacity on a board of fire commissioners may not receive compensation, but shall receive necessary expenses in accordance with (b) of this subsection.

(b) Each member of a board of fire commissioners shall receive necessary expenses incurred in attending meetings of the board or when otherwise engaged in district business, and shall be entitled to receive the same insurance available to all firefighters of the district: PROVIDED, That the premiums for such insurance, except liability insurance, shall be paid by the individual commissioners who elect to receive it.

(c) Any commissioner may waive all or any portion of his or her compensation payable under this section as to any month or months during his or her term of office, by a written waiver filed with the secretary as provided in this section. The waiver, to be effective, must be filed any time after the commissioner's election and prior to the date on which the compensation would otherwise be paid. The waiver shall specify the month or period of months for which it is made.

(3) The board shall fix the compensation to be paid the secretary and all other agents and employees of the district. The board may, by resolution adopted by unanimous vote, authorize any of its members to serve as volunteer firefighters without compensation. A commissioner actually serving

as a volunteer firefighter may enjoy the rights and benefits of a volunteer firefighter.

(4) The dollar thresholds established in this section must be adjusted for inflation by the office of financial management every five years, beginning January 1, 2019, based upon changes in the consumer price index during that time period. "Consumer price index" means, for any calendar year, that year's annual average consumer price index, for Washington state, for wage earners and clerical workers, all items, compiled by the bureau of labor and statistics, United States department of labor. If the bureau of labor and statistics develops more than one consumer price index for areas within the state, the index covering the greatest number of people, covering areas exclusively within the boundaries of the state, and including all items shall be used for the adjustments for inflation in this section. The office of financial management must calculate the new dollar threshold and transmit it to the office of the code reviser for publication in the Washington State Register at least one month before the new dollar threshold is to take effect.

(5) A person holding office as commissioner for two or more special purpose districts or serving ex officio as commissioner as a member of the legislative authority of a city or town shall receive only that per diem compensation authorized for one of his or her official positions as compensation for attending an official meeting or conducting official services or duties while representing more than one district or representing a municipality and a district. However, such commissioner may receive additional per diem compensation if approved by resolution of the boards of an affected commission, city, or town. [2017 c 328 § 7; 2017 c 58 § 1; 2012 c 174 § 1; 2007 c 469 § 2; 1998 c 121 § 2; 1994 c 223 § 48; 1985 c 330 § 2; 1980 c 27 § 1; 1979 ex.s. c 126 § 31; 1973 c 86 § 1; 1971 ex.s. c 242 § 2; 1969 ex.s. c 67 § 1; 1967 c 51 § 1; 1965 c 112 § 1; 1959 c 237 § 4; 1957 c 238 § 1; 1945 c 162 § 3; 1939 c 34 § 22; Rem. Supp. 1945 § 5654-122. Formerly RCW 52.12.010.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2017 c 58 § 1 and by 2017 c 328 § 7, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126: See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

Terms of commissioners: RCW 52.14.060.

52.14.013 Commissioner districts—Creation—Boundaries. The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may adopt a resolution by unanimous vote causing a ballot proposition to be submitted to voters of the district authorizing the creation of commissioner districts. The board of fire commissioners shall create commissioner districts if the ballot proposition authorizing the creation of commissioner districts is approved by a simple majority vote of the voters of the fire protection district voting on the proposition. Three commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with three commissioners, five commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with five commissioners, and seven commissioner districts shall be created for a fire protection district with seven commissioners. No two commissioners may reside in the same commissioner district.

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No change in the boundaries of any commissioner district shall be made within one hundred twenty days next before the date of a general district election, nor within twenty months after the commissioner districts have been established or altered unless pursuant to RCW 29A.92.040 or 29A.92.110. However, if a boundary change results in one commissioner district being represented by two or more commissioners, those commissioners having the shortest unexpired terms shall be assigned by the commission to commissioner districts where there is a vacancy, and the commissioners so assigned shall be deemed to be residents of the commissioner districts to which they are assigned for purposes of determining whether those positions are vacant.

The population of each commissioner district shall include approximately equal population. Commissioner districts shall be redrawn as provided in chapter 29A.76 RCW. Commissioner districts shall be used as follows: (1) Only a registered voter who resides in a commissioner district may be a candidate for, or serve as, a commissioner of the commissioner district; and (2) only voters of a commissioner district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a commissioner of the commissioner district. Voters of the entire fire protection district may vote at a general election to elect a person as a commissioner of the commissioner district.

When a board of fire commissioners that has commissioner districts has been increased to five or seven members under RCW 52.14.015, the board of fire commissioners shall divide the fire protection district into five or seven commissioner districts before it appoints the two or four additional fire commissioners. The two or four additional fire commissioners who are appointed shall reside in separate commissioner districts in which no other fire commissioner resides. [2019 c 454 § 8; 2012 c 174 § 3; 1994 c 223 § 49; 1992 c 74 § 2.]

Retroactive application—Effective date—2019 c 454: See notes following RCW 29A.92.050.

Creation of commissioner districts upon merger: RCW 52.06.085.

52.14.015 Increase in the number of commissioners—Election. In the event a board of commissioners of any fire protection district determines by resolution that it would be in the best interest of the district to increase the number of commissioners to five or seven, or in the event the board is presented with a petition signed by 10 percent of the registered voters resident within the district who voted in the last general municipal election calling for such an increase in the number of commissioners of the district, the board shall submit a resolution to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district is located requesting that an election be held. Upon receipt of the resolution, the legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties shall call a special election to be held within the fire protection district at which election the following proposition shall be submitted to the voters substantially as follows:

Shall the board of commissioners of county fire protection district no. . . . be increased from (three or five) members to (five or seven) members?

Yes

No

If the fire protection district is located in more than a single county, this proposition shall indicate the name of the district.

If the proposition receives a majority approval at the election, the board of commissioners of the fire protection district shall be increased to five or seven members. The additional members shall be appointed in the same manner as provided in RCW 52.14.020. [2021 c 34 § 1; 2012 c 174 § 4; 1994 c 223 § 50; 1990 c 259 § 14; 1989 c 63 § 20; 1984 c 230 § 85.]

52.14.017 Decrease in the number of commissioners—Election—Disposition of commissioner districts. Except as provided in RCW 52.14.020, in the event a five-member or seven-member board of commissioners of any fire protection district determines by resolution that it would be in the best interest of the fire protection district to decrease the number of commissioners from five to three or from seven to five, or in the event the board is presented with a petition signed by ten percent of the registered voters resident within the district who voted in the last general municipal election calling for such a decrease in the number of commissioners of the district, the board shall submit a resolution to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district is located requesting that an election be held. Upon receipt of the resolution, the legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties shall call a special election to be held within the fire protection district at which election the following proposition shall be submitted to the voters substantially as follows:

Shall the board of commissioners of county fire protection district no. . . . be decreased from five (seven) members to three (five) members?

Yes

No

If the fire protection district has commissioner districts, the commissioners of the district must pass a resolution, before the submission of the proposition to the voters, to either redistrict from five or seven commissioner districts to three or five commissioner districts or eliminate the commissioner districts. The resolution takes effect upon approval of the proposition by the voters.

If the fire protection district is located in more than a single county, this proposition shall indicate the name of the district.

If the proposition receives a majority approval at the election, the board of commissioners of the fire protection district shall be decreased to five or three members. The two members shall be decreased in accordance with RCW 52.06.085. [2012 c 174 § 5; 1997 c 43 § 1.]

52.14.020 Number of commissioners in district—Terms of first appointees. (1) In a fire protection district with elected commissioners that maintains a fire department consisting wholly of personnel employed on a full-time, fully-paid basis, there shall be five fire commissioners. A fire

protection district with an annual budget of ten million dollars or more may have seven fire commissioners.

(2)(a) If two positions are created on boards of fire commissioners by this section, such positions shall be filled initially as for a vacancy, except that the appointees shall draw lots, one appointee to serve until the next general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms, and the other appointee to serve until the second general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms.

(b) If four positions are created on boards of fire commissioners by this section, such positions shall be filled initially as for a vacancy, except that the appointees shall draw lots, three appointees to serve until the next general fire district election after the appointment, at which three commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms and two commissioners shall be elected for four-year terms, and the other appointee to serve until the second general fire district election after the appointment, at which two commissioners shall be elected for six-year terms. [2017 c 328 § 8; 2012 c 174 § 2; 1984 c 230 § 29; 1971 ex.s. c 242 § 3. Formerly RCW 52.12.015.]

52.14.030 Polling places. The polling places for a fire protection district election may be located inside or outside the boundaries of the district, as determined by the auditor of the county in which the fire protection district is located, and the elections of the fire protection district shall not be held to be irregular or void on that account. [1994 c 223 § 51; 1984 c 230 § 31; 1939 c 34 § 24; RRS § 5654-124. Formerly RCW 52.12.030.]

52.14.050 Vacancies. Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall occur as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. In addition, if a fire commissioner is absent from the district for three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings unless by permission of the board, the office shall be declared vacant by the board of commissioners. However, such an action shall not be taken unless the commissioner is notified by mail after two consecutive unexcused absences that the position will be declared vacant if the commissioner is absent without being excused from the next regularly scheduled meeting. Vacancies on a board of fire commissioners shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW. [1994 c 223 § 52; 1989 c 63 § 21; 1984 c 238 § 2; 1977 c 64 § 1; 1974 ex.s. c 17 § 1; 1971 ex.s. c 153 § 1; 1939 c 34 § 26; RRS § 5654-126. Formerly RCW 52.12.050.]

52.14.060 Commissioner's terms. The initial three members of the board of fire commissioners shall be elected at the same election as when the ballot proposition is submitted to the voters authorizing the creation of the fire protection district. If the district is not authorized to be created, the election of the initial fire commissioners shall be null and void. If the district is authorized to be created, the initial fire commissioners shall take office immediately when qualified. Candidates shall file for each of the three separate fire commissioner positions. Elections shall be held as provided in chapter 29A.52 RCW, with the county auditor opening up a special filing period as provided in RCW 29A.24.171 and

29A.24.181, as if there were a vacancy. The person who receives the greatest number of votes for each position shall be elected to that position. The terms of office of the initial fire commissioners shall be staggered as follows: (1) The person who is elected receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected to a six-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a five-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; (2) the person who is elected receiving the next greatest number of votes shall be elected to a four-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a three-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and (3) the other person who is elected shall be elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The initial commissioners shall take office immediately when elected and qualified and their terms of office shall be calculated from the first day of January in the year following their election.

The term of office of each subsequent commissioner shall be six years. Each commissioner shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified and assumes office in accordance with RCW 29A.60.280. [2015 c 53 § 75; 1994 c 223 § 53; 1989 c 63 § 22; 1984 c 230 § 33; 1979 ex.s. c 126 § 33; 1939 c 34 § 27; RRS § 5654-127. Formerly RCW 52.12.060.]

Purpose—1979 ex.s. c 126: See RCW 29A.60.280(1).

52.14.065 Voluntary change to electoral system. The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may authorize a change to its electoral system pursuant to RCW 29A.92.040 by majority vote. [2018 c 113 § 208.]

Findings—Intent—Short title—2018 c 113: See RCW 29A.92.005 and 29A.92.900.

52.14.070 Oath of office. Before beginning the duties of office, each fire commissioner shall take and subscribe the official oath for the faithful discharge of the duties of office as required by RCW 29A.04.133, which oath shall be filed in the office of the auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the district is located. [2015 c 53 § 76; 1989 c 63 § 23; 1986 c 167 § 22; 1984 c 230 § 34; 1939 c 34 § 29; RRS § 5654-129. Formerly RCW 52.12.070.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.14.080 Chair—Secretary—Duties and oath. The fire commissioners shall elect a chair from their number and shall appoint a secretary of the district, who may or may not be a member of the board, for such term as they shall by resolution determine. The secretary, if a member of the board, shall not receive additional compensation for serving as secretary.

The secretary of the district shall keep a record of the proceedings of the board, shall perform other duties as prescribed by the board or by law, and shall take and subscribe an official oath similar to that of the fire commissioners which oath shall be filed in the same office as that of the commissioners. [2010 c 8 § 15003; 1984 c 230 § 35; 1965 c 112 § 2; 1939 c 34 § 30; RRS § 5654-130. Formerly RCW 52.12.080.]

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52.14.090 Office—Meetings. (1) The office of the fire commissioners and principal place of business of the district shall be at some place within the county in which the district is situated, to be designated by the board of fire commissioners.

(2) The board shall hold regular monthly meetings at a place and date as it determines by resolution, and may adjourn its meetings as required for the proper transaction of business. Special meetings of the board shall be called at any time under the provisions of RCW 42.30.080. [1984 c 230 § 36; 1947 c 254 § 8; 1939 c 34 § 31; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-131. Formerly RCW 52.12.090.]

52.14.100 Meetings—Powers and duties of board. All meetings of the board of fire commissioners shall be conducted in accordance with chapter 42.30 RCW and a majority constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. All records of the board shall be open to inspection in accordance with chapter 42.56 RCW. The board has the power and duty to adopt a seal of the district, to manage and conduct the business affairs of the district, to make and execute all necessary contracts, to employ any necessary services, and to adopt reasonable rules to govern the district and to perform its functions, and generally to perform all such acts as may be necessary to carry out the objects of the creation of the district. [2005 c 274 § 326; 1984 c 230 § 37; 1939 c 34 § 32; RRS § 5654-132. Formerly RCW 52.12.100.]

Open public meetings: Chapter 42.30 RCW.

52.14.110 Purchases and public works—Competitive bids required—Exceptions. Insofar as practicable, purchases and any public works by the district shall be based on competitive bids. A formal sealed bid procedure shall be used as standard procedure for purchases and contracts for purchases executed by the board of commissioners. Formal sealed bidding shall not be required for:

(1) The purchase of any materials, supplies, or equipment if the cost will not exceed the sum of forty thousand dollars. However, whenever the estimated cost does not exceed seventy-five thousand dollars, the commissioners may by resolution use the process provided in RCW 39.04.190 to award contracts;

(2) Contracting for work to be done involving the construction or improvement of a fire station or other buildings where the estimated cost will not exceed the sum of thirty thousand dollars, which includes the costs of labor, material, and equipment;

(3) Contracts using the small works roster process under RCW 39.04.155; and

(4) Any contract for purchases or public work pursuant to RCW 39.04.280 if an exemption contained within that section applies to the purchase or public work. [2019 c 434 § 12; 2009 c 229 § 9; 2001 c 79 § 1; 2000 c 138 § 209; 1998 c 278 § 5; 1993 c 198 § 11; 1984 c 238 § 3.]

Finding—Intent—2019 c 434: See note following RCW 35.23.352.

Purpose—Part headings not law—2000 c 138: See notes following RCW 39.04.155.

52.14.120 Purchases and public works—Competitive bidding procedures. (1) Notice of the call for bids shall be given by publishing the notice in a newspaper of general cir-

ulation within the district at least thirteen days before the last date upon which bids will be received. If no bid is received on the first call, the commissioners may readvertise and make a second call, or may enter into a contract without a further call.

(2) A public work involving three or more specialty contractors requires that the district retain the services of a general contractor as defined in RCW 18.27.010. [1993 c 198 § 12; 1984 c 238 § 4.]

52.14.130 Low bidder claiming error—Prohibition on later bid for same project. A low bidder who claims error and fails to enter into a contract with a fire protection district for a public works project is prohibited from bidding on the same project if a second or subsequent call for bids is made for the project. [1996 c 18 § 10.]

52.14.140 Governance authority of fire protection district. (1) The members of the legislative authority of a city or town shall serve ex officio, by virtue of their office, as the fire commissioners of a fire protection district created under RCW 52.02.160.

(2) The legislative authority of a city or town may, within the initial resolution establishing the district's formation, relinquish governance authority of a fire protection district created under chapter 328, Laws of 2017 to an independently elected board of commissioners to be elected in accordance with RCW 52.14.060.

(3)(a) The legislative authority of a city or town may, by a majority vote of its members in an open public meeting, relinquish governance authority of a fire protection district created under chapter 328, Laws of 2017 to an appointed board of three fire commissioners at any time after formation. Each appointed commissioner serves until successors are elected at the next qualified election.

At the next qualified election, the person who receives the greatest number of votes for each commissioner position is elected to that position. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The person who is elected receiving the greatest number of votes is elected to a six-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a five-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The person who is elected receiving the next greatest number of votes is elected to a four-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a three-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other person who is elected is elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years.

(b) If the legislative authority of a city or town relinquishes governance authority of a fire protection district after formation under this section, and that fire protection district maintains a fire department consisting wholly of personnel employed on a full-time, fully paid basis, that district shall have five fire commissioners. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The two people elected receiving the two greatest number of votes are elected to six-year terms of office if the

election is held in an odd-numbered year, or five-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The two people who are elected receiving the next two greatest number of votes are elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or three-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other person who is elected is elected to a two-year term of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or a one-year term of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years.

(c) If the legislative authority of a city or town relinquishes governance authority of a fire protection district after formation under this section, and that fire protection district has an annual budget of ten million dollars or more, that district must have seven fire commissioners. The terms of office for the initial elected fire commissioners are staggered as follows:

(i) The three people who are elected receiving the three greatest number of votes are elected to six-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or five-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year;

(ii) The two people who are elected receiving the next two greatest number of votes are elected to four-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or three-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year; and

(iii) The other two people who are elected are elected to two-year terms of office if the election is held in an odd-numbered year, or one-year terms of office if the election is held in an even-numbered year. The term of office for each subsequent commissioner is six years. [2017 c 328 § 6.]

Chapter 52.16 RCW FINANCES

Sections

52.16.010	County treasurer as financial agent.
52.16.020	Funds.
52.16.030	Budget for each fund—Biennial budget authority.
52.16.040	Tax levies—Assessment roll—Collection.
52.16.050	Disbursal of funds—Issuance of warrants—Monthly reports.
52.16.061	General obligation bonds—Issuance—Limitations.
52.16.070	Obligations shall not exceed taxes, revenues, and cash balances—Exceptions.
52.16.080	Bonds may be issued for capital purposes—Excess property tax levies.
52.16.130	General levy authorized—Limit—Excess levy at special election.
52.16.140	General levy may exceed limit—When.
52.16.150	Donations and bequests to district.
52.16.160	Tax levy authorized.
52.16.170	Taxation and assessment of lands lying both within a fire protection district and forest protection assessment area.

52.16.010 County treasurer as financial agent. It is the duty of the county treasurer of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, any fire protection district created under this title is located to receive and disburse district revenues, to collect taxes and assessments authorized and levied under this title, and to credit district revenues to the proper fund. However, where a fire protection district is located in more than one county, the county treasurer of each other

county in which the district is located shall collect the fire protection district's taxes and assessments that are imposed on property located within the county and transfer these funds to the county treasurer of the county in which the largest portion of the district is located. [1989 c 63 § 24; 1984 c 230 § 38; 1939 c 34 § 33; RRS § 5654-133.]

52.16.020 Funds. In each county in which a fire protection district is situated, there shall be in the county treasurer's office of each district the following funds: (1) Expense fund; (2) reserve fund; (3) local improvement district No. . . . fund; (4) general obligation bond fund; and (5) such other funds as the board of commissioners of the district may establish. Taxes levied for administrative, operative, and maintenance purposes and for the purchase of firefighting and emergency medical equipment and apparatus and for the purchase of real property, when collected, and proceeds from the sale of general obligation bonds shall be placed by the county treasurer in the proper fund. Taxes levied for the payment of general obligation bonds and interest thereon, when collected, shall be placed by the county treasurer in the general obligation bond fund. The board of fire commissioners may include in its annual budget items of possible outlay to be provided for and held in reserve for any district purpose, and taxes shall be levied therefor. Such taxes, when collected, shall be placed by the county treasurer in the reserve fund. The reserve fund, or any part of it, may be transferred by the county treasurer to other funds of the district at any time by order of the board of fire commissioners. Special assessments levied against the lands in any improvement district within the district, when collected, shall be placed by the county treasurer in the local improvement district fund for the local improvement district. [1984 c 230 § 39; 1983 c 167 § 120; 1959 c 221 § 1; 1955 c 134 § 1; 1953 c 176 § 2; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 1; 1949 c 22 § 1; 1947 c 254 § 9; 1939 c 34 § 34; Rem. Supp. 1949 § 5654-134.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.030 Budget for each fund—Biennial budget authority. (1) Annually after the county board or boards of equalization of the county or counties in which the district is located have equalized the assessments for general tax purposes in that year, the secretary of the district shall prepare and certify a budget of the requirements of each district fund, and deliver it to the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district is located in ample time for the tax levies to be made for district purposes.

(2) In lieu of adopting an annual budget, a fire protection district may adopt a biennial budget with a mid-biennium review and modification for the second year of the biennium. [2015 c 40 § 1; 1989 c 63 § 25; 1984 c 230 § 40; 1939 c 34 § 35; RRS § 5654-135.]

52.16.040 Tax levies—Assessment roll—Collection. At the time of making general tax levies in each year the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which a fire protection district is located shall make the required levies for district purposes against the real and personal property in the district in accordance with the equalized valuations of the property for general tax purposes and as a part of the general taxes. The tax levies shall be a part

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of the general tax roll and shall be collected as a part of the general taxes against the property in the district. [1989 c 63 § 26; 1984 c 230 § 41; 1939 c 34 § 36; RRS § 5654-136.]

Levy of taxes: Chapter 84.52 RCW.

52.16.050 Disbursal of funds—Issuance of warrants—Monthly reports. (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section, the county treasurer shall pay out money received for the account of the district on warrants issued by the county auditor against the proper funds of the district. The warrants shall be issued on vouchers approved and signed by a majority of the district board and by the district secretary.

(2) The board of fire commissioners of a district that had an annual operating budget of five million or more dollars in each of the preceding three years may by resolution adopt a policy to issue its own warrants for payment of claims or other obligations of the fire district. The board of fire commissioners, after auditing all payrolls and bills, may authorize the issuing of one general certificate to the county treasurer, to be signed by the chair of the board of fire commissioners, authorizing the county treasurer to pay all the warrants specified by date, number, name, and amount, and the accounting funds on which the warrants shall be drawn; thereupon the district secretary may issue the warrants specified in the general certificate.

(3) The board of fire commissioners of a district that had an annual operating budget of greater than two hundred fifty thousand dollars and under five million dollars in each of the preceding three years may upon agreement between the county treasurer and the fire district commission, with approval of the fire district commission by resolution, adopt a policy to issue its own warrants for payment of claims or other obligations of the fire district. The board of fire commissioners, after auditing all payrolls and bills, may authorize the issuing of one general certificate to the county treasurer, to be signed by the chair of the board of fire commissioners, authorizing the county treasurer to pay all the warrants specified by date, number, name, and amount, and the accounting funds on which the warrants shall be drawn. The district secretary may then issue the warrants specified in the general certificate.

(4) The county treasurer may also pay general obligation bonds and the accrued interest thereon in accordance with their terms from the general obligation bond fund when interest or principal payments become due. The county treasurer shall report in writing monthly to the secretary of the district the amount of money held by the county in each fund and the amounts of receipts and disbursements for each fund during the preceding month. [2002 c 165 § 1; 1998 c 5 § 1; 1984 c 230 § 42; 1983 c 167 § 121; 1939 c 34 § 37; RRS § 5654-137.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.061 General obligation bonds—Issuance—Limitations. The board of fire commissioners of the district shall have authority to contract indebtedness and to refund same for any general district purpose, including expenses of maintenance, operation and administration, and the acquisition of firefighting facilities, and evidence the same by the issuance and sale of general obligation bonds of the district

payable at such time or times not longer than twenty years from the issuing date of the bonds. Such bonds shall be issued and sold in accordance with chapter 39.46 RCW. Such bonds shall not exceed an amount, together with any outstanding nonvoter approved general obligation indebtedness, equal to three-eighths of one percent of the value of the taxable property within the fire protection district, as the term "value of the taxable property" is defined in RCW 39.36.015. [1993 c 231 § 1; 1984 c 186 § 39; 1983 c 167 § 122; 1970 ex.s. c 56 § 66; 1969 ex.s. c 232 § 89; 1955 c 134 § 2; 1953 c 176 § 3.]

Purpose—1984 c 186: See note following RCW 39.46.110.

Purpose—1970 ex.s. c 56: See note following RCW 39.52.020.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.070 Obligations shall not exceed taxes, revenues, and cash balances—Exceptions. Except as authorized by the issuance and sale of general obligation bonds, the creation of local improvements districts, and the issuance of local improvement bonds and warrants of the fire protection district, the board of fire commissioners may not incur expenses or other financial obligations payable in any year in excess of the aggregate amount of taxes levied for that year, revenues derived from all other sources, and the cash balances on hand in the expense and reserve funds of the district on the first day of that year. In the event that there are any unpaid warrants drawn on any district funds for expenses and obligations incurred and outstanding at the end of any calendar year, the warrants may be paid from taxes collected in the subsequent year or years and from other income. [1984 c 230 § 43; 1983 c 167 § 123; 1975 1st ex.s. c 130 § 1; 1972 ex.s. c 16 § 1; 1959 c 221 § 2; 1955 c 134 § 3; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 10; 1947 c 254 § 11; 1943 c 106 § 1; 1941 c 70 § 5; 1939 c 34 § 39; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-139.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.080 Bonds may be issued for capital purposes—Excess property tax levies. Fire protection districts additionally are authorized to incur general indebtedness for capital purposes and to issue general obligation bonds not to exceed an amount, together with any outstanding general obligation indebtedness, equal to three-fourths of one percent of the value of the taxable property within such district, as the term "value of the taxable property" is defined in RCW 39.36.015, and to provide for the retirement thereof by excess property tax levies, when the voters of the district have approved a proposition authorizing such indebtedness and levies by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of those voting on the proposition at such election, at which election the total number of persons voting shall constitute not less than forty percent of the voters in the fire protection district who voted at the last preceding general state election. The maximum term of such bonds may not exceed twenty years. Such bonds shall be issued and sold in accordance with chapter 39.46 RCW. Such elections shall be held as provided in RCW 39.36.050. [1984 c 186 § 40; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 50; 1970 ex.s. c 42 § 30; 1953 c 176 § 4; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 3.]

Purpose—1984 c 186: See note following RCW 39.46.110.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.130 General levy authorized—Limit—Excess levy at special election. To carry out the purposes for which fire protection districts are created, the board of fire commissioners of a district may levy each year, in addition to the levy or levies provided in RCW 52.16.080 for the payment of the principal and interest of any outstanding general obligation bonds, an ad valorem tax on all taxable property located in the district not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value: PROVIDED, That in no case may the total general levy for all purposes, except the levy for the retirement of general obligation bonds, exceed one dollar per thousand dollars of assessed value. Levies in excess of one dollar per thousand dollars of assessed value or in excess of the aggregate dollar rate limitations or both may be made for any district purpose when so authorized at a special election under RCW 84.52.130. Any such tax when levied shall be certified to the proper county officials for the collection of the tax as for other general taxes. The taxes when collected shall be placed in the appropriate district fund or funds as provided by law, and shall be paid out on warrants of the auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the district is located, upon authorization of the board of fire commissioners of the district. [2002 c 180 § 3; 1989 c 63 § 27; 1985 c 7 § 121; 1984 c 230 § 44; 1983 c 167 § 126; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 52; 1971 ex.s. c 105 § 1; 1963 ex.s. c 13 § 2; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 8.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.140 General levy may exceed limit—When. Notwithstanding the limitation of dollar rates contained in RCW 52.16.130, the board of fire commissioners of any district may levy, in addition to any levy for the payment of the principal and interest of outstanding general obligation bonds, an ad valorem tax on all property located in the district of not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value and which will not cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional or statutory limitations, and the additional levy, or any portion of the levy, may also be made when dollar rates of other taxing units are released by agreement with the other taxing units from their authorized levies. [1984 c 230 § 45; 1983 c 167 § 127; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 53; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 9.]

Levy of taxes: Chapter 84.52 RCW.

Protection from levy prorationing: RCW 84.52.120.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.150 Donations and bequests to district. A fire protection district may accept and receive in behalf of the district any money or property donated, devised, or bequeathed to the district, and may carry out the terms of the donation, devise, or bequest, if within the powers granted by law to fire protection districts. In the absence of such terms, a fire protection district may expend or use the money or property for district purposes as determined by the board. [1984 c 230 § 46; 1951 2nd ex.s. c 24 § 11.]

52.16.160 Tax levy authorized. Notwithstanding the limitation of dollar rates contained in RCW 52.16.130, and in addition to any levy for the payment of the principal and interest of any outstanding general obligation bonds and in addition to any levy authorized by RCW 52.16.130,

52.16.140 or any other statute, the board of fire commissioners of any fire protection district within such county is hereby authorized to levy each year an ad valorem tax on all taxable property within such district of not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, which levy may be made only if it will not affect dollar rates which other taxing districts may lawfully claim nor cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional and/or statutory limitations. [2017 c 107 § 1; 2002 c 84 § 1; 1985 c 112 § 1; 1983 c 167 § 128; 1973 1st ex.s. c 195 § 54; 1969 ex.s. c 243 § 2; 1961 c 53 § 9.]

Protection from levy prorationing: RCW 84.52.120.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.16.170 Taxation and assessment of lands lying both within a fire protection district and forest protection assessment area. In the event that lands lie within both a fire protection district and a forest protection assessment area they shall be taxed and assessed as follows:

(1) If the lands are wholly unimproved, they shall be subject to forest protection assessments but not to fire protection district levies;

(2) If the lands are wholly improved, they shall be subject to fire protection district levies but not to forest protection assessments;

(3) If the lands are partly improved and partly unimproved they shall be subject both to fire protection district levies and to forest protection assessments: PROVIDED, That upon request, accompanied by appropriate legal descriptions, the county assessor shall segregate any unimproved portions which each consist of twenty or more acres, and thereafter the unimproved portion or portions shall be subject only to forest protection assessments. [1984 c 230 § 47; 1963 ex.s. c 13 § 3.]

Forest protection assessments: RCW 76.04.610.

Chapter 52.18 RCW BENEFIT CHARGES

Sections

52.18.010	Benefit charges authorized—Exemptions—Amounts—Limitations—Annual review.
52.18.020	Personal property, improvements to real property—Defined.
52.18.030	Resolution establishing benefit charges—Contents—Listing—Collection.
52.18.040	Reimbursement of county for administration and collection expenses.
52.18.050	Voter approval of benefit charges required—Election—Ballot.
52.18.060	Public hearing—Required—Report—Benefit charge resolution to be filed—Notification to property owners.
52.18.065	Property tax limited if benefit charge imposed.
52.18.070	Review board.
52.18.080	Model resolution.
52.18.090	Exemptions.

Assessments and charges against state lands: Chapter 79.44 RCW.

52.18.010 Benefit charges authorized—Exemptions—Amounts—Limitations—Annual review. (1) Pursuant to an approved initial or continued benefit charge authorized under RCW 52.18.050, the board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district may by resolution, for fire protection district purposes authorized by law, fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property which are located within the fire protection district on the date specified and which have or will receive the

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benefits provided by the fire protection district, to be paid by the owners of the properties.

(2) A benefit charge does not apply to:

(a) Personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization as, or including, a sanctuary or for purposes related to the bona fide religious ministries of the denomination or religious organization, including schools and educational facilities used for kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education and all grounds and buildings related thereto, but not including personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization for business operations, profit-making enterprises, or activities not including use of a sanctuary or related to kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education; and

(b) Any of the following tax-exempt properties, provided such entity is not required to pay a fire protection charge under subsection (8) of this section:

(i) Property of housing authorities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210;

(ii) Property of nonprofit entities providing rental housing for very low-income households or providing space for the placement of a mobile home for a very low-income household that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.560;

(iii) Property of nonprofit homes for the aging that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.041;

(iv) Property of nonprofit organizations, corporations, or associations providing housing for eligible persons with developmental disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.042;

(v) Property of nonprofit organizations providing emergency or transitional housing for low-income homeless persons or victims of domestic violence who are homeless for personal safety reasons that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.043;

(vi) Property of the state housing finance commission that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.135; and

(vii) Property of nonprofit corporations operating sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.350.

(3) A benefit charge may apply to a tax-exempt property included in subsection (2)(b) of this section if the tax-exempt property is located in a fire protection district that:

(a) Is less than four square miles in size;

(b) Has approved a benefit charge prior to May 5, 2017; and

(c) Has a population exceeding nineteen thousand people as of May 5, 2017, as determined by the office of financial management.

(4) A limited benefit charge may apply to property or improvements owned by a Christmas tree grower as defined in RCW 15.13.250(4) so long as the property or improvement is located on land that has been approved as farm and agricultural land with standing crops under chapter 84.34 RCW. For such property or improvement, a benefit charge may not exceed the reduction in property tax that results from the

imposition of a benefit charge, as required under RCW 52.18.065.

(5) The aggregate amount of such benefit charges in any one year shall not exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of the operating budget for the year in which the benefit charge is to be collected: PROVIDED, That it shall be the duty of the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the fire protection district is located to make any necessary adjustments to assure compliance with such limitation and to immediately notify the board of fire commissioners of any changes thereof.

(6) A benefit charge imposed shall be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the district. It is acceptable to apportion the benefit charge to the values of the properties as found by the county assessor or assessors modified generally in the proportion that fire insurance rates are reduced or entitled to be reduced as the result of providing the services. Any other method that reasonably apportions the benefit charges to the actual benefits resulting from the degree of protection, which may include but is not limited to the distance from regularly maintained fire protection equipment, the level of fire prevention services provided to the properties, or the need of the properties for specialized services, may be specified in the resolution and shall be subject to contest on the ground of unreasonable or capricious action or action in excess of the measurable benefits to the property resulting from services afforded by the district. The board of fire commissioners may determine that certain properties or types or classes of properties are not receiving measurable benefits based on criteria they establish by resolution. A benefit charge authorized by this chapter shall not be applicable to the personal property or improvements to real property of any individual, corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association maintaining a fire department and whose fire protection and training system has been accepted by a fire insurance underwriter maintaining a fire protection engineering and inspection service authorized by the state insurance commissioner to do business in this state, but such property may be protected by the fire protection district under a contractual agreement.

(7) For administrative purposes, the benefit charge imposed on any individual property may be compiled into a single charge, provided that the district, upon request of the property owner, provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit included in the charge.

(8)(a) At the annual review of the fire benefit charge mandated by RCW 52.18.060(2), if a fire service agency has identified:

(i) A tax-exempt property under subsection (2)(b) of this section as having a substantial increase in requested emergency services over the previous year; or

(ii) A new tax-exempt property that is similar in size, population, and geographic location as another such tax-exempt property as having an increase in requested emergency services;

then the tax-exempt property and the fire service agency must work together, in good faith, to address the problem by implementing community risk reduction efforts. The community risk reduction plan may include but is not limited to wellness programs and community action plans.

(b) At the subsequent annual review, if the heightened service requirements have not been reasonably addressed by the joint mitigation efforts, and the tax-exempt property owner has not acted in good faith:

(i) The property is subject to assessment of the fire benefit charge in the subsequent year, subject to approval by the board of fire commissioners as outlined in RCW 52.18.060(2); or

(ii) The respective tax-exempt property shall pay the fire service agency a fire protection charge payment in lieu of a benefit charge. The fire protection charge shall be an amount equivalent to the benefit rates for similarly situated properties for that year.

(c) All tax-exempt properties identified under subsection (2)(b) of this section and all local fire service agencies are encouraged to work collaboratively to develop and implement programs to address proper usage of fire service resources for residents of the housing properties. [2017 c 196 § 5; 1998 c 16 § 1; 1990 c 294 § 1; 1989 c 63 § 28; 1987 c 325 § 1; 1985 c 7 § 122; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 1.]

Application—2017 c 196 §§ 5 and 6: "Sections 5 and 6 of this act apply to benefit charges approved after May 5, 2017." [2017 c 196 § 15.]

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.18.020 Personal property, improvements to real property—Defined. The term "personal property" for the purposes of this chapter shall include every form of tangible personal property, including but not limited to, all goods, chattels, stock in trade, estates, or crops: PROVIDED, That all personal property not assessed and subjected to ad valorem taxation under Title 84 RCW, all property under contract or for which the district is receiving payment for as authorized by RCW 52.30.020 and all property subject to the provisions of chapter 54.28 RCW, or all property that is subject to a contract for services with a fire protection district, shall be exempt from the benefit charge imposed under this chapter: PROVIDED FURTHER, That the term "personal property" shall not include any personal property used for farming, field crops, farm equipment or livestock: AND PROVIDED FURTHER, That the term "improvements to real property" shall not include permanent growing crops, field improvements installed for the purpose of aiding the growth of permanent crops, or other field improvements normally not subject to damage by fire. [1990 c 294 § 2; 1987 c 325 § 2; 1985 c 7 § 123; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 2.]

52.18.030 Resolution establishing benefit charges—Contents—Listing—Collection. The resolution establishing benefit charges as specified in RCW 52.18.010 shall specify, by legal geographical areas or other specific designations, the charge to apply to each property by location, type, or other designation, or other information that is necessary to the proper computation of the benefit charge to be charged to each property owner subject to the resolution. The county assessor of each county in which the district is located shall determine and identify the personal properties and improvements to real property which are subject to a benefit charge in each fire protection district and shall furnish and deliver to the county treasurer of that county a listing of the properties with information describing the location, legal description,

and address of the person to whom the statement of benefit charges is to be mailed, the name of the owner, and the value of the property and improvements, together with the benefit charge to apply to each. These benefit charges shall be certified to the county treasurer for collection in the same manner that is used for the collection of fire protection charges for forestlands protected by the department of natural resources under RCW 76.04.610 and the same penalties and provisions for collection shall apply. [1990 c 294 § 3; 1989 c 63 § 29; 1987 c 325 § 3; 1986 c 100 § 53; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 3.]

52.18.040 Reimbursement of county for administration and collection expenses. Each fire protection district shall contract, prior to the imposition of a benefit charge, for the administration and collection of the benefit charge by each county treasurer, who shall deduct a percent, as provided by contract to reimburse the county for expenses incurred by the county assessor and county treasurer in the administration of the resolution and this chapter. The county treasurer shall make distributions each year, as the charges are collected, in the amount of the benefit charges imposed on behalf of each district, less the deduction provided for in the contract. [1990 c 294 § 4; 1989 c 63 § 30; 1987 c 325 § 4; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 4.]

52.18.050 Voter approval of benefit charges required—Election—Ballot. (1)(a) The initial imposition of a benefit charge authorized by this chapter must be approved by not less than sixty percent of the voters of the district voting at a general election or at a special election called by the district for that purpose.

(b) An election held for the initial imposition of a benefit charge must be held not more than twelve months prior to the date on which the first charge is to be assessed.

(c) A benefit charge approved at an election expires in six or fewer years as authorized by the voters unless subsequently reapproved by the voters.

(2) Ballot measures calling for the initial imposition of a benefit charge must be submitted so as to enable voters favoring the authorization of a benefit charge to vote "Yes" and those opposed to vote "No," and the ballot question must be as follows:

"Shall county fire protection district No. be authorized to impose benefit charges each year for (insert number of years not to exceed six) years, not to exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of its operating budget, and be prohibited from imposing an additional property tax under RCW 52.16.160?

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3)(a) The continued imposition of a benefit charge authorized by this chapter may be approved for six consecutive years, ten consecutive years, or permanently.

A ballot measure calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge for six consecutive years or ten consecutive years must be approved by a majority of the voters of the district voting at a general election or at a special election called by the district for that purpose.

A ballot measure calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge as a permanent benefit charge must be approved by not less than sixty percent of the voters of the district voting at a general election or at a special election called by the district for that purpose.

(b) Ballot measures calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge must be submitted so as to enable voters favoring the continued imposition of the benefit charge to vote "Yes" and those opposed to vote "No." The ballot question must be substantially in the following form:

"Shall county fire protection district No. be authorized to continue voter-authorized benefit charges. . . . (insert "each year for six consecutive years," "each year for ten consecutive years," or "permanently"), not to exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of its operating budget, and be prohibited from imposing an additional property tax under RCW 52.16.160?

YES	NO
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[2020 c 99 § 1; 2017 c 196 § 4; 2013 c 49 § 1; 1998 c 16 § 2; 1990 c 294 § 5; 1989 c 27 § 1; 1987 c 325 § 5; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 5.]

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.18.060 Public hearing—Required—Report—Benefit charge resolution to be filed—Notification to property owners. (1) Not less than ten days nor more than six months before the election at which the proposition to impose the benefit charge is submitted as provided in this chapter, the board of fire commissioners of the district shall hold a public hearing specifically setting forth its proposal to impose benefit charges for the support of its legally authorized activities which will maintain or improve the services afforded in the district. A report of the public hearing shall be filed with the county treasurer of each county in which the property is located and be available for public inspection.

(2) Prior to November 15 of each year the board of fire commissioners shall hold a public hearing to review and establish the fire district benefit charges for the subsequent year.

All resolutions imposing or changing the benefit charges shall be filed with the county treasurer or treasurers of each county in which the property is located, together with the record of each public hearing, before November 30 immediately preceding the year in which the benefit charges are to be collected on behalf of the district.

After the benefit charges have been established, the owners of the property subject to the charge shall be notified of the amount of the charge. [1990 c 294 § 6; 1989 c 63 § 31; 1987 c 325 § 6; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 6.]

52.18.065 Property tax limited if benefit charge imposed. A fire protection district that imposes a benefit charge under this chapter shall not impose all or part of the property tax authorized under RCW 52.16.160. [1990 c 294 § 7; 1987 c 325 § 9.]

52.18.070 Review board. After notice has been given to the property owners of the amount of the charge, the board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district imposing a benefit charge under this chapter shall form a review board for at least a two-week period and shall, upon complaint in writing of a party aggrieved owning property in the district, reduce the charge of a person who, in their opinion, has been charged too large a sum, to a sum or amount as they believe to be the true, fair, and just amount. [1990 c 294 § 8; 1987 c 325 § 7; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 7.]

52.18.080 Model resolution. The Washington fire commissioners association, as soon as practicable, shall draft a model resolution to impose the fire protection district benefit charge authorized by this chapter and may provide assistance to fire protection districts in the establishment of a program to develop benefit charges. [1990 c 294 § 9; 1987 c 325 § 8; 1974 ex.s. c 126 § 8.]

52.18.090 Exemptions. A person who is receiving the exemption contained in RCW 84.36.381 through 84.36.389 shall be exempt from any legal obligation to pay a portion of the charge imposed by this chapter according to the following.

(1) A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(a) and does not meet the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b) (i) or (ii) shall be exempt from twenty-five percent of the charge.

(2) A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b)(i) shall be exempt from fifty percent of the charge.

(3) A person who meets the income limitation contained in RCW 84.36.381(5)(b)(ii) shall be exempt from seventy-five percent of the charge. [1990 c 294 § 10.]

Chapter 52.20 RCW

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Sections

52.20.010	L.I.D.'s authorized—Petition or resolution method.
52.20.020	Dismissal, approval of petition or resolution of intention—Notice of hearing.
52.20.022	Notice must contain statement that assessments may vary from estimates.
52.20.025	Hearing and subsequent proceedings to be in accordance with laws applicable to cities and towns—Definitions.
52.20.027	Lands subject to forest fire protection assessments exempt—Separation of forest-type lands for tax and assessment purposes.
52.20.060	Coupon or registered warrants—Payment—Interest—Registration.
52.20.070	Contracts not general district obligations.

Assessments and charges against state lands: Chapter 79.44 RCW.

Local improvements, supplemental authority: Chapter 35.51 RCW.

52.20.010 L.I.D.'s authorized—Petition or resolution method. If, for fire protection or emergency medical purposes the acquisition, maintenance, and operation of real property, buildings, apparatus, and instrumentalities needed to provide such services are of special benefit to part or all of the lands in the fire protection district, the board of fire commissioners may include the lands in a local improvement district, and may levy special assessments under a mode of annual installments extending over a period not exceeding

twenty years on all property specially benefited by any local improvement, on the basis of the special benefits to pay in whole or in part the damages or costs of improvements ordered in the local improvement district. Local improvement districts may be initiated either by resolution of the board of fire commissioners or by petition signed by the owners of a majority of the acreage of lands to be included within the local improvement district.

If the petition procedure is followed, the petition shall set forth generally the necessity for the creation of a local improvement district, outline the plan of fire or emergency medical protection to be accomplished, and the means by which the cost shall be financed. Upon receipt of a petition, the board of fire commissioners of the district shall at its next regular meeting review the petition. The owners of the lands as shown on the general tax roll in the county treasurer's office, last equalized, shall be used to determine the ownership of the lands to be included in the local improvement district. If the petition is sufficient, the district board shall consider the petition and determine whether the proposed local improvement appears feasible and of special benefit to the lands concerned.

If the board of fire commissioners desire[s] to initiate the formation of a local improvement district by resolution, it shall adopt a resolution declaring its intention to order the proposed improvement, set forth the nature and territorial extent of the proposed improvement, designate the number of the proposed district, describe the boundaries, state the estimated costs and expenses of the improvement and the proportionate amount of the costs which will be borne by the property within the proposed district, and fix a date, time, and place for a public hearing on the formation of the proposed district. [1984 c 230 § 48; 1975 1st ex.s. c 130 § 2; 1961 c 161 § 1; 1939 c 34 § 40; RRS § 5654-140.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.20.020 Dismissal, approval of petition or resolution of intention—Notice of hearing. If the petition is found insufficient or if the district board determines that a local improvement district is not feasible or is of no special benefit to the lands concerned, it shall dismiss the petition. If the district board approves the petition or adopts a resolution of intention to order an improvement, it shall fix a date, hour, and place for hearing the matter and shall (1) mail notice of the hearing at least fifteen days before the date fixed for the public hearing to the owner or reputed owner of each lot, tract, or parcel of land within the proposed local improvement district as shown on the tax rolls of the county treasurer at the address shown thereon, and (2) publish notice of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the county, for three consecutive weeks prior to the day of the hearing. The cost of publication shall be paid by the fire protection district. The notices shall describe the boundaries of the proposed local improvement district and the plan of fire or emergency medical protection proposed, or may refer to the resolution of intention describing the nature and territorial extent of the proposed improvement. The notices shall state the means by which the cost shall be financed, shall state the date, hour, and place of the hearing on the petition and shall be signed by the secretary of the fire protection district. In addition, the notice given each owner or reputed owner by

mail shall state the estimated cost and expense of the improvement to be borne by the particular lot, tract, or parcel. [1984 c 230 § 49; 1975 1st ex.s. c 130 § 3; 1961 c 161 § 2; 1939 c 34 § 41; RRS § 5654-141.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.20.022 Notice must contain statement that assessments may vary from estimates. Any notice given to the public or to the owners of specific lots, tracts, or parcels of land relating to the formation of a local improvement district shall contain a statement that actual assessments may vary from assessment estimates so long as they do not exceed a figure equal to the increased true and fair value the improvement adds to the property. [1989 c 243 § 7.]

52.20.025 Hearing and subsequent proceedings to be in accordance with laws applicable to cities and towns—Definitions. The hearing and all subsequent proceedings in connection with the local improvement, including but not limited to the levying, collection, and enforcement of local improvement assessments, and the authorization, issuance, and payment of local improvement bonds and warrants shall be in accordance with the provisions of law applicable to cities and towns set forth in chapters 35.43, 35.44, 35.45, 35.49, 35.50, and 35.53 RCW. Fire protection districts may exercise the powers set forth in those chapters: PROVIDED, That no local improvement guaranty fund may be created: PROVIDED FURTHER, That for the purposes of RCW 52.16.070, 52.20.010, 52.20.020, and 52.20.025, with respect to the powers granted and the duties imposed in chapters 35.43, 35.44, 35.45, 35.50, and 35.53 RCW:

(1) The words "city or town" mean fire protection district.

(2) The secretary of a fire protection district shall perform the duties of the "clerk" or "city or town clerk."

(3) The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district shall perform the duties of the "council" or "city or town council" or "legislative authority of a city or town."

(4) The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district shall perform the duties of the "mayor."

(5) The word "ordinance" means a resolution of the board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district.

(6) The treasurer or treasurers of the county or counties in which a fire protection district is located shall perform the duties of the "treasurer" or "city or town treasurer." [1989 c 63 § 32; 1984 c 230 § 50; 1975 1st ex.s. c 130 § 4; 1961 c 161 § 3.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.20.027 Lands subject to forest fire protection assessments exempt—Separation of forest-type lands for tax and assessment purposes. RCW 52.20.010, 52.20.020, and 52.20.025 shall not apply to any tracts or parcels of wholly forest-type lands within the district which are required to pay forest fire protection assessments, as required by RCW 76.04.610; however, both the tax levy or special assessments of the district and the forest fire protection assessment shall apply to the forestland portion of any tract or parcel which is in the district containing a combination of both forest-type lands and nonforest-type lands or improvements: PROVIDED, That an owner has the right to have for-

est-type lands of more than twenty acres in extent separated from land bearing improvements and from nonforest-type lands for taxation and assessment purposes upon furnishing to the assessor a written request containing the proper legal description. [1986 c 100 § 54; 1984 c 230 § 51; 1961 c 161 § 5.]

52.20.060 Coupon or registered warrants—Payment—Interest—Registration. (1) The district board may also, if in accordance with the adopted method of financing the local improvement district, issue and sell at par and accrued interest coupon or registered warrants payable within three years from the date thereof exclusively from the local improvement fund of the district. The coupon or registered warrants shall bear semiannual interest and shall be in such form as the board determines and shall state on their face that they are payable exclusively from the local improvement fund of the district. Interest shall be payable on the first day of January and of July. Such warrants may be registered as provided in RCW 39.46.030.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, such warrants may be issued and sold in accordance with chapter 39.46 RCW. [1984 c 230 § 52; 1983 c 167 § 129; 1970 ex.s. c 56 § 68; 1969 ex.s. c 232 § 90; 1939 c 34 § 45; RRS § 5654-145.]

Purpose—1970 ex.s. c 56: See note following RCW 39.52.020.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.20.070 Contracts not general district obligations. A fire protection district shall not be liable under any contract creating an obligation chargeable against the lands of any local improvement district therein, unless the liability and the extent thereof is specifically stated in the contract. [1984 c 230 § 53; 1939 c 34 § 21; RRS § 5654-121.]

Chapter 52.22 RCW SPECIAL PROCEEDINGS

Sections

52.22.011	Legislative validation.
52.22.021	Special proceedings for judicial confirmation of organization, bonds, warrants, contracts, etc.
52.22.031	Petition.
52.22.041	Hearing date to be fixed—Notice.
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52.22.071	Jurisdiction of court.
52.22.081	Minor irregularities to be disregarded.
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52.22.111	Districts governed by Title 52 RCW.

52.22.011 Legislative validation. The respective areas, organized and established or attempted to be organized and established under the authority granted in Title 52 RCW which since their organization and establishment or attempted organization and establishment have continuously maintained their organization as fire protection districts established under the authority of these statutes are declared to be properly organized fire protection districts existing under and by virtue of the statutes having in each case, the boundaries set forth in the respective organization proceedings of each of them as shown by the files and records in the offices of the legislative authority or authorities and auditor

or auditors of the county or counties in which the particular area lies. [1989 c 63 § 33; 1984 c 230 § 66; 1947 c 230 § 1; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-151o. Formerly RCW 52.32.010.]

52.22.021 Special proceedings for judicial confirmation of organization, bonds, warrants, contracts, etc. The board of fire commissioners of a fire protection district now existing or which may be organized under the laws of this state may commence a special proceeding in the superior court of the state of Washington. These proceedings for the organization of the fire district, for the formation of any local improvement district therein, or proceedings for the authorization, issuance, and sale of coupon or registered warrants or general obligation bonds issued pursuant to RCW 52.16.061, either of the fire district or for a local improvement district therein, or both, whether the bonds or coupon or registered warrants have been sold, or proceedings for any contract of the district involving the fire district or any local improvement district therein, and any other proceedings that may affect the legality of the proceedings concerned or any or all of the proceedings above outlined, may be judicially examined, approved, and confirmed. [1984 c 230 § 67; 1983 c 167 § 130; 1947 c 255 § 1; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153a. Formerly RCW 52.34.010 and 52.32.020.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.22.031 Petition. The board of fire commissioners of the fire protection district shall file in the superior court of the county in which the fire protection district was organized, a petition requesting in effect that the proceedings be examined, approved, and confirmed by the court. The petition shall state the facts showing any of the proceedings that the petition asks the court to examine, approve, and confirm, but need allege only generally that the fire protection district was properly organized and that the first board of fire commissioners was properly elected. [1984 c 230 § 68; 1947 c 255 § 2; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153b. Formerly RCW 52.34.020 and 52.32.030.]

52.22.041 Hearing date to be fixed—Notice. The court shall fix the time for the hearing of the petition and direct the clerk of the court to give notice of the filing of the petition and of the time and place fixed for the hearing. The notice shall state the time and place of the hearing of the petition and that any person interested in the proceedings sought by the petition to be examined, approved, and confirmed by the court, may on or before the date of the hearing of the petition, answer the petition. The petition may be referred to and described in the notice as the petition of the board of fire commissioners of county fire protection district No. (giving the county and its number or any other name by which it is officially designated), requesting that the proceedings (naming them as set out in the request of the petition), be examined, approved, and confirmed by the court, and shall be signed by the clerk.

The notice shall be given by posting and publishing for the same length of time that the notice of the hearing on the petition before the county legislative body to form the district was required by law to be posted and published, and it may be published in any legal newspaper designated in the order of the court fixing the time and place of the hearing of the peti-

tion and directing the clerk of the court to give notice thereof. [1984 c 230 § 69; 1947 c 255 § 3; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153c. Formerly RCW 52.34.030 and 52.32.040.]

Public hearing—Notice—Publication and posting: RCW 52.02.050.

52.22.051 Answer of petition. A person interested in the fire protection district, or in a local improvement district therein, involved in the petition or in any proceedings sought by the petition to be examined, approved, and confirmed by the court, may answer the petition. The statutes of this state respecting answers to verified complaints are applicable to answers to the petition. The person so answering the petition shall be the defendant in the special proceeding, and the board of fire commissioners shall be the plaintiff. Every material statement of the petition not specifically controverted by the answer must, for purposes of the special proceedings, be taken as true, and each person failing to answer the petition is deemed to admit as true all the material statements of the petition. [1984 c 230 § 70; 1947 c 255 § 4; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153d. Formerly RCW 52.34.040 and 52.32.050.]

Pleadings: Chapters 4.32, 4.36 RCW.

52.22.061 Pleading and practice—Motion for new trial. The rules of pleading and practice governing civil actions are applicable to the special proceedings provided for except where inconsistent with this chapter. A motion for a new trial must be made upon the minutes of the court and in case of an order granting a new trial, the order must specify the issue to be reexamined at the new trial. The findings of the court on the other issues shall not be affected by the order granting a new trial. [1984 c 230 § 71; 1947 c 255 § 5; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153e. Formerly RCW 52.34.050 and 52.32.060.]

New trials: Chapter 4.76 RCW.

52.22.071 Jurisdiction of court. At the hearing of the special proceedings, the court has power and jurisdiction to examine and determine the legality and validity of, and to approve and confirm, each and all of the proceedings for the organization of the fire protection district and for the formation of any local improvement district therein under the law relating to such districts from and including the petition for the organization of the fire district and for the formation of any local improvement district therein and all other proceedings which affect the legality of the districts, or the validity and legality of any coupon or registered warrants or bonds either of the fire district or for a local improvement district therein and all proceedings conducted by the fire district for a contract of the district involving the fire district or a local improvement district therein, and any other proceeding which may affect the legality of the proceedings concerned. [1984 c 230 § 72; 1983 c 167 § 131; 1947 c 255 § 6; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153f. Formerly RCW 52.34.060 and 52.32.070.]

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.22.081 Minor irregularities to be disregarded. The court has full authority and jurisdiction to consider any question of laches, estoppel, and other infirmities in the position and claims of the defendants, to question the legality of

the proceedings sought by the plaintiff to be confirmed by the court, and to pass upon and determine them. The court, in inquiring into the regularity, legality, and correctness of the proceedings sought by the board of fire commissioners in its petition to be examined, approved, and confirmed by the court, must disregard any error, irregularity, or omission which does not affect the substantial rights of the parties to the special proceedings. The court may approve and confirm the proceedings in part, and disapprove and declare illegal or invalid other or subsequent parts of the proceedings, or it may approve and confirm all of the proceedings, and make and enter its decree accordingly. [1984 c 230 § 73; 1947 c 255 § 7; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153g. Formerly RCW 52.34.070 and 52.32.080.]

52.22.091 Costs. The court shall find and determine, in these special proceedings, whether the notice of the filing of the petition and of the time and place of hearing on the petition has been properly posted and published for the time and in the manner prescribed in this chapter. The costs of the special proceedings may be allowed and apportioned between all the parties, in the court's discretion. [1984 c 230 § 74; 1947 c 255 § 8; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153h. Formerly RCW 52.34.080 and 52.32.090.]

52.22.101 Appellate review. Appellate review of an order granting or refusing a new trial, or from the judgment, in the special proceedings must be taken by the party aggrieved within thirty days after the entry of the order or the judgment. [1988 c 202 § 50; 1984 c 230 § 75; 1947 c 255 § 9; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 5654-153i. Formerly RCW 52.34.090 and 52.32.100.]

Rules of court: Cf. *RAP 2.2, 18.22.*

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.22.111 Districts governed by Title 52 RCW. All fire protection districts are governed by Title 52 RCW. [1984 c 230 § 86.]

Chapter 52.26 RCW REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITIES

Sections

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52.26.010 Findings. The legislature finds that:

(1) The ability to respond to emergency situations by many of Washington state's fire protection jurisdictions has not kept up with the state's needs, particularly in urban regions;

(2) Providing a fire protection service system requires a shared partnership and responsibility among the federal, state, local, and regional governments and the private sector;

(3) There are efficiencies to be gained by regional fire protection service delivery while retaining local control; and

(4) Timely development of significant projects can best be achieved through enhanced funding options for regional fire protection service agencies, using already existing taxing authority to address fire protection emergency service needs and new authority to address critical fire protection projects and emergency services. [2004 c 129 § 1.]

52.26.020 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Board" means the governing body of a regional fire protection service authority.

(2) "Elected official" means an elected official of a participating fire protection jurisdiction or a regional fire protection district commissioner created under RCW 52.26.080.

(3) "Fire protection jurisdiction" means a fire district, regional fire protection service authority, city, town, port district, municipal airport, or Indian tribe.

(4) "Participating fire protection jurisdiction" means a fire protection jurisdiction participating in the formation or operation of a regional fire protection service authority.

(5) "Reasonable proximity" means geographical areas near enough to each other so that governance, management, and services can be delivered effectively.

(6) "Regional fire protection service authority" or "authority" means a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority within the meaning of Article VII, section 1 of the state Constitution, and a taxing district within the meaning of Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution, whose boundaries are coextensive with two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity and that has been created by a vote of the people under this chapter to implement a regional fire protection service authority plan.

(7) "Regional fire protection service authority plan" or "plan" means a plan to develop and finance a regional fire

protection service authority project or projects including, but not limited to, specific capital projects, fire operations and emergency service operations pursuant to RCW 52.26.040 (3)(b), and preservation and maintenance of existing or future facilities.

(8) "Regional fire protection service authority planning committee" or "planning committee" means the advisory committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to fire protection jurisdictions a regional fire protection service authority plan to design, finance, and develop fire protection and emergency service projects.

(9) "Regular property taxes" has the same meaning as in RCW 84.04.140. [2018 c 28 § 5; 2017 c 196 § 7. Prior: 2011 c 141 § 1; 2006 c 200 § 1; 2004 c 129 § 2.]

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.26.030 Planning committee—Formation—Powers. Regional fire protection service authority planning committees are advisory entities that are created, convened, and empowered as follows:

(1) Any two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity may create a regional fire protection service authority and convene a regional fire protection service authority planning committee. No fire protection jurisdiction may participate in more than one created authority.

(2) Each governing body of the fire protection jurisdictions participating in planning under this chapter shall appoint three elected officials to the authority planning committee. Members of the planning committee may receive compensation of seventy dollars per day, or portion thereof, not to exceed seven hundred dollars per year, for attendance at planning committee meetings and for performance of other services in behalf of the authority, and may be reimbursed for travel and incidental expenses at the discretion of their respective governing body.

(3) A regional fire protection service authority planning committee may receive state funding, as appropriated by the legislature, or county funding provided by the affected counties for start-up funding to pay for salaries, expenses, overhead, supplies, and similar expenses ordinarily and necessarily incurred. Upon creation of a regional fire protection service authority, the authority shall within one year reimburse the state or county for any sums advanced for these start-up costs from the state or county.

(4) The planning committee shall conduct its affairs and formulate a regional fire protection service authority plan as provided under RCW 52.26.040.

(5) At its first meeting, a regional fire protection service authority planning committee may elect officers and provide for the adoption of rules and other operating procedures.

(6) The planning committee may dissolve itself at any time by a majority vote of the total membership of the planning committee. Any participating fire protection jurisdiction may withdraw upon thirty calendar days' written notice to the other jurisdictions. [2018 c 28 § 3; 2017 c 196 § 8; 2004 c 129 § 3.]

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.26.040 Planning committee—Formulation of service plan—Competition with private ambulance service.

(1) A regional fire protection service authority planning committee shall adopt a regional fire protection service authority plan providing for the governance, design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency services. The planning committee may consider the following factors in formulating its plan:

(a) Land use planning criteria; and

(b) The input of cities and counties located within, or partially within, a participating fire protection jurisdiction.

(2) The planning committee may coordinate its activities with neighboring cities, towns, and other local governments that engage in fire protection planning.

(3) The planning committee shall:

(a) Create opportunities for public input in the development of the plan;

(b) Adopt a plan proposing the creation of a regional fire protection service authority and recommending governance, design, financing, and development of fire protection and emergency service facilities and operations, including maintenance and preservation of facilities or systems. The plan may authorize the authority to establish a system of ambulance service to be operated by the authority or operated by contract after a call for bids. However, the authority shall not provide for the establishment of an ambulance service that would compete with any existing private ambulance service, unless the authority determines that the region served by the authority, or a substantial portion of the region served by the authority, is not adequately served by an existing private ambulance service. In determining the adequacy of an existing private ambulance service, the authority shall take into consideration objective generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service which must be published by the authority. Following the preliminary conclusion by the authority that the existing private ambulance service is inadequate, and before establishing an ambulance service or issuing a call for bids, the authority shall allow a minimum of sixty days for the private ambulance service to meet the generally accepted medical standards and accepted levels of service. In the event of a second preliminary conclusion of inadequacy within a twenty-four-month period, the authority may immediately issue a call for bids or establish its own ambulance service and is not required to afford the private ambulance service another sixty-day period to meet the generally accepted medical standards and reasonable levels of service. A private ambulance service that is not licensed by the department of health or whose license is denied, suspended, or revoked is not entitled to a sixty-day period within which to demonstrate adequacy and the authority may immediately issue a call for bids or establish an ambulance service; and

(c) In the plan, recommend sources of revenue authorized by RCW 52.26.050, identify the portions of the plan that may be amended by the board of the authority without voter approval, consistent with RCW 52.26.050, and recommend a financing plan to fund selected fire protection and emergency services and projects.

(4) Once adopted, the plan must be forwarded to the participating fire protection jurisdictions' governing bodies to initiate the election process under RCW 52.26.060.

(5) If the ballot measure is not approved, the planning committee may redefine the selected regional fire protection service authority projects, financing plan, and the ballot measure. The fire protection jurisdictions' governing bodies may approve the new plan and ballot measure, and may then submit the revised proposition to the voters at a subsequent election or a special election. If a ballot measure is not approved by the voters by the third vote, the planning committee is dissolved. [2011 c 141 § 2; 2006 c 200 § 2; 2004 c 129 § 4.]

52.26.050 Service plan—Taxes and benefit charges.

(1) A regional fire protection service authority planning committee may, as part of a regional fire protection service authority plan, recommend the imposition of some or all of the following revenue sources, which a regional fire protection service authority may impose upon approval of the voters as provided in this chapter:

(a) Benefit charges under RCW 52.26.180 through 52.26.270;

(b) Property taxes under RCW 52.26.140 through 52.26.170 and 84.52.044 and RCW 84.09.030, 84.52.010, 84.52.052, and 84.52.069; or

(c) Both (a) and (b) of this subsection.

(2) The authority may impose taxes and benefit charges as set forth in the regional fire protection service authority plan upon creation of the authority, or as provided for in this chapter after creation of the authority. If the plan authorizes the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty percent voter approved taxes, the plan and creation of the authority must be approved by an affirmative vote of sixty percent of the voters within the boundaries of the authority voting on a ballot proposition as set forth in RCW 52.26.060. However, if the plan provides for alternative sources of revenue that become effective if the plan and creation of the authority is approved only by a majority vote, then the plan with alternative sources of revenue and creation of the authority may be approved by an affirmative vote of the majority of those voters. If the plan does not authorize the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty percent voter approved taxes, the plan and creation of the authority must be approved by an affirmative vote of the majority of the voters within the boundaries of the authority voting on a ballot proposition as set forth in RCW 52.26.060. Except as provided in this section, all other voter approval requirements under law for the levying of property taxes or the imposition of benefit charges apply. Revenues from these taxes and benefit charges may be used only to implement the plan as set forth in this chapter. [2006 c 200 § 3; 2004 c 129 § 5.]

52.26.060 Service plan—Submission to voters. The governing bodies of two or more fire protection jurisdictions located within reasonable proximity, upon receipt of the regional fire protection service authority plan under RCW 52.26.040, may certify the plan to the ballot, including identification of the revenue options specified to fund the plan. The governing bodies of the fire protection jurisdictions may draft a ballot title, give notice as required by law for ballot measures, and perform other duties as required to put the plan before the voters of the proposed authority for their approval or rejection as a single ballot measure that both approves formation of the authority and approves the plan. Authorities

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may negotiate interlocal agreements necessary to implement the plan. The electorate is the voters voting within the boundaries of the proposed regional fire protection service authority. A simple majority of the total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is required for approval. However, if the plan authorizes the authority to impose benefit charges or sixty percent voter approved taxes, then the percentage of total persons voting on the single ballot measure to approve the plan and establish the authority is the same as in RCW 52.26.050. The authority must act in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The authority is liable for its proportionate share of the costs when the elections are held under RCW 29A.04.321 and 29A.04.330. [2018 c 28 § 6; 2006 c 200 § 4; 2004 c 129 § 6.]

52.26.070 Service authority—Formation—Challenges. If the voters approve the plan, including creation of a regional fire protection service authority and imposition of taxes and benefit charges, if any, and the election results are certified, the authority is formed on the effective date as set forth in the plan or the next January 1st or July 1st, whichever occurs first. A party challenging the procedure or the formation of a voter-approved authority must file the challenge in writing by serving the prosecuting attorney of each county within, or partially within, the regional fire protection service authority and the attorney general within thirty days after the final certification of the election. Failure to challenge within that time forever bars further challenge of the authority's valid formation. [2017 c 196 § 14; 2017 c 37 § 4; 2006 c 200 § 5; 2004 c 129 § 7.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2017 c 37 § 4 and by 2017 c 196 § 14, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.26.080 Organization and composition of governing board—Commissioner positions, districts. (1) The board shall adopt rules for the conduct of business. The board shall adopt bylaws to govern authority affairs, which may include:

- (a) The time and place of regular meetings;
- (b) Rules for calling special meetings;
- (c) The method of keeping records of proceedings and official acts;
- (d) Procedures for the safekeeping and disbursement of funds; and
- (e) Any other provisions the board finds necessary to include.

(2) The governing board shall be determined by the plan. However, only elected officials of participating fire protection jurisdictions and elected commissioners of the authority as provided in subsection (3) of this section are eligible to serve on the board.

(3)(a) A regional fire protection service authority plan may create one or more regional fire protection service authority commissioner positions to serve on a governing board. The following provisions define the qualifications,

compensation, terms, and responsibilities of regional fire protection service authority commissioner positions:

(i) RCW 52.14.010 governs the compensation, qualifications, and ability to serve as a volunteer firefighter;

(ii) RCW 52.14.030 governs the polling places for elections; and

(iii) RCW 52.14.050 governs commissioner vacancies.

(b) The terms of office for regional fire protection service authority commissioner positions may be established by the plan, however, no single term may exceed six years and the terms of multiple positions must be staggered.

(c) Regional fire protection service authority commissioners shall take an oath of office in the manner specified by RCW 52.14.070.

(4)(a) A regional fire protection service authority plan may create commissioner districts. If commissioner districts are created, the population of each commissioner district must be approximately equal. Commissioner districts must be redrawn as provided in chapter 29A.76 RCW.

(b) Commissioner districts shall be used as follows: (i) Only a registered voter who resides in a commissioner district may be a candidate for, or serve as, a commissioner of the commissioner district; and (ii) only voters of a commissioner district may vote at a primary to nominate candidates for a commissioner of the commissioner district. All voters of the proposed authority must be eligible to vote at a general election to elect a commissioner of the commissioner district. If a plan includes elected officials from participating fire protection jurisdictions, the commissioner districts may be based, in part, on the jurisdictional boundaries of the participating jurisdictions. [2011 c 141 § 3; 2004 c 129 § 8.]

52.26.090 Powers of governing board. (1) The governing board of the authority is responsible for the execution of the voter-approved plan. Participating jurisdictions shall review the plan every ten years. The board may:

(a) Levy taxes and impose benefit charges as authorized in the plan and approved by authority voters;

(b) Enter into agreements with federal, state, local, and regional entities and departments as necessary to accomplish authority purposes and protect the authority's investments;

(c) Accept gifts, grants, or other contributions of funds that will support the purposes and programs of the authority;

(d) Monitor and audit the progress and execution of fire protection and emergency service projects to protect the investment of the public and annually make public its findings;

(e) Pay for services and enter into leases and contracts, including professional service contracts;

(f) Hire, manage, and terminate employees; and

(g) Exercise powers and perform duties as the board determines necessary to carry out the purposes, functions, and projects of the authority in accordance with Title 52 RCW if one of the fire protection jurisdictions is a fire district, unless provided otherwise in the regional fire protection service authority plan, or in accordance with the statutes identified in the plan if none of the fire protection jurisdictions is a fire district.

(2) An authority may enforce fire codes as provided under chapter 19.27 RCW. [2006 c 200 § 6; 2004 c 129 § 9.]

52.26.100 Transfer of responsibilities and employees to authority—Civil service system. (1) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, all powers, duties, and functions of a participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to fire protection and emergency services shall be transferred to the regional fire protection service authority on its creation date or on the effective date that a fire protection jurisdiction is subsequently annexed into an authority.

(2)(a) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, and on the creation date of the regional fire protection service authority or, in the case of a fire protection jurisdiction, on the effective date that the fire protection jurisdiction is subsequently annexed into an authority, all reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material in the possession of the participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be delivered to the regional fire protection service authority; all real property and personal property including cabinets, furniture, office equipment, motor vehicles, and other tangible property employed by the participating fire protection jurisdiction in carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred to the regional fire protection service authority; and all funds, credits, or other assets held by the participating fire protection jurisdiction in connection with the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred and credited to the regional fire protection service authority.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, any appropriations made to the participating fire protection jurisdiction for carrying out the fire protection and emergency services powers, functions, and duties shall be transferred and credited to the regional fire protection service authority.

(c) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, whenever any question arises as to the transfer of any personnel, funds, books, documents, records, papers, files, equipment, or other tangible property used or held in the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties and functions transferred, the governing body of the participating fire protection jurisdiction shall make a determination as to the proper allocation.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, all rules and all pending business before the participating fire protection jurisdiction pertaining to the powers, functions, and duties transferred shall be continued and acted upon by the regional fire protection service authority, and all existing contracts and obligations shall remain in full force and shall be performed by the regional fire protection service authority.

(4) The transfer of the powers, duties, functions, and personnel of the participating fire protection jurisdiction shall not affect the validity of any act performed before creation of the regional fire protection service authority.

(5) If apportionments of budgeted funds are required because of the transfers, the treasurer for the authority shall certify the apportionments.

(6)(a) Subject to (c) of this subsection, all employees of the participating fire protection jurisdictions are transferred

to the jurisdiction of the regional fire protection service authority on its creation date or, in the case of a fire protection jurisdiction, on the effective date that the fire protection jurisdiction is subsequently annexed into an authority. Upon transfer, unless an agreement for different terms of transfer is reached between the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the participating fire protection jurisdictions, an employee is entitled to the employee rights, benefits, and privileges to which he or she would have been entitled as an employee of a participating fire protection jurisdiction, including rights to:

- (i) Compensation at least equal to the level at the time of transfer;
- (ii) Retirement, vacation, sick leave, and any other accrued benefit;
- (iii) Promotion and service time accrual; and
- (iv) The length or terms of probationary periods, including no requirement for an additional probationary period if one had been completed before the transfer date.

(b) If any or all of the participating fire protection jurisdictions provide for civil service in their fire departments, the collective bargaining representatives of the transferring employees and the participating fire protection jurisdictions must negotiate regarding the establishment of a civil service system within the authority. This subsection does not apply if none of the participating fire protection districts provide for civil service.

(c) Nothing contained in this section may be construed to alter any existing collective bargaining unit or the provisions of any existing collective bargaining agreement until the agreement has expired or until the bargaining unit has been modified as provided by law. [2011 c 271 § 1; 2006 c 200 § 7; 2004 c 129 § 10.]

52.26.110 Withdrawal, reannexation of territory. (1) As provided in this section, a regional fire protection service authority may withdraw areas from its boundaries or reannex into the authority areas that previously had been withdrawn from the authority under this section.

(2)(a) The withdrawal of an area is authorized upon: (i) Adoption of a resolution by the board approving the withdrawal and finding that, in the opinion of the board, inclusion of this area within the regional fire protection service authority will result in a reduction of the authority's tax levy rate under the provisions of RCW 84.52.010; or (ii) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the withdrawal, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the governing body of the fire protection district within which the area is located approving the withdrawal, if the area is located outside of a city or town, but within a fire protection district.

(b) A withdrawal under this section is effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the resolution under (a)(i) or (ii) of this subsection is adopted, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the resolution.

(c) The withdrawal of an area from the boundaries of an authority does not exempt any property therein from taxation for the purpose of paying the costs of redeeming any indebtedness of the authority existing at the time of withdrawal.

(3)(a) An area that has been withdrawn from the boundaries of a regional fire protection service authority under this section may be reannexed into the authority upon: (i) Adoption of a resolution by the board proposing the reannexation; and (ii) adoption of a resolution by the city or town council approving the reannexation, if the area is located within the city or town, or adoption of a resolution by the governing body of the fire protection district within which the area is located approving the reannexation, if the area is located outside of a city or town but within a fire protection district.

(b) A reannexation under this section shall be effective at the end of the day on the thirty-first day of December in the year in which the adoption of the resolution under (a)(ii) of this subsection occurs, but for purposes of establishing boundaries for property tax purposes, the boundaries shall be established immediately upon the adoption of the resolution.

(c)(i) Referendum action on the proposed reannexation under this section may be taken by the voters of the area proposed to be reannexed if a petition calling for a referendum is filed with the city or town council, or governing body of the fire protection district, within a thirty-day period after the adoption of the resolution under (a)(ii) of this subsection, which petition has been signed by registered voters of the area proposed to be reannexed equal in number to ten percent of the total number of the registered voters residing in that area.

(ii) If a valid petition signed by the requisite number of registered voters has been so filed, the effect of the resolutions shall be held in abeyance and a ballot proposition to authorize the reannexation shall be submitted to the voters of the area at the next special election date specified in RCW 29A.04.330 that occurs forty-five or more days after the petitions have been validated. Approval of the ballot proposition authorizing the reannexation by a simple majority vote shall authorize the reannexation. [2004 c 129 § 11.]

52.26.120 Dissolution of fire protection district—Election—Transfer of responsibilities. Any fire protection district within the authority may be dissolved by a majority vote of the registered electors of the district at an election conducted by the election officials of the county or counties in which the district is located in accordance with the general election laws of the state. The proceedings for dissolution may be initiated by the adoption of a resolution by the board. The dissolution of the district shall not cancel outstanding obligations of the district or of a local improvement district within the district, and the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the district was located may make annual levies against the lands within the district until the obligations of the districts are paid. All powers, duties, and functions of a dissolved fire protection jurisdiction within the authority boundaries, pertaining to providing fire protection services may be transferred, by resolution, to the regional fire protection service authority. [2004 c 129 § 12.]

52.26.130 Debt—Interlocal contracts—General obligation bonds. (1) An authority may incur general indebtedness for authority purposes, issue bonds, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness not to exceed an amount, together with any outstanding nonvoter approved general obligation

debt, equal to three-fourths of one percent of the value of the taxable property within the authority. The maximum term of the obligations may not exceed twenty years. The obligations may pledge benefit charges and may pledge payments to an authority from the state, the federal government, or any fire protection jurisdiction under an interlocal contract. The interlocal contracts pledging revenues and taxes are binding for a term not to exceed twenty-five years, and taxes or other revenue pledged by an interlocal contract may not be eliminated or modified if it would impair the pledge of the contract.

(2) An authority may also issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes not to exceed an amount, together with any outstanding general obligation debt, equal to one and one-half percent of the value of the taxable property within the authority. The authority may provide for the retirement of the bonds by excess property tax levies. The voters of the authority must approve a proposition authorizing the bonds and levies by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of those voting on the proposition at an election. At the election, the total number of persons voting must constitute not less than forty percent of the voters in the authority who voted at the last preceding general state election. The maximum term of the bonds may not exceed twenty-five years. Elections shall be held as provided in RCW 39.36.050.

(3) Obligations of an authority shall be issued and sold in accordance with chapters 39.46 and 39.50 RCW, as applicable. [2006 c 200 § 10; 2004 c 129 § 14.]

52.26.140 Levy of taxes—Levies authorized by special election—Indebtedness—Definition. (1) To carry out the purposes for which a regional fire protection service authority is created, as authorized in the plan and approved by the voters, the governing board of an authority may annually levy the following taxes:

(a) An ad valorem tax on all taxable property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value;

(b) An ad valorem tax on all property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value and which will not cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional or statutory limitations. This levy, or any portion of this levy, may also be made when dollar rates of other taxing units are released by agreement with the other taxing units from their authorized levies; and

(c) An ad valorem tax on all taxable property located within the authority not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value if the authority has at least one full-time, paid employee, or contracts with another municipal corporation for the services of at least one full-time, paid employee. This levy may be made only if it will not affect dollar rates which other taxing districts may lawfully claim nor cause the combined levies to exceed the constitutional or statutory limitations or both.

(2) Levies in excess of the amounts provided in subsection (1) of this section or in excess of the aggregate dollar rate limitations or both may be made for any authority purpose when so authorized at a special election under RCW 84.52.052. Any such tax when levied must be certified to the proper county officials for the collection of the tax as for other general taxes. The taxes when collected shall be placed in the appropriate authority fund or funds as provided by law,

and must be paid out on warrants of the auditor of the county in which all, or the largest portion of, the authority is located, upon authorization of the governing board of the authority.

(3) Authorities may provide for the retirement of general indebtedness by excess property tax levies as set forth in RCW 52.26.130.

(4) For purposes of this chapter, the term "value of the taxable property" has the same meaning as in RCW 39.36.015. [2006 c 200 § 11; 2004 c 129 § 15.]

52.26.150 Levy of taxes—To be made by county or counties where authority is located. At the time of making general tax levies in each year, the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which a regional fire protection service authority is located shall make the required levies for authority purposes against the real and personal property in the authority in accordance with the equalized valuations of the property for general tax purposes and as a part of the general taxes. The tax levies are part of the general tax roll and must be collected as a part of the general taxes against the property in the authority. [2004 c 129 § 16.]

52.26.160 Taxation of lands lying within authority and forest protection assessment area. In the event that lands lie within both a regional fire protection service authority and a forest protection assessment area they shall be taxed and assessed as follows:

(1) If the lands are wholly unimproved, they are subject to forest protection assessments but not to authority levies;

(2) If the lands are wholly improved, they are subject to authority levies but not to forest protection assessments; and

(3) If the lands are partly improved and partly unimproved, they are subject both to authority levies and to forest protection assessments. However, upon request, accompanied by appropriate legal descriptions, the county assessor shall segregate any unimproved portions which each consist of twenty or more acres, and thereafter the unimproved portion or portions are subject only to forest protection assessments. [2004 c 129 § 17.]

52.26.170 Collection of taxes. It is the duty of the county treasurer of the county in which the regional fire protection service authority created under this chapter is located to collect taxes authorized and levied under this chapter. However, when a regional fire protection service authority is located in more than one county, the county treasurer of each county in which the authority is located shall collect the regional fire protection service authority's taxes that are imposed on property located within the county and transfer these funds to the treasurer of the county in which the majority of the authority lies. [2004 c 129 § 18.]

52.26.180 Benefit charges—Exemptions—Annual review—Definitions. (1) The governing board of a regional fire protection service authority may by resolution, as authorized in the plan and approved by the voters, for authority purposes authorized by law, fix and impose a benefit charge on personal property and improvements to real property which are located within the authority on the date specified and which have received or will receive the benefits provided by the authority, to be paid by the owners of the properties.

(2) A benefit charge does not apply to:

(a) Personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization as, or including, a sanctuary or for purposes related to the bona fide religious ministries of the denomination or religious organization, including schools and educational facilities used for kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education and all grounds and buildings related thereto. However, a benefit charge does apply to personal property and improvements to real property owned or used by any recognized religious denomination or religious organization for business operations, profit-making enterprises, or activities not including use of a sanctuary or related to kindergarten, primary, or secondary educational purposes or for institutions of higher education;

(b) Property of housing authorities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 35.82.210;

(c) Property of nonprofit entities providing rental housing for very low-income households or providing space for the placement of a mobile home for a very low-income household that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.560;

(d) Property of nonprofit homes for the aging that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.041;

(e) Property of nonprofit organizations, corporations, or associations providing housing for eligible persons with developmental disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.042;

(f) Property of nonprofit organizations providing emergency or transitional housing for low-income homeless persons or victims of domestic violence who are homeless for personal safety reasons that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.043;

(g) Property of the state housing finance commission that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.135; and

(h) Property of nonprofit corporations operating sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities that is exempt from property taxes under RCW 84.36.350.

(3) A limited benefit charge may apply to property or improvements owned by a Christmas tree grower as defined in RCW 15.13.250(4) so long as the property or improvement is located on land that has been approved as farm and agricultural land with standing crops under chapter 84.34 RCW. For such property or improvement, a benefit charge may not exceed the reduction in property tax that results from the imposition of a benefit charge, as required under RCW 52.26.240.

(4) The aggregate amount of these benefit charges in any one year may not exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of the operating budget for the year in which the benefit charge is to be collected. It is the duty of the county legislative authority or authorities of the county or counties in which the regional fire protection service authority is located to make any necessary adjustments to assure compliance with this limitation and to immediately notify the governing board of an authority of any changes thereof.

(5) A benefit charge imposed must be reasonably proportioned to the measurable benefits to property resulting from the services afforded by the authority. It is acceptable to apportion the benefit charge to the values of the properties as

found by the county assessor or assessors modified generally in the proportion that fire insurance rates are reduced or entitled to be reduced as the result of providing the services. Any other method that reasonably apportions the benefit charges to the actual benefits resulting from the degree of protection, which may include but is not limited to the distance from regularly maintained fire protection equipment, the level of fire prevention services provided to the properties, or the need of the properties for specialized services, may be specified in the resolution and is subject to contest on the grounds of unreasonable or capricious action or action in excess of the measurable benefits to the property resulting from services afforded by the authority. The governing board of an authority may determine that certain properties or types or classes of properties are not receiving measurable benefits based on criteria they establish by resolution. A benefit charge authorized by this chapter is not applicable to the personal property or improvements to real property of any individual, corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association maintaining a fire department and whose fire protection and training system has been accepted by a fire insurance underwriter maintaining a fire protection engineering and inspection service authorized by the state insurance commissioner to do business in this state, but the property may be protected by the authority under a contractual agreement.

(6) For administrative purposes, the benefit charge imposed on any individual property may be compiled into a single charge, provided that the authority, upon request of the property owner, provide an itemized list of charges for each measurable benefit included in the charge.

(7)(a) At the annual review of the fire benefit charge mandated by RCW 52.26.230(2), if a fire service agency has identified:

(i) A tax-exempt property under subsection (2)(b) of this section as having a substantial increase in requested emergency services over the previous year; or

(ii) A new tax-exempt property that is similar in size, population, and geographic location as another such tax-exempt property as having an increase in requested emergency services;

then the tax-exempt property and the fire service agency must work together, in good faith, to address the problem by implementing community risk reduction efforts. The community risk reduction plan may include but is not limited to wellness programs and community action plans.

(b) At the subsequent annual review, if the heightened service requirements have not been reasonably addressed by the joint mitigation efforts, and the tax-exempt property owner has not acted in good faith:

(i) The property is subject to assessment of the fire benefit charge in the subsequent year, subject to approval by the governing board of the authority as outlined in RCW 52.26.230(2); or

(ii) The respective tax-exempt property shall pay the fire service agency a fire protection charge payment in lieu of a benefit charge. The fire protection charge shall be an amount equivalent to the benefit rates for similarly situated properties for that year.

(c) All tax-exempt properties identified under subsection (2)(b) of this section and all local fire service agencies are encouraged to work collaboratively to develop and imple-

ment programs to address proper usage of fire service resources for residents of the housing properties.

(8) For the purposes of this section and RCW 52.26.190 through 52.26.270, the following definitions apply:

(a)(i) "Personal property" includes every form of tangible personal property including, but not limited to, all goods, chattels, stock in trade, estates, or crops.

(ii) "Personal property" does not include any personal property used for farming, field crops, farm equipment, or livestock.

(b) "Improvements to real property" does not include permanent growing crops, field improvements installed for the purpose of aiding the growth of permanent crops, or other field improvements normally not subject to damage by fire. [2017 c 196 § 6; 2004 c 129 § 24.]

Application—2017 c 196 §§ 5 and 6: See note following RCW 52.18.010.

Effective date—2017 c 196 §§ 1-9, 11, 13, and 14: See note following RCW 52.26.220.

52.26.190 Benefit charges—Exemptions. All personal property not assessed and subjected to ad valorem taxation under Title 84 RCW, all property under contract or for which the regional fire protection service authority is receiving payment for as authorized by law, all property subject to chapter 54.28 RCW, and all property that is subject to a contract for services with an authority, is exempt from the benefit charge imposed under this chapter. [2004 c 129 § 25.]

52.26.200 Benefit charges—Resolution—County assessor's duties. (1) The resolution establishing benefit charges as specified in RCW 52.26.180 must specify, by legal geographical areas or other specific designations, the charge to apply to each property by location, type, or other designation, or other information that is necessary to the proper computation of the benefit charge to be charged to each property owner subject to the resolution.

(2) The county assessor of each county in which the regional fire protection service authority is located shall determine and identify the personal properties and improvements to real property that are subject to a benefit charge in each authority and shall furnish and deliver to the county treasurer of that county a listing of the properties with information describing the location, legal description, and address of the person to whom the statement of benefit charges is to be mailed, the name of the owner, and the value of the property and improvements, together with the benefit charge to apply to each. These benefit charges must be certified to the county treasurer for collection in the same manner that is used for the collection of fire protection charges for forestlands protected by the department of natural resources under RCW 76.04.610 and the same penalties and provisions for collection apply. [2004 c 129 § 26.]

52.26.210 Benefit charges—Administration and collection by county treasurer. Each regional fire protection service authority shall contract, prior to the imposition of a benefit charge, for the administration and collection of the benefit charge by each county treasurer, who shall deduct a percentage, as provided by contract to reimburse the county for expenses incurred by the county assessor and county trea-

surer in the administration of the resolution and this chapter. The county treasurer shall make distributions each year, as the charges are collected, in the amount of the benefit charges imposed on behalf of each authority, less the deduction provided for in the contract. [2004 c 129 § 27.]

52.26.220 Benefit charges—Submission to voters—Renewal. (1)(a) The initial imposition of a benefit charge authorized by this chapter must be approved by not less than sixty percent majority of the voters of the regional fire protection service authority voting at a general election or at a special election called by the authority for that purpose. Ballot measures containing an authorization to impose benefit charges that are approved by the voters pursuant to RCW 52.26.060 satisfy the proposition approval requirement of this subsection and subsection (2) of this section.

(b) An election held for the initial imposition of a benefit charge must be held not more than twelve months prior to the date on which the first charge is to be assessed.

(c) A benefit charge approved at an election expires in six or fewer years as authorized by the voters, unless subsequently reapproved by the voters.

(2) Ballot measures calling for the initial imposition of a benefit charge must be submitted so as to enable voters favoring the authorization of a benefit charge to vote "Yes" and those opposed to vote "No." The ballot question is as follows:

"Shall the regional fire protection service authority composed of (insert the participating fire protection jurisdictions) be authorized to impose benefit charges each year for (insert number of years not to exceed six) years, not to exceed an amount equal to sixty percent of its operating budget, and be prohibited from imposing an additional property tax under RCW 52.26.140 (1)(c)?

YES

NO

(3)(a) The continued imposition of a benefit charge authorized by this chapter may be approved for six consecutive years, ten consecutive years, or permanently. A ballot measure calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge for six consecutive years or ten consecutive years must be approved by a majority of the voters of the regional fire protection service authority voting at a general election or at a special election called by the authority for that purpose. A ballot measure calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge as a permanent benefit charge must be approved by not less than sixty percent of the voters of the regional fire protection service authority voting at a general election or at a special election called by the authority for that purpose.

(b) Ballot measures calling for the continued imposition of a benefit charge must be submitted so as to enable voters favoring the continued imposition of the benefit charge to vote "Yes" and those opposed to vote "No." The ballot question must be substantially in the following form:

"Shall the regional fire protection service authority composed of (insert the participating fire

authority that is requested to annex the fire protection jurisdiction.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in the regional fire protection service authority plan, on receipt of the resolution requesting annexation, the governing board of the authority may adopt a resolution amending its plan to establish terms and conditions of the requested annexation and submit the resolution and plan amendment to the fire protection jurisdiction requesting annexation. An election to authorize the annexation may be held only if the governing body of the fire protection jurisdiction seeking annexation adopts a resolution approving both the annexation and the related plan amendment.

(4)(a) An annexation is authorized if the voters in the fire protection jurisdiction proposed to be annexed approve by a simple majority vote a single ballot measure approving the annexation and related plan amendment.

(b) An annexation is effective on the date specified in the ballot measure. In the event the ballot measure does not specify an effective date, the effective date is on the subsequent January 1st or July 1st, whichever occurs first. [2018 c 28 § 7; 2011 c 271 § 2.]

52.26.310 Biennial budget authority. A regional fire protection service authority may, in lieu of adopting an annual budget, adopt a biennial budget with a mid-biennium review and modification for the second year of the biennium. [2015 c 40 § 2.]

Chapter 52.30 RCW

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sections

52.30.020	Property of public agency included within district—Contracts for services.
52.30.040	Civil service for employees.
52.30.050	Residency not grounds for discharge of civil service employees.
52.30.060	Change of district name—Resolution.
52.30.070	District volunteer members—Holding public office—Definitions.
52.30.080	Tribal property—Contracts for service.
52.30.090	Hazardous material cleanup or removal—Cost recovery.

52.30.020 Property of public agency included within district—Contracts for services. Wherever a fire protection district has been organized which includes within its area or is adjacent to, buildings and equipment, except those leased to a nontax exempt person or organization, owned by the legislative or administrative authority of a state agency or institution or a municipal corporation, the agency or institution or municipal corporation involved shall contract with such district for fire protection services necessary for the protection and safety of personnel and property pursuant to the provisions of chapter 39.34 RCW: PROVIDED, That nothing in this section shall be construed to require that any state agency, institution, or municipal corporation contract for services which are performed by the staff and equipment of such state agency, institution, or municipal corporation: PROVIDED FURTHER, That nothing in this section shall apply to state agencies or institutions or municipal corporations which are receiving fire protection services by contract from another municipality, city, town, or other entities: AND

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PROVIDED FURTHER, That school districts shall receive fire protection services from the fire protection districts in which they are located without the necessity of executing a contract for such fire protection services: PROVIDED FURTHER, That prior to September 1, 1974, the superintendent of public instruction, the chief of the Washington state patrol through the director of fire protection, the director of financial management, and the executive director of the Washington fire commissioners association, or their designees, shall develop criteria to be used by the chief of the Washington state patrol through the director of fire protection in establishing uniform rates governing payments to fire districts by school districts for fire protection services. On or before September 1, 1974, the chief of the Washington state patrol through the director of fire protection shall establish such rates to be payable by school districts on or before January 1st of each year commencing January 1, 1975, payable July 1, 1975: AND PROVIDED FURTHER, That beginning with the 1975-77 biennium and in each biennium thereafter the superintendent of public instruction shall present in the budget submittal to the governor an amount sufficient to reimburse affected school districts for the moneys necessary to pay the costs of the uniform rates established by the chief of the Washington state patrol through the director of fire protection. [2006 c 25 § 12; 1979 c 151 § 164; 1974 ex.s. c 88 § 1; 1973 1st ex.s. c 64 § 1; 1941 c 139 § 1; Rem. Supp. 1941 § 5654-143a. Formerly RCW 52.36.020.]

Fire, medical, or other emergency services provided to county by political subdivision—Financial assistance authorized: RCW 36.32.470.

Fire protection services for state-owned facilities: RCW 35.21.775.

Additional notes found at www.leg.wa.gov

52.30.040 Civil service for employees. A fire protection district with a fully-paid fire department may, by resolution of its board of fire commissioners, provide for civil service in its fire department in the same manner, with the same powers, and with the same force and effect as provided by chapter 41.08 RCW for cities, towns, and municipalities, including restrictions against the discharge of an employee because of residence outside the limits of the fire protection district. [1984 c 230 § 79; 1971 ex.s. c 256 § 2; 1949 c 72 § 1; Rem. Supp. 1949 § 5654-120a. Formerly RCW 52.36.060.]

52.30.050 Residency not grounds for discharge of civil service employees. Residence of an employee outside the limits of a fire protection district is not grounds for discharge of any regularly-appointed civil service employee otherwise qualified. [1984 c 230 § 80; 1971 ex.s. c 256 § 1. Formerly RCW 52.36.065.]

52.30.060 Change of district name—Resolution. The name of a fire protection district shall be changed, as proposed by resolution of the board of fire commissioners of the district, upon the adoption of a resolution approving the change by the county legislative authority of the county in which all, or the largest portion, of a fire protection district is located. [1989 c 63 § 34.]

52.30.070 District volunteer members—Holding public office—Definitions. (1) Except as otherwise prohib-

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ited by law, a volunteer member of any fire protection district who does not serve as fire chief for the district may be:

(a) A candidate for elective public office and serve in that public office if elected; or

(b) Appointed to any public office and serve in that public office if appointed.

(2) For purposes of this section, "volunteer" means a member of any fire protection district who performs voluntarily any assigned or authorized duties on behalf of or at the direction of the fire protection district without receiving compensation or consideration for performing such duties.

(3) For purposes of this section, "compensation" and "consideration" do not include any benefits the volunteer may have accrued or is accruing under chapter 41.24 RCW. [2006 c 211 § 2.]

52.30.080 Tribal property—Contracts for service.

(1) When exempt tribal property is located within the boundaries of a fire protection district or a regional fire protection service authority, the fire protection district or authority is authorized to contract with the tribe for compensation for providing fire protection services in an amount and under such terms as are mutually agreed upon by the fire protection district or authority and the tribe.

(2) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Exempt tribal property" means property that is owned exclusively by a federally recognized Indian tribe and that is exempt from taxation under RCW 84.36.010.

(b) "Regional fire protection service authority" or "authority" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 52.26.020. [2014 c 207 § 10.]

Application—2014 c 207: See note following RCW 84.36.010.

52.30.090 Hazardous material cleanup or removal—Cost recovery.

(1) A fire service jurisdiction is entitled to recover from any liable party the actual costs associated with the cleanup or removal of hazardous waste and other hazardous materials, including debris or vehicle operating fluids, when responding to a vehicle accident on private or public property, including public roadways. A liable party may submit an invoice for those actual costs incurred by the jurisdiction, for the jurisdiction's cleanup or removal services, to their insurer that provides coverage for property damage for which the party becomes legally obligated, if coverage is found within a liable party's insurance policy. An insurer providing such coverage may issue payment directly to the jurisdiction from available property damage liability coverage contained in the policy. If there are multiple liable parties involved, the jurisdiction may only recover the proportional amount of liability legally determined for each party. The jurisdiction may not recover from any one liable party, or all liable parties combined, more than the actual costs incurred with the cleanup and removal of the hazardous waste and other hazardous materials, including debris or vehicle operating fluids, when responding to a vehicle accident on private or public property, including public roadways.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the definitions in this subsection apply:

(a) "Actual costs" means the amount necessary to compensate for reasonable personnel time spent at the scene of a

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vehicle accident and the reasonable cost of any supplies used in the cleanup or removal of hazardous waste and other hazardous materials, including debris or vehicle operating fluids, when responding to a vehicle accident on private or public property, including public roadways.

(b) "Fire service jurisdiction" or "jurisdiction" means a fire protection district or regional fire protection service authority.

(c) "Insurer" has the same meaning as in RCW 48.01.050.

(d) "Liable party" means a person or entity that is legally obligated or responsible for causing a vehicle accident.

(e) "Vehicle" means any mode of transportation operated by a liable party and involved in a vehicle accident including, but not limited to, automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles. [2020 c 198 § 1.]

Chapter 52.33 RCW

FIRE DEPARTMENTS—PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Sections

52.33.010	Intent.
52.33.020	Definitions.
52.33.030	Policy statement—Service delivery objectives.
52.33.040	Annual evaluations—Annual report.

52.33.010 Intent. The legislature intends for fire protection districts and regional fire [protection] service authorities to set standards for addressing the reporting and accountability of substantially career fire departments, and to specify performance measures applicable to response time objectives for certain major services. The legislature acknowledges the efforts of the international city/county management association, the international association of fire chiefs, and the national fire protection association for the organization and deployment of resources for fire departments. The arrival of first responders with automatic external defibrillator capability before the onset of brain death, and the arrival of adequate fire suppression resources before flash-over is a critical event during the mitigation of an emergency, and is in the public's best interest. For these reasons, this chapter contains performance measures, comparable to that research, relating to the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations by substantially career fire departments. This chapter does not, and is not intended to, in any way modify or limit the authority of fire protection districts and regional fire protection service authorities to set levels of service. [2005 c 376 § 301.]

52.33.020 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Advanced life support" means functional provision of advanced airway management, including intubation, advanced cardiac monitoring, manual defibrillation, establishment and maintenance of intravenous access, and drug therapy.

(2) "Aircraft rescue and firefighting" means the firefighting actions taken to rescue persons and to control or extinguish fire involving or adjacent to aircraft on the ground.

(3) "Brain death" as defined by the American heart association means the irreversible death of brain cells that begins four to six minutes after cardiac arrest.

(4) "Fire department" means a fire protection district or a regional fire protection service authority responsible for fire-fighting actions, emergency medical services, and other special operations in a specified geographic area. The department must be a substantially career fire department, and not a substantially volunteer fire department.

(5) "Fire suppression" means the activities involved in controlling and extinguishing fires.

(6) "First responder" means provision of initial assessment and basic first-aid intervention, including cardiac pulmonary resuscitation and automatic external defibrillator capability.

(7) "Flash-over" as defined by national institute of standards and technology means when all combustibles in a room burst into flame and the fire spreads rapidly.

(8) "Marine rescue and firefighting" means the firefighting actions taken to prevent, control, or extinguish fire involved in or adjacent to a marine vessel and the rescue actions for occupants using normal and emergency routes for egress.

(9) "Response time" means the time immediately following the turnout time that begins when units are en route to the emergency incident and ends when units arrive at the scene.

(10) "Special operations" means those emergency incidents to which the fire department responds that require specific and advanced training and specialized tools and equipment.

(11) "Turnout time" means the time beginning when units receive notification of the emergency to the beginning point of response time. [2005 c 376 § 302.]

52.33.030 Policy statement—Service delivery objectives. (1) Every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority shall maintain a written statement or policy that establishes the following:

- (a) The existence of a fire department;
- (b) Services that the fire department is required to provide;
- (c) The basic organizational structure of the fire department;
- (d) The expected number of fire department employees; and
- (e) Functions that fire department employees are expected to perform.

(2) Every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority shall include service delivery objectives in the written statement or policy required under subsection (1) of this section. These objectives shall include specific response time objectives for the following major service components, if appropriate:

- (a) Fire suppression;
- (b) Emergency medical services;
- (c) Special operations;
- (d) Aircraft rescue and firefighting;
- (e) Marine rescue and firefighting; and
- (f) Wildland firefighting.

(3) Every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority, in order to measure the ability to arrive

and begin mitigation operations before the critical events of brain death or flash-over, shall establish time objectives for the following measurements:

- (a) Turnout time;
- (b) Response time for the arrival of the first arriving engine company at a fire suppression incident and response time for the deployment of a full first alarm assignment at a fire suppression incident;
- (c) Response time for the arrival of a unit with first responder or higher level capability at an emergency medical incident; and
- (d) Response time for the arrival of an advanced life support unit at an emergency medical incident, where this service is provided by the fire department.

(4) Every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority shall also establish a performance objective of not less than ninety percent for the achievement of each response time objective established under subsection (3) of this section. [2005 c 376 § 303.]

52.33.040 Annual evaluations—Annual report. (1) Every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority shall evaluate its level of service and deployment delivery and response time objectives on an annual basis. The evaluations shall be based on data relating to level of service, deployment, and the achievement of each response time objective in each geographic area within the jurisdiction of the fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority.

(2) Beginning in 2007, every fire protection district and regional fire protection service authority shall issue an annual written report which shall be based on the annual evaluations required by subsection (1) of this section.

(a) The annual report shall define the geographic areas and circumstances in which the requirements of this standard are not being met.

(b) The annual report shall explain the predictable consequences of any deficiencies and address the steps that are necessary to achieve compliance. [2005 c 376 § 304.]