

Your Fire Protection



TAX CUT

ESD commissioners reduce tax rate 18%

In a dramatic reduction of Travis County Emergency Service District No. 3's tax rate, the ESD's Board of Commissioners honored a pledge.

In adopting its tax rate in September, the ESD Board set the rate at 8 cents per \$100 of assessed value, down from 9.75 cents the year before.

That's a cut of almost 18 percent. For many properties in the district, that cut more than compensated for increases in assessed value to deliver a real reduction of the amount a property owner will pay ESD3 in taxes.

When voters approved an ESD sales tax, commissioners promised they would reduce the property tax rate. The Great Recession delayed that promise, and commissioners set tax rates to assure the continued ability of the ESD to provide fire protection and emergency medical first response.

As sales tax revenues recovered, ESD commissioners were able to make good on the promise.

Continued on Page 2, "TAX CUT"



The Oak Hill Fire Department Annual Open House Oct. 10 was another great success! Hundreds of guests visited the station, met the crews, saw several different types of equipment, and even shared a bite to eat. The fire department also conducts an annual Pancake Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt, scheduled this year on April 4.

***Save the date for a visit to the station for
fun and food on Saturday, April 4, 2020!***

Fire response may cross boundaries to speed aid

By Chief J.J. Wittig

If you live in the Oak Hill area, you might see another fire department responding to an emergency in the area. That's the result of a unique agreement that has been in place in the Oak Hill area since 2008.

We understand that when you call 9-1-1, you're most interested in receiving the assistance you need as quickly as possible. That's why ALL of the fire departments in Travis County, including the City of Austin, have agreed that we will send the closest appropriate response unit to an emergency when someone calls.

That's important as growth in our area means we get more calls for help. When all our resources are deployed to emergencies, and another call comes in, we can count on nearby departments to have our back.

The system is known as "Automatic Aid."

The patch on the door of the truck or on the sleeve of the firefighter only signifies our respective departments' commitment to providing the help you need instead of worrying about which jurisdiction an emergency occurs in.

Political lines on a map don't deter us from working together to provide you with the best response possible.

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.

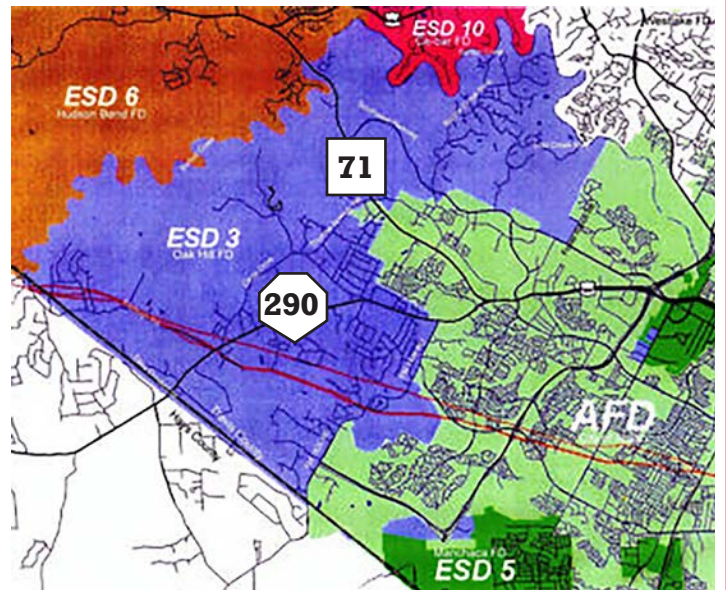
Q: What is an emergency services district (ESD)?

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.

Amazon Smile purchases can fund training foundation

Travis County Emergency Services District No. 3 and the Oak Hill Fire Department created a foundation several years ago to raise funds to train new firefighters to be able to work anywhere in Texas.

The largest fundraiser is a softball tournament the firefighters conduct. The parents of Cohnway Johnson, the former Oak Hill firefighter who died as he training for a new position in Houston, also provide funds for deserving individuals enrolled in the Oak Hill Fire Academy.

The Oak Hill Regional Emergency Response Training Foundation is also available for selection in the Amazon Smile program. Amazon shoppers can visit www.smile.amazon.com to designate the Foundation to receive profit-sharing donations from Amazon. Pricing of items available on Amazon remains the same.

Amazon shoppers who use an app on their devices can also register by selecting "AmazonSmile" in the settings section of the app.

TAX CUT *From Page 1*

In a press release, the ESD cited "effective planning, leveraging of cooperative purchasing opportunities and the implementation of logical cost control measures" as key ingredients that allowed the ESD Board of Commissioners to lower the tax rate without any degradation to the level of service provided by the ESD through the Oak Hill Fire Department.

The department operates two fully staffed fire stations, at 9211 Circle Drive and 4111 Barton Creek Blvd.

The ESD Board of Commissioners is comprised of Edd New, president; John Villanacci, vice president; Carroll Knight, treasurer and secretary; David Detwiler, assistant treasurer; and Matt Escobedo, commissioner.



Robert Hartigan



J.D. Patton



Jason Torres

Meet your battalion chiefs

Battalion Chiefs Robert Hartigan, J.D. Patton and Jason Torres work on rotating shifts along with the rest of the Oak Hill Fire Dept. firefighters.

The battalion chiefs work 48 hours on duty and 96 hours off duty. While on duty, they oversee the staffing and response of the firefighters. They will respond on larger incidents to ensure safety of everyone involved and to coordinate emergency response.

Each has a special assignment to perform on duty. One focuses on coordination of ESD3's fire and EMS training academies, one focuses on vehicle and building maintenance, and one focuses on fire and medical training for our staff.

These three work together to help make sure we're prepared when we're called to an emergency.

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. 201.

We've got to run along

Have you seen us running around?

Normally, you only see firefighters at an emergency.

But firefighters at Oak Hill Fire Dept. take a different approach

We conduct public education events, check fire hydrant flows, conduct preplanning meetings with local businesses, and even perform wellness/fitness activities to make sure we're ready when you need us.

On occasion, you might even see a flock of firefighter cadets from our training academy or even the fire chief jogging in the neighborhoods around the stations.

We understand that, along with the millions of dollars in state-of-the-art equipment available in our stations, fit and healthy firefighters are the best way to make sure we can help you when you need us.



**TRAVIS COUNTY
EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 3
OAK HILL FIRE DEPT.**

4111 Barton Creek Blvd.
Austin, TX 78735

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*

Protect your home from wildfire

Action steps for around your home:

- **CLEAR** leaves and other vegetative debris from roofs, gutters, porches and decks. This helps prevent embers from igniting your home.
- **REMOVE** dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house.
- **SCREEN** in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- **REMOVE** flammable materials (wood piles, propane tanks) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don't let it touch your house, deck or porch.
- Wildfire can spread to tree tops. **PRUNE** trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- **KEEP** your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.
- Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. **DISPOSE** of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.
- **INSPECT** shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair the shingles that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- **COVER** exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.
- **ENCLOSE** eaves and screen soffit vents using 1/8 mesh metal screening to prevent ember entry.

**AND
DON'T
FORGET...**

The more actions a community takes, the more fire adapted it becomes. Learn how you can make a difference in your community. Visit www.fireadapted.org and www.firewise.org for more information.



FACT

- ! There are more than **45 million** homes near or in the wildland.
- ! More than **72,000** U.S. communities are now at risk from wildfire.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169