

California begins sending bills for fire protection

El Dorado County officials are advising county residents that the California will soon issue Fire Prevention Fee bills.

Each property owner in state responsibility area where CalFire provides fire protection will be assessed an annual \$150 fee per habitable structure. A \$35 reduction applies if the property is also located within a local fire district.

The new state fee was approved was approved by the Legislature and governor last year. The State Board of Equalization is expected to begin issuing the first bills this month. Billing will proceed alphabetically by county name.

“Although El Dorado County is the 29th largest county in terms of population, we are the fourth largest in terms of fire fee bills due to the size of the State Responsibility Area,” Terri Daly, chief administrative officer, said in a statement. “This new state fee hits our residents hard, and has the potential to create a lot of confusion.”

Most of the populated areas of El Dorado County are already part of a local fire protection district. In most instances, local fire districts are the first responders to emergency calls. Neither the county nor local fire districts receive any additional funding through the State Fire Prevention Fee.

At a meeting in South Lake Tahoe this summer Kelly Keenan with CalFire explained the tax means \$89 million for CalFire, but in reality the department’s budget from the state has been reduced by that same amount so the tax is not a net gain to the state fire agency. What people are paying for is unknown. The tax really goes to the general fund to be spent however the governor and Legislature want.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*