



CHARGES FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVICES

By Randy Koepp, Belle Plaine Fire Chief

According to Minnesota State Statute 366.011, Statute.012 and Statute 415.01 cities have the authority to charge citizens for a fire utility fee. Many cities utilize this as a way to keep updated equipment and personnel available to serve the community at a moment's notice, while still maintaining minimal tax increases that are necessary to fund this operation.

The members of the Fire Department have joined the service with the willingness to help our fellow citizens in their time of need. The firefighters are considered paid on-call. When an alarm is answered, the firefighter will be paid on an hourly basis for service. These firefighters still volunteer countless hours a year in various educational and community activities. Many billed residents/individuals feel that they are being treated unfairly by getting a bill for a service during a very emotional and stressful time in their lives. The City has been very flexible in working with people and insurance companies when dealing with the outstanding bill. The fee charged does not cover the annual expenses associated with the Fire Department. The Department responds to many calls annually on the highway that deal with out-of-state motorists or uninsured/underinsured motorists. The City has a very difficult time receiving a payment for this service. This accounts for many hours of billing and collection fees the City has to endure, while still maintaining an operating budget for the department. This service fee can be compared to the other services the City provides and bills for.

The City of Belle Plaine has chosen to remain with this fee system. I ask that you continue to use common sense when the Fire Department is needed instead of dollars and cents to make your decision.

Have a Fire Safe Day!