# Consolidated FAQ v3 12 22 2024

**FAQs on a website don’t need to be exhaustive- they are the *frequently* asked questions. Spokespeople and campaign interviewers may need additional information so they aren’t caught off-guard! But with every new question you need to go back to and find ways to reinforce the core talking points included in the document from Lynn’s “4 Main Q&A for “Sounding the alarm.”” I have that with the questions below, most of which were taken from the FAQs in the PPT slide deck Lynn and the board shared with people starting in May.**

**Please review the following FAQs be reviewed for accuracy, succinctness, before being finalized.**

**Q: How much will I have to pay for the new ESD?**

1. If this measure passes, the County Commissioners will appoint 5 [qualified voters or tax paying property owners] from within the ESD boundaries to manage the ESD and to set the budget for the ESD with operations starting at some point in 2025. So, we can’t project a firm amount. However, the maximum amount of funding for the ESD would be 10 cents per $100 of property valuation or $1000 for a property valuation of $1,000,000.

* Emergency Service Districts (ESDs) are local political subdivisions of the State of Texas that may provide a range of emergency services. ESDs are governed by a board of five commissioners who must meet certain voter and/or tax payer qualifications within the service area. ESDs are primarily funded by an ad valorem (property) tax that, under the State of Texas Constitution, cannot exceed $0.10 per $100 of property valuation.

**Q: Why are you recommending an ESD?**

1. The volume of calls for BVFD is at the point where it exceeds what we can handle with local volunteers. ESDs are scalable and also continue to mutual assistance just as the BVFD currently does with surrounding city and volunteer fire department.

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* ESDs are the typical funding mechanism for fire departments that are not funded through Municipalities in the State of Texas. Texas currently has 356 established ESDs. The BVFD service area is surrounded by ESDs in Bandera, Bexar, Comal and Kerr counties.
* County governments are not required to fund emergency services.
* For more information on ESDs throughout Texas check out the website for of Texas Association of Fire and Emergency Districts) [**https://www.safe-d.org**](https://www.safe-d.org)
* One Sentence Summary: ESDs allow for locally-controlled taxation to fund necessary locally-managed emergency services.

**Q:** Can the volunteer model of the BVFD scale to address future needs of our service area?

1. **No.** The volunteer model is not scaling and will not scale. The over 500 call volume in 2023 and 2024 was highly dependent on 4 (four) people and donations for needed equipment.

While the BVFD continues to reach out to and train potential volunteers, most of them live outside of the area, many of them leave to attend college or a new job, also most of the current volunteers live outside of the area and have full time jobs and families.

Additionally, it takes almost a year to go from getting an ESD on the ballot to election to having funds to hire. We need to start now to be ready for growing projected call volume in 2026.

**Q:** How would an ESD better protect our homes and area from a wildfire?

1. Having paid staff 24/7 would allow firefighters to stop a wildfire more quickly. Quickly containing and completely extinguishing a wildfire in an area affected by drought and high winds is critical to it not expanding exponentially.

**Q:** Is the Bergheim VFD focus on fire suppression?

1. Fire suppression is a major focus of the BVFD, recently it has been the third most frequent type of call. The past couple of years the majority of the calls were EMS and Public Assistance. Additionally the BVFD has responded to situations which were hazardous without a fire being present and some false alarms.

**Q:** Is the ESD model well accepted in Texas?

1. **Yes.** Over 340 ESDs in Texas. Per the SAFE-D website (website of Texas Association of Fire and Emergency Districts) The number is increasing every year.

[**https://www.safe-d.org/resources/**](https://www.safe-d.org/resources/)ESD Map for 2023 shows 340 ESDs in 97 counties.

**Q:** Do neighboring counties use the ESD model?

1. **Yes**. There are ESDs in Bexar, Blanco, Comal, Kerr and beyond. See the map on the SAFE-D website (website of Texas Association of Fire and Emergency Districts) [**https://www.safe-d.org/resources/**](https://www.safe-d.org/resources/)ESD Map for 2023 shows 340 ESDs in 97 counties including those surrounding us.

**Q:** Is flexibility in an ESD model?

1. **Yes.** The ESD funding model is very adaptable. ESDs range from 100% paid to 100% volunteer including those with both paid and volunteer staff. Establishing an ESD would allow us to have both volunteers and paid staff.

**Q:** What are the controls/ limitations on increasing annual ESD tax rates?

* Per the Texas Constitution the maximum amount of ad valorem tax rate to fund for an ESD is 10 cents per $100 of valuation, so $1,000 for a home valued at $1,000,000. This would be the maximum tax rate that can ever be charged, and the ESD Board could set the rate lower. The median ESD tax rate in Texas is $.078/$100 property value.
* If this measure passes, the Commissioners Court will appoint a five-member board of emergency services commissioners to manage the ESD and to set the initial budget with operations starting at some point in late 2025/early 2026.
* One Sentence Summary: The Texas Constitution allows for the creation of locally established and locally controlled taxing entity to fund emergency services in areas with unfunded emergency service needs.

**Q:** Would a county-wide ESD be better for us?

1. **No.** In a county-wide ESD, voter and property owners in the BVFD would have little influence on how the funds raised from our taxes would be spent and there is no guarantee that funds raised from taxes in the BVFD district would be spend in the BVFD district. The only way to make sure taxes for fire and emergency services paid by property owners in the BVFD district are spent in the BVFD district is through a Bergheim ESD.

A county wide ESD would require a tax increase with less control of how monies are allocated. There is less likelihood that the taxes raised in the BVFD district within a county-wide ESD would be spent within the BVFD district given the large percentage of funds for the county that come from our geographic area. It is very possible that taxes raised in the BVFD district would fund ESD services in more rural areas with smaller populations, tax valuations, and taxes raised. County wide ESDs are not typically created because of wide variance in the needs of rural and more suburban areas.

Fortunately, The Texas Constitution allows for the creation of locally established and locally controlled taxing entity to fund emergency services in areas with unfunded emergency service needs through ESDs.

**Q:** Is an ESD accountable to the public? Tax payers?

* **Yes.** If this measure passes, the County Commissioners Court will appoint a five-member board of emergency services commissioners to manage the ESD and to set the initial budget with operations starting at some point in late 2025/early 2026.

**Q:** How do capabilities of your emergency services provider impact your homeowners’ insurance?

1. Some insurers look at ISO scores and better ISO scores may result in lower costs. Insurance costs are carrier specific and no accurate prediction can be made of the effect of moving to an ESD on homeowners’ insurance.

**Need subject matter expert to review and provide an accurate/succinct answer**

**Q: Why do we need a new tax? We already pay county taxes.**

Only a very small percentage of the taxes collected by Kendall County help fund the BVFD. Every year the County Commissioners decide how much to allocate to BVFD. It has averaged $xxx per year over the past three years, and pays only xx% of the costs of operating the BVFD. The balance of the funds come from donations and grants which are not a consistent or reliable source of funding.

* County governments are not required to fund emergency services.
* The Texas Constitution allows for the creation of locally established and locally controlled taxing entity {Emergency Service Districts or ESDs] to fund emergency services in areas with unfunded emergency service needs.

**Q:** If my current Kendall County property taxes pay for ambulance service, why do we need an ESD to fund fire department?

County funding of $150K to BVFD – keeps the lights on, rest is donations/fundraising. Both county and BVFD provide EMS services. But there is no overlap because??? Also state ambulance service limitations such as not being able to extract victims from a wreck, [anything else?]

**Q:** Do tax rates for an ESD ever go down?

Yes. They can go down as rates can be reset every year. In Comal County the rates went down with growth [from x to y in 20xx due to increased tax base from increase in new housing?]. [this needs a URL or source of data]