

Background Information | 2026-31 Levy King County Medic One/EMS System

Summary

The King County Medic One/EMS system is primarily funded with a countywide, voter approved EMS levy. The current EMS levy expires at the end of 2025. An EMS Advisory Task Force, consisting of elected officials from throughout King County and supported by subject matter experts and stakeholders, met from February– September 2024 and recommended a successor levy to replace the expiring levy.

The King County Executive will transmit a proposed Medic One/EMS 2026-2031 Strategic Plan and EMS Levy ordinance, based on the EMS Advisory Task Force’s recommendations, to the King County Council for its review and approval.

King County EMS System:

King County’s Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system provides residents of Seattle and King County with life-saving pre-hospital medical care through an internationally recognized tiered regional response system. This system relies upon coordinated partnerships with fire departments, paramedic agencies, dispatch centers and hospitals. The use of a tiered response system ensures the most appropriate care provider responds to each 9-1-1 call. Of note, the City of Seattle operates and funds a Medic One emergency services program that is separate from the county program but is part of the regional delivery system.

The tiered regional Medic One/EMS system consists of five major components:

1. EMS System Access: A patient or bystander accesses the Medic One/EMS system by calling 9-1-1 for medical assistance. Bystanders’ reactions and rapid responses to the scene can greatly impact the chances of patient survival.
2. Dispatcher Triage: Calls to 9-1-1 are received and triaged by professional dispatchers who determine the most appropriate level of care needed. Dispatchers are trained to provide pre-arrival instructions for most medical emergencies and guide the caller through life-saving steps, including Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) instructions, until the Medic One/EMS provider arrives.
3. First Tier Response - Basic Life Support (BLS): BLS personnel, usually first to arrive on scene, provide immediate basic life support medical care that includes advanced first aid and CPR/AED to stabilize the patient. Staffed by firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), EMTs are employed by 23 fire- based agencies across King County. EMTs are certified by the state and are required to complete initial and ongoing training.
4. Second Tier Response - Advanced Life Support (ALS): Paramedics respond to about 20 percent of all calls and usually arrive second on scene to provide

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emergency care for critical or life-threatening injuries and illness. Regional paramedic services are provided by five agencies operating 27 Advanced Life Support (ALS) units throughout King County, including fire departments in Bellevue, Redmond, Shoreline, Seattle, and King County Medic One (KCM1, which operates in south King County). Paramedics receive more than 2,100 hours of intensive training through the University of Washington/Harborview Medical Center Paramedic Training Program.

5. Transport to Hospitals: Once a patient is stabilized, it is determined whether transport to a hospital or clinic for further medical attention is needed. Transport is most often provided by an ALS agency, BLS agency, private ambulance, or taxi for lower-acuity situations.

In addition, King County EMS oversees strategic initiatives and regional services, managed by the EMS Division of Seattle King County Public Health. These services provide for regional coordination and consistent quality across all jurisdictions in King County, and include: program supervision, BLS EMT staff training, E-911 dispatch training, medical data collection and analysis, financial oversight, contract administration, and division management. EMS regularly integrates initiatives that are aimed at preventing/reducing emergency calls and improving the quality of the services.

The current EMS levy was approved by voters in November 2019 at a levy rate of 26.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for 2020-2025. Levy revenues are anticipated to total approximately \$1.1 billion for the six-year period. These revenues have supported the EMS/Medic One System.

Analysis

The EMS Advisory Task Force has endorsed an initial EMS levy rate of 25-cents per \$1,000 of assessed value for 2026-2031. Levy revenues under the proposed levy rate are estimated to total approximately \$1.5 billion for the six-year period. The levy proposal would cost the typical King County homeowner \$200 per year, based on an \$800,000 home value.

The proposed levy will continue funding several core services that the City of Redmond provides to its community members and the region, including:

- Advanced Life Support (ALS): Redmond has 3 of the 27 medic units in King County, which will continue to be funded.
- Basic Life Support (BLS): increased BLS funding which is distributed using an allocation methodology of 60% BLS call volume and 40% City of Redmond assessed value.
- Mobile Integrated Health: increased funding spread across all agencies using the same BLS allocation method.

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- Regional Services: continue to fund services that focus on medical training, oversight, and improvement/strategic initiatives.
- Contingencies/Reserves: will provide funding to support EMS services in the case of an economic downturn (as seen in 2008), with reserves that will allow for more flexibility in responding to unforeseen economic events.