

FAQ's

1. Is the NLFPD part of the Village of New Lenox?

- a. No. The NLFPD is an entirely separate entity from the village.

The NLFPD has its own governing body of Trustees and Commissioners which oversees the fire district. This board is completely separate from the Village of New Lenox, its trustees and the Mayor.

The NLFPD only receives funding through property taxes twice a year. It does not receive any funding from the village or sales taxes. Any alternative funding the NLFPD receives is through ambulance billing, grants, donations, and the New Lenox Fire Foundation.

2. What was the tax levy in 1989, 1991 and 2017?

- a. The tax collections for 1989 were \$746,049 with assessed valuation of \$190,006,113. In 1991 they were \$1,183,801 with an assessed valuation of \$250,699,128.

The tax revenues for 2017 were \$4,796,765 and \$1,472,408 in ambulance billing. Additional revenues such as loans, grants, donations totaled \$241,065 for total revenues of \$6,510,238. The district had expenditures of \$7,936,904 or \$1,426,66 more than it brought in. To view the numbers yourself please see our 2017 Annual Treasures report. <http://www.nlfire.com/content/financials/>

Please note that the numbers are a bit skewed as the NLFPD's fiscal year is January 1 - December 31, as we do not start receiving property tax dollars until the middle of June. This means the money on hand needs to last the district until June.

3. What was the population and call volume in 1989 (the last time the NLFPD received a tax increase) and now?

- a. Since 1989, the NLFPD has not seen a tax rate. Since then, the population has doubled from 16,574 to 42,172 per the U.S. Census Bureau, and the amount of commercial and industrial buildings has grown exponentially as well, causing an increased demand.

In 2017 the call volume increased to over 4,200; nearly quintupling in work load.

4. What would the increase mean for me?

a. This would be the equivalent of approximately an extra:

- \$67 per year or \$5.62 per month for a \$100k home
- \$101 per year or \$8.43 per month for a \$150k home
- \$135 per year or \$11.24 per month for a \$200k home
- \$169 per year or \$14.05 per month for a \$250k home
- \$202.32 per year or \$16.86 per month for a \$300k home
- \$236.04 per year or \$19.67 per month for a \$350k home
- \$269.76 per year or \$22.48 per month for a \$400k home

For your exact increase, use the Tax Calculator at <https://tinyurl.com/NLFireTaxCalc>

5. What would the referendum do for the NLFPD and its residents?

a. The referendum would:

- Maintain manpower to existing stations, continuing the high-quality service the residents have come to expect. Increase revenue to keep up with the ever-growing needs of the community.
- Maintain sufficient manpower to continue running Cardiac Arrest Management Program (C.A.M.P) at current level.
 - Before instituting C.A.M.P program in 2015 the department's save rate for cardiac events where someone's heart had stopped was 5%. In 2017 we have a save rate of almost 25%.
- Over a period of time we would be able to replace, and update outdated existing equipment.
 - Provide funds for 3 fire engines, 1 tender and 2 ambulances over next five years.
 - 2001 Engine has 120k miles – needs to be replaced which costs around \$500k
 - 2003 Engine with 115k miles needs to be replaced next year
 - 2004 Engine with 110k miles will need to be replaced in the next couple years.
 - Two 2010 ambulances need to be replaced in the next couple years, cost around \$230K each.
 - 1987 Tender will need to be replaced in the next few years, cost around \$380K.

- Continue to offer free or minimally priced services to public such as:
 - CPR and First Aid classes
 - Babysitting Academy
 - Fire Cadet Program
 - Ambulance Standby at Community and Sporting Events
 - NLFPD Open House and Family Fun Day
 - Community Events (Block Parties, Festivals)
 - Child Car Seat Safety Inspections
 - Knox Box Program for Seniors
 - Install/Check smoke alarms/CO detectors for Seniors
 - Matter of Balance – Fall Prevention Program for Seniors
 - Fire Extinguisher Training classes
 - Fire & Life Safety Education to area schools
 - Military/Community Firefighter Program
 - Soldier Welcome Home

6. What are the current tax rates for fire districts in neighboring communities compared to New Lenox?

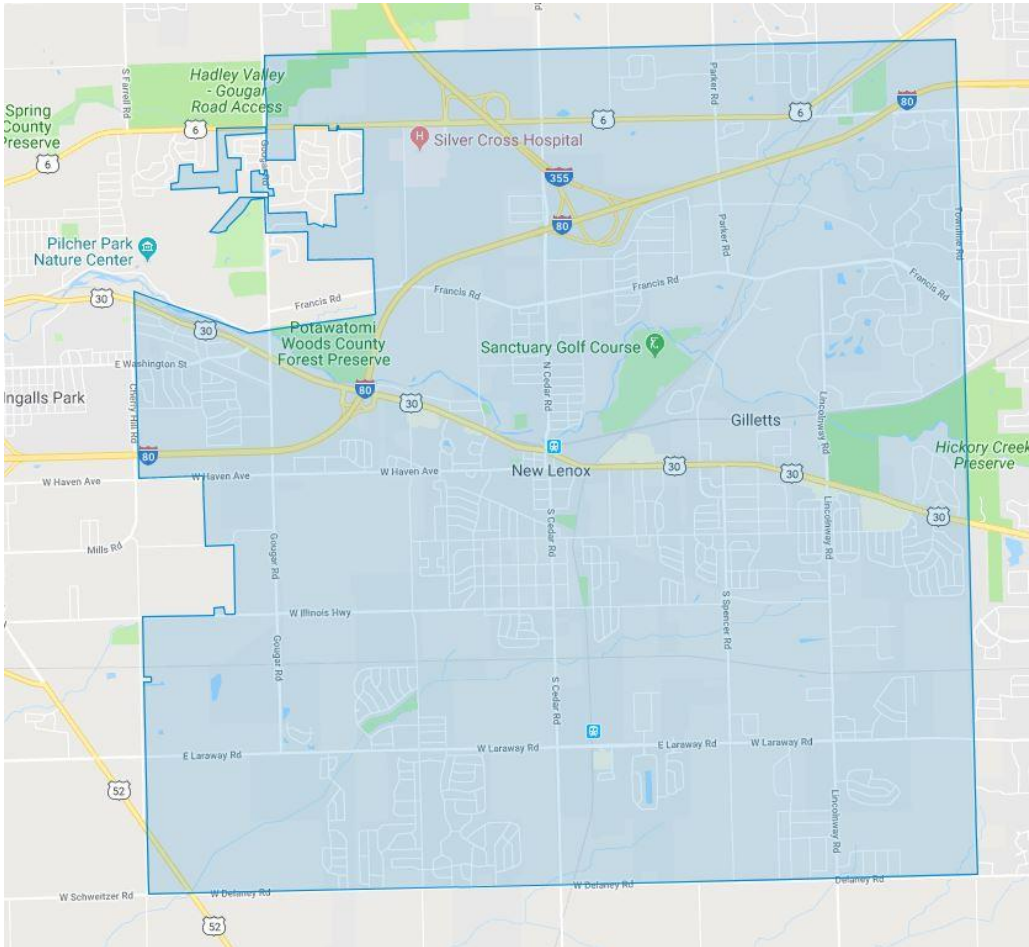
- a. Currently the NLFPD tax rate is .387 and the recommended increase is to .59.
 - Neighboring communities: Frankfort - .80, Homer – 1.07, Manhattan - .98, Mokena – 1.001.

Below is a comparison chart:

Fire District	Tax Rate	Tax Levy (2017)	Stations	Calls (2017)
New Lenox	.387 (proposed .59)	\$4,750,149	4	4252
Frankfort	.80	\$10,622,703	5	4377
Homer	1.07	\$6,202,778	3	1956
Manhattan	.98	\$3,008,813	2	1124
Mokena	1.001	\$6,136,252	3	2607

7. What are the boundaries of the NLFPD and what Villages are covered by the district?

The NLFPD covers an area of slightly less than 36 square miles. It includes the Village of New Lenox and parts of the Village of Mokena and Homer Glen. Also, most of the unincorporated parts of New Lenox Township.



8. How many fire stations does NLFPD have?

Currently, the New Lenox Fire Protection District has four stations which are located at:

- Station 1: 261 E. Maple Street
- Station 2: 1205 N. Cedar Road
- Station 3: 930 N. Country Creek Drive
- Station 4: 19819 Schoolhouse Road

Every day, each station has four firefighters/paramedics on duty. Two are staffed on the engine and two are staffed on the ambulance. Each day there are a total of 16 firefighters and a Battalion Chief that are on shift.

9. Why do I see firefighters shopping on duty?

Every day our firefighters put their own money into their grocery fund for the day. They are at the fire house for 24 hours at a time, so they need to purchase their own food for that time. The firefighters will then go to a local store to get what they need for that day. They will bring their ambulance, engine or fire truck to the store with them, so they can leave if they have an emergency call. By spending their own money on food in the district, the firefighters add approximately \$60,000 into the local economy each year.

10. Does the NLFPD buy firefighters groceries/food?

No. The firefighters will use their own money to buy the food they will need for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

11. Why do so many fire vehicles show up on an ambulance call?

All our apparatus is equipped with Advanced Life Support equipment and Paramedics capable of providing the same level of care as our ambulances. We will send our closest unit to the emergency. An engine or truck may respond with an ambulance to provide additional care or support during a medical emergency.

In 2015, the NLFPD implemented a new CPR protocol known as C.A.M.P (Cardiac Arrest Management Program) The CAMP program takes all the current elements of high quality CPR and advanced life skills, and adds to it additional manpower, and a fluid system of accountability for each person responding to the scene. This uniformity allows for the greatest implementation of high quality resuscitation efforts and leads to a higher ratio of saved lives. Since the implementation of the CAMP program in early 2015, the NLFPD has seen an increase in lives saved. Prior to starting the program, the district's save rate for cardiac events where someone's heart stopped was 3%. In the last two years, this save rate has increased to 25%! The new program has been a great success and has accounted for many lives saved.

12. Why do you need so many fire departments to respond to a New Lenox structure fire?

Normal structure fire takes up to 15 personnel, however depending on weather conditions and the size of the building more equipment and personnel may be needed. The NLFPD is part of the Illinois Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS). Through this agreement, we can call in additional personnel and equipment needed to battle a fire and man our stations in case other calls come in at the same time we are on another call. We can also call in other area MABAS partners for numerous specialized equipment or teams (such those for hazardous materials, water rescue, high angle and below grade rescue and disasters.)

13. What is the New Lenox Fire Foundation?

The New Lenox Fire Foundation is a non-profit organization that is composed of volunteers who strive to provide the New Lenox Fire District with the most elite and up to date equipment that is needed to benefit the community. All the items purchased exceed the budget of the New Lenox Fire District and have been purchased with money raised from the Foundation.

14. What is the ambulance billing structure?

- Ambulance billing structure –
 - Advanced Life Support 2 \$2000
 - Advanced Life Support \$1,800
 - Basic Life Support \$1,600
 - Non-transport fee/treatment administered \$400
 - Extrication \$500
 - Mileage Charge \$17.50/mi
 - NLFPD only bills the insurance companies for fire district residents, any additional fees not covered by the insurance company are waived. If you have a question about a bill that you believe you should not have received, please contact the District at (815) 463-4500.

15. What is the NLFPD’s call volume:

In nearly 30 years, the population of New Lenox has doubled from 16, 574 to 42,172 per the U.S. Census Bureau, and the amount of commercial and industrial buildings has grown exponentially as well, causing an increased demand on the fire district. In 1990, the NLFPD had 890 calls, in 2017 the NLFPD had over 4,250 calls; a 378% increase in workload.

Number of calls per year:

- 2010 – 2,802
- 2011 – 2,924
- 2012 – 3,398
- 2013 – 3,395
- 2014 – 3,691
- 2015 – 3,746
- 2016 - 3,907
- 2017 - 4,252

16. Why doesn't the growth in the district and increase in equalized assessed value provide enough revenue?

- a. Will County falls under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL), sometimes referred to as "tax caps". In general terms, the total dollar tax levy of a taxing body subject to PTELL may not exceed an "extension limitation" which is the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index during the 12-month calendar year preceding the tax levy. In the past 5 years the Consumer Price Index has been 2.10%, 0.70%, 0.80%, 1.50% and 1.70% respectively. Although this has increased our tax revenues each year slightly it has not kept pace with call volume and operating expenses.

17. What is going to happen if this referendum fails?

- a. We will have to permanently close a fire station and reduce our first responders by 25% and reduce ancillary staff and programs.

18. What is going to happen if the referendum passes?

- a. The district will be able to keep open all the fire stations and maintain the first responders in them. We will also be able to start to replace vehicles that are at or nearing the end of service life.

19. How many engines/ ambulances are in the town?

- a. The fire district has 3 Advanced Life Support Engines, 1 Advanced Life Support Tower Ladder, 4 Advanced Life Support Ambulances and 1 Battalion Chief on duty each day.

20. Was closing the station on North Cedar a scare tactic?

- a. Closing Station 2 was not a scare tactic! The district is currently spending more money than we are bringing in and cannot continue to do so. Closing Station 2 was the start of being able to live within our means and bringing our budget under control.

21. Could more firehouses close?

- a. The district has worked with our accounting firm to develop a plan to be able to live within our means if the referendum were to not pass. That plan involves closing one station and reducing staffing. However, this plan also uses forecasts that can change such as ambulance billing revenue and estimating what the consumer price index will be in the future. If any of these forecasts change more stations may need to be closed to reduce our spending.

22. Why can't we gradually (step) increase the tax rate?

- a. The district has no choice in how the increase in our tax limiting rate is applied. A step increase is not allowed by Illinois State Statute (35 ILCS 200/18-205).

23. Why does the district use some Contracted Employee's?

- a. We use contracted employees to try to provide as much service as possible with the amount of money that we receive. The district can get 2 contracted employees for the cost of 1 district employee. We try to use a mixture of contract and district employees to provide the best possible service with the budget we have.

24. The Village of New Lenox seems to have plenty of money, why does the fire department need more, can't they just get it from the Village?

- a. The New Lenox Fire Protection District is a separate governing body and cannot get additional money from the Village of New Lenox. As a Fire Protection District, we protect portions of the Villages of New Lenox, Mokena and Homer Glen along with the unincorporated portion of New Lenox Township.

25. Where can I view the fire district's financial information if I am concerned that they are wasteful or do not really need this increase?

- a. All the district's financial information is posted on the districts website, www.nlfire.com, under the Financials' tab. You can also view the 2017 Annual Treasures report on the same page. <http://www.nlfire.com/content/financials/>

26. Why does it appear that there are a lot of SUV's and that they all look new?

- a. Many of our staff vehicles are 2015 model year. In 2015 the district started to replace older staff vehicles that were nearing the end of the serviceable life (several of which had to be immediately replaced due to rust and rot on the frame that made them unsafe to drive) and replace 2 cars and a plow truck that is used to haul equipment and clear our lot when we receive snow. We also added an additional SUV when the district filled the Deputy Chief position that had been left vacant. In December of 2016 two additional vehicles were replaced with insurance money when they were destroyed in an accident at Station 1 where a vehicle left the roadway and struck them in our parking lot. A list of all our vehicles and their ages is below.

- Chief 61- 2015 Chevy
- Chief 62- 2015 Chevy
- Battalion 61- 2015 Chevy
- Engine 61- 2009 Sutphen
- Truck 61- 2012 Smeal
- Ambulance 61- 2015 Ford

- Investigator 61- 2017 Ford
- Utility 61- 2015 Chevy
- Engine 62- 2016 Pierce
- Ambulance 62- 2010 Ford
- Utility 62- 2017 Ford
- Engine 63- 2003 Pierce
- Brush 63- 1995 Chevy
- Utility 63- 2017 Chevy
- Engine 64- 2004 Pierce
- Ambulance 64- 2015 International
- Tender 64- 1986 Peterbilt
- Ambulance 65- 2010 Ford
- Fleet Services 2015 Chevy

The recommended front line service life for an engine is 15 years for an engine, 20 years for a truck and 7 years for an ambulance.

27. Who pays for your community events? (Pancake Breakfasts, Open House, etc...)

- a. The pancake breakfast that are held at Station 1 are sponsored by and the New Lenox Fire Foundation and funded thru donations from local businesses to provide community outreach. The Annual Open house is funded thru donations from local businesses.

28. If a station runs 4 or 5 calls a day, what do they do all day?

- a. Each call on average takes about 1 ½ hours to complete from start to finish. The rest of the time the crews spend doing vehicle and station check, training, public education and station chores (cleaning, mowing grass and minor repairs).

29. How do I know what this will cost me?

- a. If you visit our website, www.nlfire.com, and click on the Referendum button we have provided a tax calculator, so you can figure out what the increase will cost you using your tax bill. If you are unable to use the calculator you can bring your tax bill into our District Office during business hours and we would be happy to calculate it for you.

30. Why do you show comparisons on a \$100,000 home when there are not many at that price in this town?

- a. The \$100,000 fair market value wording is taken directly out of the referendum question on the ballot. The District has no choice in how the question is worded as the wording comes from the County Clerk and is regulated by Illinois State Statute (35 ILCS 200/18-205). For what the referendum will cost you please visit our website and use the tax calculator.

31. Do you have unfunded pension liability?

- a. The New Lenox Firefighters Pension fund is one of the better funded pensions in the state according to an article in the Prairie State Wire on February 1, 2018.
<https://prairiestatewire.com/stories/511325853-rankings-100-best-funded-pensions-in-illinois>

32. What have you done to cut costs?

- a. The District has taken many steps over the years to try to cut costs including but not limited to.
 - Obtaining grants for equipment and facility improvements
 - Cutting the grass
 - Not replacing ancillary staff positions thru attrition
 - Conducting our own maintenance on vehicles

33. How much does a fire engine, truck and ambulance cost?

- a. A fire engine, that carries water and hoses, costs about \$500,000 without equipment. The ladder truck costs about \$1,200,000 without equipment and an ambulance costs about \$230,000 without equipment.

34. Who do I call if I want more information?

- a. If you need more information please contact our District office at (815)463-4500.