

KITTCOM 911

Serving Kittitas County, Washington

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Commissioners to hold public hearing to consider proposition for emergency communication systems and facilities funds

Community members are encouraged to attend and learn more

ELLENSBURG, WASH. – The Kittitas Board of County Commissioners will hold a public hearing December 19 at 2 p.m. to consider a ballot proposition for funding to improve the countywide 911 communications system. The community is invited to learn more and provide comments.

Residents can attend in-person at the Kittitas County Courthouse, 205 W. Fifth Avenue in Ellensburg.

KITTCOM, a public agency and consolidated public safety communications center, answers and coordinates 911 services for all 17 public safety agencies in the county. Its emergency radio system and communications infrastructure are outdated and unreliable in many parts of the county, which makes it difficult for first responders and search teams to coordinate and communicate during emergencies.

There are many locations in the county where radio signals are not reliable or nonexistent including in the Cle Elum River Valley, Suncadia, Yakima River recreational areas, ski areas, rural schools and homes, and in the many new residential and recreational developments in the county. These “radio holes” or “dead zones” impact response times, patient care, wildland fire suppression, and rescue operations.

“This is a public safety issue that impacts the entire county,” said Rich Elliott, interim director for KITTCOM. “We must secure a sustainable funding source to pay for critical improvements.”

KITTCOM serves nearly 50,000 residents plus thousands more who come to recreate or attend festivals. Seasonal and weekend visitors can triple and, at times, quadruple the population. More people living and visiting the county are straining the outdated and aging 911 system. Emergency responders and search teams must regularly use personnel to seek out radio signals to relay pertinent search information or to coordinate resources and supplies, which delays the response.

KITTCOM funds its 911 system through cell phone and user agency fees paid for through local property taxes. In the last three years, user agency fees increased by 50 percent. When user agency fees increase, it reduces the amount of revenue they have for their daily operations to pay for the emergency

personnel, equipment, ambulances, and fire engines all residents require. This funding source is not sustainable for the 911 system or user agencies.

KITTCOM will present to the Board of County Commissioners a proposition to raise revenue to pay for radio equipment, communication towers, technology improvements, security and other critical infrastructure, and maintenance costs. **The proposition concerns placing a two-tenths of 1 percent sales tax (two cents per \$10 sale) on the ballot for 2024.**

Learn more at www.kittcom.org. KITTCOM Interim Director Rich Elliott also welcomes any questions at 509-925-8530 or fundingquestions@kittcom.org.

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KITTCOM answers and coordinates 911 service for all 17 public safety agencies throughout Kittitas County, including fire, emergency medical service, law enforcement and disaster response agencies. The agency serves both Kittitas County residents (population nearly 50,000), non-residents and visitors who come to the county for recreational opportunities. The agency responds to more than 48,000 calls per year.