

VRFA FIRE BENEFIT CHARGE FAQ - 2020

Q) Was this voted on?

A) Yes. The Fire Benefit Charge (FBC) was first approved by voters in 2006, and renewed in 2012 and 2018. The FBC must be renewed by the voters every six years.

Q) Is this on top of the taxes we pay?

A) While the VRFA does have a property tax levy, the amount that can be levied is reduced under State law because of the FBC. Without an FBC, the maximum levy could apply is \$1.50 / \$1,000 of assessed property valuation. With the FBC, the 2020 levy rate will be \$0.76 per / \$1,000 of assessed property valuation.

Q) My FBC changed this year – what happened?

A) The FBC is set at a level every year to ensure that all residents of the Authority continue to receive fire and EMS services. Because the FBC is applied to every square foot of property within the entire VRFA service area, the FBC will change from year-to-year.

Q) What part of my property is the FBC charged on?

A) All structural square footage, which is comprised of all usable and livable space of your house (this includes the square footage of basements, and both attached and detached garages).

Q) Is the FBC a way to shift a tax burden?

A) No. The FBC is a fair way of paying for fire services, because it is charged based on the cost of providing fire service to each structure within our service area. The result is that homeowners pay a lower effective FBC rate than commercial properties do because the cost of providing fire service to commercial properties is higher than it is for residential properties.

Q) If I am a senior citizen, do I receive a discount?

A) We use the same rules for the senior citizen discount as the County does on your property taxes. Because it is based on income, not all seniors qualify. If you are eligible for the senior discount on your property taxes, it will automatically be applied to your FBC. Senior discounts are administered by your County Assessor's Office – you must contact them to determine your eligibility.

Q) My home has a sprinkler system installed but I did not receive a sprinkler discount for it – why not?

A) Under the VRFA service and funding plan approved by the voters, sprinkler discounts are only applied to commercial properties

Q) How do I appeal?

A) The appeal procedure is outlined on your FBC notice. You can download a copy of the appeal form on our website, one can be mailed to you, or you can come to our headquarters in Auburn to pick one up. It must be either postmarked or delivered by hand to our headquarters by 5:00 PM on January 27, 2020.