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Fire Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

What does the Fire Department do?

A Fire Departments' primary function/goal is to respond to fire and medical incidents within a critical time frame to save lives and structures. Availability of this service on a 24-hour basis for 7 days a week, along with the appropriate use of these resources, is critical for the entire community during incidents by saving lives and protecting property as well as through reductions in insurance premiums and increased property values.

What type of assessment is this?

This is a non-ad valorem assessment based on the benefit to your property that you receive from fire protection service.

- Fire Assessment is used to fund fire protection services, such as fire suppression, fire prevention, fire building inspections, and first response medical services; Basic Life Support (BLS) services.
- Cannot fund Advanced Life Support (ALS) services.
- This fee is used for firefighters' salaries and to pay for operating expenses such as fuel and health insurance. Property owners pay this fee once a year, no matter how many times the fire department is called to their home or property for assistance.

I pay taxes, why is a fire assessment needed?

Public safety expenses for personnel and operating costs are approximately \$10.4 million (Police \$5.5 million and Fire \$4.9 million). Property taxes bring in approximately \$6.5 million which accounts for only 62% of the total amount needed. The fire assessment will help fund the gap of \$3.8 million.

Where do these rates come from?

To determine the fire rescue assessment rates, the City hired the Benesch Professional Service Firm, (formerly Tindale Oliver), to prepare the necessary technical analysis. The final report provides an explanation of the methodology used to calculate the fire rescue assessment rates and the findings of the fire rescue assessment study. The study is available on the City of Groveland's website.

What is BLS and ALS?

BLS stands for *Basic Life Support* and ALS stands for *Advanced Life Support*. Both terms represent a level of care provided by emergency medical service personnel based on training and certifications. ALS units will be equipped with advanced airway equipment, cardiac monitor/defibrillator, IV fluids, medications, three medical providers and more.

A BLS emergency unit is equipped with basic ventilation and airway equipment, portable oxygen apparatus and other basic life-saving equipment needed to provide emergency services.

What is the difference between property tax and a fire assessment?

Property tax is based on the value of your property. Property tax can be used for any General Government purpose such as roads, libraries, and police services. The fire assessment is based on the type and size of your property and is based on the benefit to the property. The fire assessment can only be used for Fire Department costs.

Do any other cities in Lake County have a fire assessment?

Yes, of the 14 cities in Lake County, 12 cities and the County have a fire assessment. Seven of these cities and the County have a dedicated property tax for fire services in addition to the fire assessment.

Who is charged this assessment?

All property owners in the incorporated area of the City of Groveland will be charged the fire assessment on their annual tax bill. These are the areas that receive fire protection services from the City of Groveland.

Where did you get the information on my property?

All our information is derived from the Lake County Property Appraiser's office. You can look up your parcel at the Lake County Property Appraiser's website.

I have more than one structure on my property, and this isn't the correct use code.

We use the primary use code assigned by the Lake County Property Appraiser to determine our rates. If you have more than one structure, and each structure has a different use code, we do not have the capability to use that information. We can only use one use code per property.

Will you be helping low-income residents?

The City Council will consider implementing a low-income assistance program during the fiscal year 2023 budget development process.

Is this a one time charge?

This is an annual assessment collected with your property taxes to support fire protection services. If approved, the first year for this assessment will be fiscal year 2022-2023. The annual assessment will continue in effect until the City Council decides to revisit this matter again.

Will my rate increase?

The rate may only increase by the annual consumer price index (CPI).

Will the fire assessment fees supplement a decrease in property taxes?

No, the fire assessment fees are separate from the City of Groveland's property tax revenue. Tax cuts or increases do not affect fire fees, which are used to pay for Fire Rescue operating expenses.

How many firefighters does the City of Groveland have?

The City of Groveland has 40 certified uniformed personnel with 36 assigned to the 24 hour on/48 hour shifts at the fire stations. The remaining staff serve on days in command and/or support functions.

Are these additional fees going to be used to build a fire station in my neighborhood?

Assessment fees are used for personnel and operating expenses. Infrastructure sales tax and fire impact fees are used to pay for capital items, such as the construction of a new fire station. Infrastructure sales tax is a tax incurred when a consumer purchases a tangible good or certain service. Impact fees are one-time charges on all development and are paid when a project goes through the City permitting process. All proposed capital improvements are designed to contribute to the maximum credit possible in order to reduce the City of Groveland’s Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Fire Protection Risk Classification, which helps continue to reduce fire insurance rates for both residential and commercial properties.

Can I get some help paying this bill?

Save on your property tax bill by taking of advantage of the discounts for early payment. If a property tax bill is paid in November, the property owner receives a 4 percent discount. For each month that passes, the savings decreases by one percentage point until March when the full amount is due. Residents may also qualify for Hardship Assistance for Fire Rescue Assessments.

I don't pay taxes now, due to homestead exemption. Will I have to pay this non-ad valorem assessment?

Yes, special assessments are different from taxes, and these assessment fees apply to all residential property, regardless of homestead exemption.

I receive a discount for early payment of taxes. Will I receive the same discount on my special assessment?

Yes.

When will I be billed and how do I pay the fee?

You will receive the fire assessment fee on your annual Property Tax bill received in November. This fee is payable along with your property taxes.

How much is the fee?

Please refer to the table below.

<i>Residential (Equivalent Residential Units)</i>	
Square Footage Tier	Fire Assessment Rate per Dwelling Unit
Less than 1,000 sf	\$215.96
1,000 to 1,499 sq ft	\$238.16
1,500 to 1,999 sq ft	\$257.99
2,000 to 2,499 sq ft	\$277.02
2,500 sq ft or more	\$306.36

<i>Non Residential</i>			
Square Footage Tier	Fire Assessment Rate per Parcel		
	Commercial	Industrial/Warehouse	Institutional
<250	n/a	n/a	n/a
251-1,999	\$282	\$192	\$101
2,000 - 3,499	\$564	\$384	\$203
3,500 - 4,999	\$987	\$672	\$355
5,000 - 9,999	\$1,410	\$960	\$506
10,000 - 19,999	\$2,820	\$1,920	\$1,013
20,000 - 29,999	\$5,640	\$3,840	\$2,025
30,000 - 39,999	\$8,460	\$5,760	\$3,038
40,000 - 49,999	\$11,280	\$7,680	\$4,050
50,000 or greater	\$14,100	\$9,600	\$5,063
<i>Vacant Land</i>			
Property Rate Category	Fire Assessment Rate per Parcel		
Vacant Land	\$32.99		

What will happen if I do not pay the fire services fee?

Failure to pay this fee will result in the same consequences as not paying your property tax bill.

What is ISO and how does it affect my homeowner's insurance rates?

ISO (Insurance Services Organization) is a company that evaluates fire protection services for communities. A Fire Department is rated from a scale from 1 to 10. A (1) is the highest level a fire department can achieve, and a (10) is the worst. Based upon a Fire Department's rate, insurance companies develop premiums for homeowners. The lower the rate, the better the insurance premium. The City of Groveland currently has a rate of 3 urban/3x rural.

When will the City Council vote on the fire assessment?

Tuesday, July 5, 2022, a special City Council public hearing on the fire assessment will be held at the Puryear Building located at 243 S Lake Avenue, Groveland, FL 34736 at 6:00 PM.