

Jackson County Commissioners;

The Fire Chiefs of Jackson County would like to discuss with you the possibility of hiring an additional employee to work at the Fire Departments. We feel that over the last 7 years the county employee positions at the Fire Departments have proven to be a very important benefit to our communities and to Jackson County. By creating those positions the Commissioners have moved fire protection forward for the citizens of Jackson County.

One major accomplishment that has been made since a Jackson County employee was hired for each fire department is the lowering of fire ratings for the citizens of Jackson County. By achieving these lower fire ratings the citizens of Jackson County have seen a large reduction of their fire insurance premiums. Now that we have achieved these lower ratings we need to maintain them and this requires continual work.

Fire protection provided by the 7 fire departments with funding by the Jackson County Commissioners is a service provided to every citizen in Jackson County from the time they are born until they die. This service is not a service that the citizens have to go to a certain location to receive. This service is brought to the citizens' wherever they are. The fire departments may be the only service provided by Jackson County that saves the tax payers money each year.

Listed below are some reasons why we think a second Jackson County employee at the Fire Departments is needed.

- People are not knocking down the doors at the fire departments wanting to volunteer
- Volunteers are having to spend more time working on their job to provide for their family and less time volunteering at the fire department
- Rise in number of emergency calls each year
- Increase in training hours needed for certification of firefighters and rescue members
- More record keeping is required for the department and the State
- More stations to maintain
- More trucks to maintain
- More equipment to maintain
- Annual testing of fire hose, annual testing of air packs, annual flow testing of hydrants, annual pump testing of engines, 1 person cannot perform this tests by themselves's so other members have to take off from work to help
- Review and update pre-plans annually, some departments have close to 1000 pre-plans to update annually, if not more often when businesses close or change owners

- Lots of the minor calls could be handled with an extra employee without calling the volunteers from work to assist
- If equipment has to go out of town for repairs a volunteer would not have to be called on to assist
- Volunteers could be released sooner from a call so they could return to work and the paid employees could clean and replace equipment on trucks and return them back to service
- Paid employees could assist the Fire Marshal with fire prevention training for our school children. At this time members have to take off from work to help with this training
- The fire station and district could be manned by 1 paid employee when the other had to go to town for parts or supplies
- Response times by mutual aid departments or EMS can take as long as 45 minutes to arrive on scene in some cases, this long response time could be the difference in life or death. One person by themselves could not perform CPR or fight fire for that amount of time.
- Two employees could take care of many car wrecks where only traffic control was needed
- With 2 employees station coverage hours could be increased if needed by scheduling different shifts
- Paid members could plan, prepare and get props that will be needed for training of members
- The station and district could still be covered by a paid employee if one employee was sick or took vacation time
- Needed reports and record keeping could be completed by both employees, these reports could be completed on time if one employee was sick or out of work for an extended amount of time
- An additional employee could assist with lifting heavy items, therefore cutting down on the chance of a workers comp claim
- All fire departments depend on each other for assistance at structure fires, therefore we could immediately send two people and two trucks to assist if needed
- Often visitors in our area stop by the fire station for medical assistance, with two employees we could provide additional care
- Often community citizens call the station for assistance that is not an emergency, such as helping a subject back into their house, or to get up when they have fallen but were not injured

- Often we have to assist by lifting a very large person, with 2 employees this could mean not getting a strained back or other injury that would create a workers comp claim
- Two employees could perform firefighting efforts while waiting on volunteers to arrive, one person manning the hose line and one person operating the pump
- Two employees could perform rescue efforts if needed at vehicle accidents while waiting on volunteers to arrive, one person performing patient care and one person performing extrication efforts
- Two employees would provide more coverage to the fire district and decrease response times to the scene of emergencies by responding with trucks and other volunteers could respond to the scene instead of going to the station to get a truck
- Having two paid personnel at each fire department would give home/business owners more comfort knowing there are more firefighters on staff to immediately respond if needed
- If a natural disaster strikes the county, having two paid personnel would make it possible to man the station around the clock if needed
- Having two paid personnel is vital due to less and less response from the volunteers due to job and family responsibilities

This is but a short list of reasons why we feel there is a need for a second paid employee.

We realize that these additional paid positions will cost many thousands of dollars to fund each year, and that this could create a tax increase. But we also think that this would be tax money well spent for the protection of the citizens of Jackson County.

Thank you for all that you do for the citizens of Jackson County.

Jackson County Fire Chief's