

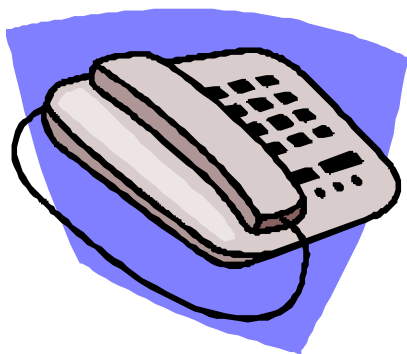
What Can I Do If My Property Is Assessed At The Wrong Fire Fee?

If you feel that your fire fee assessment does not match the size of your house or property, you should contact the Brunswick County Tax Office immediately. If a fee is wrongly assessed, it means that the Tax Office has incorrect information about your property in the county tax records. The Tax Office will investigate the matter, and may send a representative to re-assess your property.

Important Telephone Numbers

Brunswick County Fire Marshal's Office
910-253-4376

Brunswick County Tax Office
910-253-2829



Where Can I Obtain More Information About the Brunswick County Fire Fee Program?

Copies of House Bills 651 and 697 are available on the Fire Marshal's Office webpage at

<http://www.co.brunswick.nc.us>

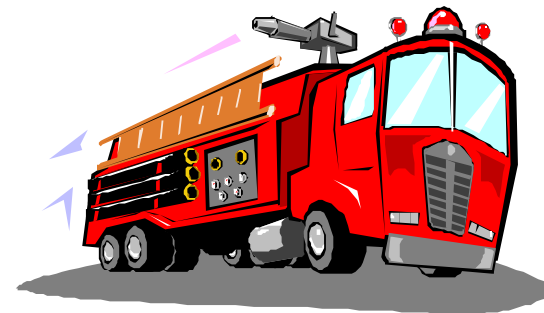
or print copies may be obtained at the Brunswick County Fire Marshal's Office located in Building C at the Government Complex in Bolivia.

A list of the fire fee amounts for all fire districts in Brunswick County is available by contacting the Brunswick County Fire Marshal's Office at 910-253-4376.

Questions regarding the assessment of fire fees or property listings should be directed to the Brunswick County Tax Office at 910-253-2829. All other questions should be directed to the Brunswick County Fire Marshal's Office at 910-253-4376.



A Citizen's Guide to the Brunswick County Fire Fee Program



ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING THE BRUNSWICK COUNTY FIRE FEE PROGRAM.

Prepared by the Brunswick County Fire Marshal's Office

A Brief History of the Fire Fee Program in Brunswick County

Fire Fees were enacted in Brunswick County through the NC Legislature in the form of House Bill 651 in the 1999-2000 Session. The bill was further amended in the 2001-2002 Session through House Bill 697. The Fire Fee program was instituted as a way to fund the fire departments in Brunswick County. Because the fire departments in the county are mainly volunteer departments, funding has in the past been a major issue. Fire Fees were seen as a way to ensure the highest quality of fire protection for citizens without issuing a flat fire tax. The fees are structured so that the owners of larger buildings or lots pay more for fire protection than do the owners of smaller buildings or lots. This structure was seen as the most equitable way of instituting the Fire Fee program. Fire Fees are collected only from those residents living within a 5-mile radius of the responding fire department.

How Are the Fire Fees for My Fire District Set?

House Bills 651 and 697 do not set the fees for each district; rather they set a maximum fee for all fire districts in the county. The actual fee structure for a

particular fire district is then left up to the Fire Fee committee for that fire district. The fire fee committee for each district is made up of a minimum of five individuals: the fire chief for the district, the county commissioner whose electoral district is comprised of at least 50% of the fire district, a community member appointed by the fire chief for the district, a community member appointed by the county commissioner representing the district, and the Brunswick County Fire Marshal. If the fire district is within the jurisdiction of a municipality, then that municipality is also entitled to representation on the committee. These individuals meet once per year and set the fire fees in the district.

How Are Fire Fees Collected?

Fire Fees for each fire district in the county are assessed and collected by the Brunswick County Tax Office. The Tax Office includes the fire fee for your property on your property tax bill. As a service to Brunswick County citizens, the fire fee is payable at the same time and on the same bill as your property tax.



Are There Any Restrictions On How Fire Fees Can Be Used?

The funds collected from the Fire Fee program are used only in the district they were collected from. For example, funds collected in one district cannot be used by a fire department in another district. Also, for accountability purposes, if a department wishes to utilize fire fee funds for capital improvements totaling \$30,000 or more, the department must first seek the approval of the Brunswick County Fire Protection Oversight Committee. This ensures that funds collected from citizens are utilized in such a way that the citizens of the district receive the maximum benefit by way of increased fire protection.

What If A Fire Department Collects More Fire Fees Than It Needs?

If a fire department collects more fire fees than it needs to meet its budget, the overrun amount is placed into a savings account to assist the department in making their budget the following year, or to make capital improvements within the department. As before, any capital improvements totaling \$30,000 or more are subject to approval of the Brunswick County Fire Protection Oversight Committee.