

# Your Fire Protection



## ESD Board cuts taxes again



Travis County Emergency Services District No. 3, operating locally as the Oak Hill Fire Department, lowered the property tax rate for its community again.

At its Sept. 28 meeting, the ESD Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a tax rate below the “no-new-revenue” tax rate that would have brought in the same amount of money as last year from properties on last year’s tax rolls.

After considering the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic on the District’s revenue, the ESD Board felt that it had positioned itself to be able to further reduce its tax burden on the community while still ensuring an effective and well-trained workforce remains available to continue providing the services expected in the community.

Commissioners unanimously adopted a new ad valorem tax rate of 7.9 cents per \$100 of property valuation compared to 8.0 cents per \$100 of valuation in 2020. The newly adopted lower tax rate will go

Continued on Page 3, “Lower Taxes”

## Fire Dept. responds to pandemic

During these unprecedented times, your Fire Department has been working diligently to ensure we’re there for you when you need help.

Like other Americans, our firefighters have been impacted by the coronavirus and the challenges it brings in each of their personal situations. Your Fire Department crews implemented safety precautions to be able to continue reporting to work ready to assist you.

Some changes we’ve made were to increase the amount or improve the type of personal protective equipment we wear when we arrive at your emergency. This can include gowns, face masks, goggles or face shields, dictated by each unique situation. We ask you to continue providing 9-1-1 call takers with as much information as possible so our crews can prepare properly and remain safe for you, for themselves, and for the next person who needs our help.

We were sad to cancel our Pancake Breakfast and our Open House this year, but we hope you’ll join us when we resume them once the virus situation improves. We miss seeing you; please know that we’re standing by and ready to serve you when you call.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## about your emergency services

### Q: Who provides our fire protection and emergency medical first response?

**A:** Travis County Emergency Services District No. 3 (ESD3) operates the Oak Hill Fire Dept., which provides fire protection and emergency medical services in southwestern Travis County, including Barton Creek. The ESD is overseen by five volunteer commissioners appointed by the Travis County Commissioners Court.

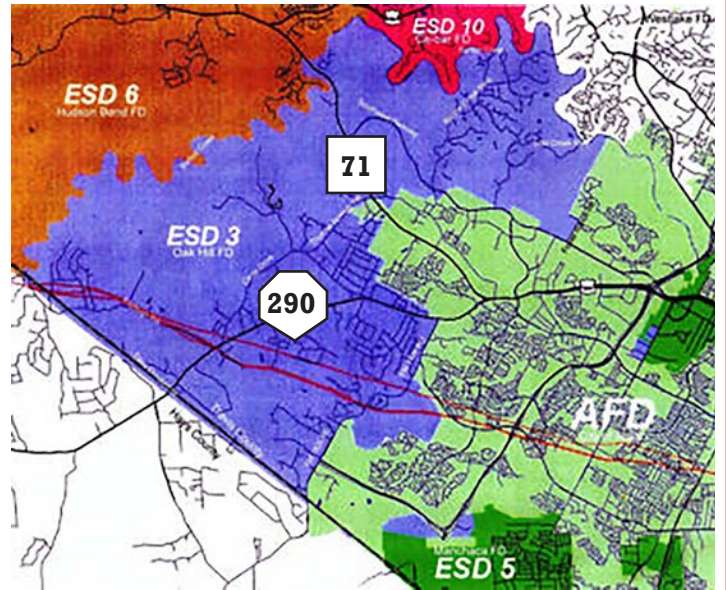
### Q: What is an emergency services district (ESD)?

**A:** Emergency services districts are political subdivisions of the state of Texas, like school districts or municipalities. An ESD can provide fire protection, emergency medical response or both. Travis County ESD No. 3 is responsible for fire protection and emergency medical first response for 10,000 people.

### Q: Where does ESD3 get its money?

**A:** ESD3 levies a property tax of 8 cents per \$100 of property value. That means that the owner of a home valued at \$300,000 on the tax rolls pays \$240 a year — \$20 a month — to know that trained, municipal-grade firefighters and emergency medical technicians with specialized equipment will be at the door within minutes when there's an emergency. Under the Texas Constitution, no ESD may set a tax rate more than 10 cents per \$100 property value.

ESD3 also collects a sales tax in the district. That reduces the district's reliance on property taxes. The sales tax provides more revenue than property tax after the ESD Board of Commissioners reduced property taxes this year. (See Page 1.)



### Q: How does ESD3 spend its money?

**A:** ESD3 staffs two stations — one in Barton Creek and one on Circle Drive — around-the-clock every day. So payroll expense is the biggest portion of the annual budget, about \$4.2 million this year.

Also this year, the ESD transferred money from its reserve account to purchase a replacement for a ladder truck and two smaller vehicles. A ladder truck routinely costs more than \$1 million.

The ESD has been recognized by the State Comptroller's Officer for its financial transparency. Its most recent budget is available on its website, [oakhillfire.org](http://oakhillfire.org).

## Amazon Smile purchases can fund training foundation

The Oak Hill Regional Emergency Response Training Foundation was created by Travis County Emergency Services District No. 3/Oak Hill Fire Department to help raise funds to train new firefighters to be able to work anywhere in Texas.

The Foundation is available for selection in the Amazon Smile program, where Amazon shoppers can visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to select a charity for Amazon to provide profit sharing donations to the Foundation.

After signing up, just return to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) each time you want to make a purchase. The pricing is the same as the main Amazon site, but it provides a way to share some of the profits of your purchase back to our Foundation. Amazon shoppers who use an app on their devices can also register by selecting "Amazon Smile" in the settings section of the app. We have 22 people already linked to the Foundation and could really use your help!

## HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

Here are tips for holiday decorating from the National Fire Protection Association:

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.



# Statewide report shows ESDs are a bargain

AUSTIN – A new report by the prestigious Perryman Group finds that emergency services districts generate estimated savings of up to \$528.2 million in annual gross product and create up to 5,188 jobs when compared to municipalities across Texas offering similar services.

ESDs – like Travis County Emergency Services District No. 3 – are political subdivisions similar to school districts, and much like school districts, they serve the public with essential needs.

ESDs provide fire and EMS services to more than eight million Texans and are created by grassroots campaigns and approved by voters.

“The Perryman Group report has reinforced what we already knew – that emergency services districts are offering cutting edge fire and EMS services to the communities they serve – and doing so by spending less than municipalities offering similar services,” Mark Jack, president of the Texas State Association of Fire and Emergency Districts (SAFE-D), said.

“Our state is facing an economic crunch due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the need to protect lives and property remains the same. ESDs save taxpayer money, create jobs and contribute greatly to economic impact

while the men and women who work for an ESD exhibit heroic bravery in the face of danger.”

The Perryman Group, led by President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. M. Ray Perryman, has extensive experience in addressing complex economic issues.

The firm’s analysis of ESDs estimated the economic benefits of the cost savings associated with ESDs compared to other options, such as relying on the same services provided by a municipality.

*‘...ESDs are an effective and cost-efficient way for fire and EMS services to be delivered to ... communities.’*  
— Dr. Ray Perryman  
Economist

“Our finding, that ESDs are an effective and cost-efficient way for fire and EMS services to be delivered to the communities that reside in an ESD, was emphatic,” Dr. Perryman said.

ESDs are constitutionally limited in their taxing authority to 10 cents per \$100 of valuation.

In comparison, municipalities often spend two- to three times that amount.

The report assumed 14 cents per \$100 taxed by municipalities for their low-end scenario and 18 cents taxed by municipalities for their high-end scenario of maintenance-and-operation tax.

**Need a speaker?  
We can help**

If your church, club, civic group or youth group needs a speaker, ESD3 and the Oak Hill Fire Dept. can help.

We’ll be happy to tell you about the services we provide at less than half the cost of many municipal fire departments. We can explain the challenges we face.

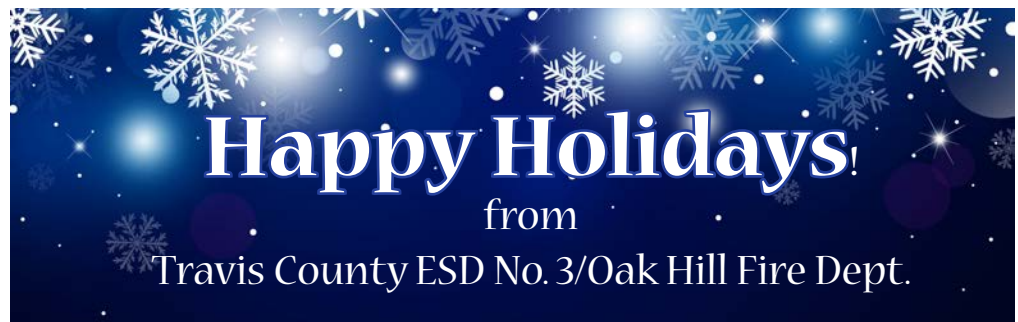
To arrange a speaker, contact Chief J.J. Wittig at 512-288-5534 ext. 214.

## LOWER TAXES *From Page 1*

into effect for the 2021 calendar year. With a tax rate that is below both the “voter-approval” tax rate and the “no-new-revenue” tax rate, the District has actually reduced the amount of taxes its community members pay for fire and emergency medical first response services.

Through its financial planning, leveraging of cooperative purchasing opportunities with other entities, and continuing cost control measures in an emergency services environment, the District was able to meet its commitment to the community in lowering the tax rate again while maintaining its high level of providing the emergency services the community expects and desires.

The Oak Hill Fire Department operates out of two fully staffed fire stations located at 9211 Circle Drive and 4111 Barton Creek Blvd.



**TRAVIS COUNTY**  
**EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 3**  
**OAK HILL FIRE DEPT.**  
4111 Barton Creek Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78735

[www.oakhillfire.org](http://www.oakhillfire.org)

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## INFORMATION FROM THE PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE YOUR FIRE PROTECTION

*Para obtener una copia de esta informacion traducida al español,  
visita el sitio web [www.oakhillfire.org](http://www.oakhillfire.org)*

# Cat's out of the bag: Pets have a role in fire safety



### SAFETY TIPS

- Pets are curious. They may bump into, turn on, or knock over cooking equipment. Keep pets away from stoves and countertops.
- Keep pets away from candles, lamps, and space heaters.
- Always use a metal or heat-tempered glass screen on a fireplace and keep it in place.
- Keep pets away from a chimney's outside vents. Have a "pet-free zone" of at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from the fireplace. Glass doors and screens can stay dangerously hot for several hours after the fire goes out.
- Consider battery-operated, flameless candles. They can look and smell like real candles.
- Some pets are chewers. Watch pets to make sure they don't chew through electrical cords. Have any problems checked by a professional.

### SMOKE ALARMS

- Have working smoke alarms on every level of the home. Test your smoke alarms at least once a month.
- If the smoke alarm sounds, get out and stay out.
- Never go back inside for pets in a fire. Tell firefighters if your pet is trapped.

Each year, pets are responsible for more than 750 home fires in the U.S.

The National Fire Protection Association offers these tips to keep you — and your pets — safe.

## Stay safe outdoors

With cooler weather and fewer places to go, you may be outside more.

When you're out walking, jogging, running, biking, rollerblading, or doing any other kind of physical activity where you'll be on or around a roadway, follow these quick guidelines from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([www.NHTSA.gov](http://www.NHTSA.gov)), part of the US Department of Transportation.

- Walk, jog, and run on a sidewalk when available
- Cross only at crosswalks or intersections when traffic is clear or stopped
- Look left, right, left for traffic.
- Wear bright colors or carry a light to be more easily seen
- If you have to walk, jog or run on a roadway, remember to face oncoming traffic and: "Walk on the Left; Drive and Bike on the Right!"