

March 1, 2024

Hauser Lake Fire Protection District  
Fire Chief James Neils  
10728 N Hauser Lake Road  
Hauser, ID 83854



Dear Community Members,

I am the Chief of the Hauser Lake Fire Protection District and Volunteer Fire Department (Hauser Fire). I am also a fellow taxpayer and a longstanding patron of the district. I have served since 1989 as a volunteer Firefighter and EMT and became the Fire Chief in 2020. I have given more than 30 years of continued service to our community.

In May 2024, for only the second time in our history, we will be requesting a levy reset to maintain emergency services. Our fire department, proudly serving since 1952, has undergone significant changes over the years. We have reached a point where the district's budget, which has not been reset in 20 years, is failing to keep pace with increasing expenses and technology.

Our fire commissioners have identified these main reasons for the levy reset.

- *Fund operations*
- *Replace apparatus and equipment*
- *Increase paid personnel*
- *Capture impact fees*
- *Preserve favorable fire rating*

Hauser Fire is, and will continue to be, a **volunteer** department. Volunteers save us hundreds of thousands of dollars; however, volunteers are not free. It currently costs over \$23,000 to outfit each volunteer Firefighter/EMT. Our volunteers must be well-equipped and safe while serving our community. We have made it over eighteen years with only two paid personnel, on a budget based on volunteers, and we now need more staff.

Our district is on track to **grow by a projected 60% by 2031**. Impact fees are being collected from new construction to help fund needed projects in the district but come with restrictions. If we do not have additional funds contributed by the district to complete the projects, the impact fees cannot be utilized at all. Our budget does not currently allow for needed apparatus and equipment replacement.

The levy reset will help ensure adequate funding for the continued safety, efficiency, and financial health of the community's fire department. Please vote May 21, 2024. More information will be shared by mail and on our website, [hauserfire.org](http://hauserfire.org), in the coming months.

Conversations are welcome and encouraged. Please call or email me with questions, concerns and comments. Please join us for the first of several face-to-face opportunities on March 21.

Sincerely,

**James L. Neils**  
Fire Chief  
Hauser Lake Fire Protection District

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10728 N. Hauser Lake Road  
Hauser, ID 83854  
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**Community Cookies & Conversation**  
Thursday, March 21, 6:00 to 7:30 pm @ Fire Station

# Hauser Fire Levy Reset



The Hauser Lake Volunteer Fire Department is a **volunteer** fire and rescue department which began in 1952 and was established in 1976 as a fire protection district. Hauser Fire provides fire, medical and emergency response to our community of Hauser Lake, Idaho. As of January 2024, the fire department is operated by 41 members: 39 volunteers and two paid staff (a full-time chief and half-time administrator).

In May 2024, Hauser Lake citizens will be asked to vote on a levy reset to raise the base budget from property taxes to \$736,067 which is needed to maintain emergency services for our area due to increasing costs and demand. Levied property taxes are the main funding source for Hauser Fire and pay for almost all department operations such as maintenance and repairs on apparatus and the station, training, payroll, supplies, fuel, recruitment and much more.

## Why is Hauser Fire asking for a Levy Reset?

By law, Hauser Fire's base budget from property tax revenue can grow by **no more than 3% per year** unless a special election is held and a new budget approved by a supermajority (66.67%) of voters.

Hauser Fire last asked for and received a reset in 2003, **over 20 years ago**. It's time again because the budget has fallen behind expenses and technology.

Currently, Hauser Fire responds to **90% of emergency calls within 10 minutes**; however, our community is **on track to grow by 60%** between 2021 and 2031, requiring more resources. To maintain the high level of service now and into the future, the levy would reset Hauser Fire's annual base budget from \$255,392 to \$736,067.

Additional money for our district (impact fees), to help pay for growth, can be secured for our community's benefit **only if** the district can provide sufficient matching funds to complete the projects.

## What will the Levy Reset fund?

Maintain and enhance firefighting and EMS response as demand grows.

Replace aged apparatus and equipment, such as radios and personal protective equipment.

Increase paid personnel.

Provide funds needed to capture the impact fees available to Hauser before the money must be returned.

Preserve Hauser Fire's favorable Idaho Survey & Rating Bureau (ISRB) insurance rating.

## How will the Levy Reset impact me?

If approved by voters, the levy reset will change the Hauser Fire levy from approximately \$0.51 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to an estimated \$1.48 for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2024. After the reset the 3% cap will resume as normal.

Maintaining Hauser Fire's ISRB rating keeps homeowners insurance premiums lower.

Tax dollars for Hauser Fire stay in our community and benefit residents directly. With a financially secure fire department, we can continue to expect the same high level of service into the future.

## What happens if the Levy Reset does not pass?

Hauser Fire will continue operations even as costs and demand continue to rise, but response will likely fall behind the needs of our growing community due to limited resources and increasing demand.

Impact fees—currently being collected from new development—will have to be returned.

Opportunities for adding revenue (such as grants) and for saving money (keeping tasks in-house) will be missed without additional paid staff.

New requirements for insurance ratings may not be met, increasing homeowners insurance premiums.

## Let's talk.

Conversations are encouraged. Please contact Chief Neils or any Hauser Fire member to discuss this levy reset. More information will be shared online, by mail, and at in-person events.

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