



# Fire District 10

*Serving the West Plains*

## **WHAT IS A FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT/ REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY? MUNICIPAL CORPORATION.**

Fire protection districts are municipal corporations authorized by Title 52 RCW as separate legal entities that have perpetual existence, specific powers, obligations and responsibilities. Fire protection districts are not subdivisions of a county and the county in which a fire protection district is located does not have general control over the fire protection district. A fire protection district may be a member of a Regional Fire Protection Service Authority.

## **PURPOSE AND FUNCTION.**

The purposes and functions of a fire protection district are set forth in RCW 52.02.020, which establishes that a district is authorized to provide:

1. Fire Prevention Services,
2. Fire Suppression Services,
3. Emergency Medical Services, and
4. The Protection of Life and Property.

As a commissioner you are required to focus your efforts and services on actions that will further the above purposes. You do not have the legal authority to undertake or direct actions outside of the scope of the above authorities.

## **WHO ARE THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATING YOUR DISTRICT? THE VOTERS/CITIZENS.**

The Voters/Citizens should be the focus of the District. The purpose of the District is to protect the citizens by providing the services identified above. The Citizens pay the taxes that provide the majority of District funding. The voters are responsible for selecting the Commissioners and for determining the amount of tax levies they will support.

## **THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS.**

The board of commissioners, generally consisting of three or five elected individuals, is responsible for governing the operations of the District. The board will generally be responsible for the following areas:

1. Determining levels of service and establishing goals.
2. Determining type and level of funding, approve budgets, tax levies.
3. Establishing policies and approve operational procedures.
4. Employing key personnel, supervising chief.
5. Guiding strategic planning.
6. Representing the District to the public.



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## **THE COMMISSIONER.**

As an individual commissioner you have no individual authority to operate a fire protection district. Instead, individual commissioners have the following responsibilities:

1. Attend meetings of the board of commissioners.
2. Educate yourself to understand the history of your District, the laws governing the operation of the District and your role in governing the District.
3. Actively participate in the governance of the District by working with the board of commissioners in open public meetings.
4. Understand and comply with all ethics laws.
5. Act as a representative of your District with a professional demeanor.
6. Avoid any attempts to unilaterally direct staff members or micromanage the staff. The board of commissioners runs the District through the Chief, individual commissioners do not, and should not, attempt to run the District.
7. Represent all constituents and avoid special interests.
8. Maintain confidentiality of privileged or private District records and information.

## **UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE – THE BIG PICTURE**

### **TWELVE SIMPLE RULES OF COMMISSIONER EFFECTIVENESS.**

1. Respect and comply with the law.
2. Work cooperatively with other board members to govern your District.
3. Act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the office of fire commissioner.
4. Participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of conduct and personally observe those standards.
5. Manage and direct personnel only through the board, do not attempt to unilaterally direct or manage personnel. You were not elected to run the District by yourself.
6. Understand, respect and uphold the District's adopted chain of command.
7. Lead by example.
8. Keep an open mind and don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."
9. Get proper advice when appropriate.
10. Recognize and understand that your actions and most of your work will be in the public eye and will be scrutinized by the public.
11. Recognize that fire protection districts are municipal corporations and often cannot be managed the same way that you manage your personal business.
12. Take advantage of the resources and experience of the Washington Fire Commissioners Association as well as your local and regional commissioner associations. Chances are the question or challenge facing you has been addressed or experienced by other commissioners.