

Bexar County District 6 Fire & Rescue



Deciding the Future

You're invited: Town Hall Meeting March 29 to discuss challenges facing ESD6

Bexar County Emergency Services District No. 6 (ESD6) invites residents to participate in a Town Hall Meeting to discuss the future of fire protection and emergency medical first response in our area.

The meeting is scheduled at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 29 at the Southside ISD Board Room, 1460 Martinez-Losoya Rd.

ESD6 is the grassroots government responsible for fire protection and emergency medical first-response in southern Bexar County, including the City of Sandy Oaks. ESD6 contracts with another emergency services district for staffing for fire protection and emergency medical first-response.

ESD6's Board of Commissioners has called an election for May 6, asking voters to approve a one-and-a-

half percent sales tax in the district. The sales tax would provide an estimated \$175,000 a year.

The sales tax would not affect the City of Sandy Oaks, which is already at the maximum sales tax rate. Sandy Oaks residents are not eligible to vote in the May 6 ballot.

The Board of Commissioners has identified the need to build and staff a new,

strategically located station to reduce the time it takes to respond to calls for help.

Currently, the ESD's only source of revenue is property tax. ESD6's property tax rate is the constitutional maximum for ESDs – 10 cents per \$100 of property value.

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**TOWN HALL MEETING
7-8pm Wed. 3/29**

Southside ISD Board Room
1460 Martinez-Losoya Rd.

Growing pains

*More people,
more calls for help,
more strain on ESD*

More and more people are coming to Bexar County, and Bexar County ESD No. 6, with large areas of open land, is primed for development.

Development can add value to the ESD's tax base, but it also can attract the attention of the City of San Antonio. When the City annexes property into the city limits – as it did along I-37 recently – the property is removed from the ESD.

ESD Treasurer Christopher Cavazos said that the district suffered a "one-

Continued on Page 3, "GROWTH"



Fires in the "wildland interface" are particularly challenging in ESD6, requiring more manpower and equipment than in fires in urban areas. They also are time-sensitive, as fire spreads rapidly. A wildfire that begins with one acre can spread to 16,000 acres in as little as an hour if left unchecked.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

about your emergency services

Q: Who provides our fire and rescue protection?

A: Bexar County Emergency Services District No. 6 (ESD6) is the local government responsible for fire protection and emergency medical response in a 166 square mile area of southern Bexar County, including the City of Sandy Oaks. Five firefighters are in the district 24/7, through an agreement with another Bexar County ESD. The Bexar County Commissioners Court appoints the ESD Board of Commissioners.

Q: What is an emergency services district?

A: Emergency Services Districts are political subdivisions of the state of Texas, similar to school districts or municipalities. An Emergency Services District (ESD) can provide fire protection, emergency medical response or both. There are more than 320 ESDs in Texas, 12 of which are inside Bexar County.

Q: Where does our local ESD get its money?

A: ESD6 is able to levy a maximum property tax of 10 cents per \$100 of property value. Put another way, if you have taxable property worth \$100, you pay a dime in property tax.

The ESD is at the maximum tax rate allowed by the state constitution. A home on the tax roll with a taxable value of \$100,000 currently pays \$100 a year – a little more than \$8 a month. These funds are used to provide equipment, fire stations and trained firefighters available to respond in an emergency.

Q: Why is the ESD calling a sales tax election?

A: Growth. The Emergency Services District Board of Commissioners has identified the need for additional revenues to staff and equip a new fire station in the hopes of reducing the time it takes to respond to emergencies. Because it is already at the maximum tax rate, the ESD has to identify alternative revenue sources.

Q: How could this reduce my homeowner insurance premiums?

A: In Texas, many insurance companies use an independent rating organization – ISO – to rate an area's risk for fire damage. The lower the risk, the lower the premiums insurers should charge. ESD6 and District 6 Fire & Rescue consult and comply with ISO standards in an effort to lower homeowner insurance premiums for ESD residents. Additional revenues could allow ESD6 to do more to lower the area's ISO score.

Q: How much money will the sales tax provide?

A: An estimated \$175,000 a year.

Q: Will this affect my property taxes?

A: No. ESD6 is NOT asking for a property tax increase.

Q: How will this affect what I pay at the store?

A: Most residents of ESD6 will probably notice little change. The maximum sales tax that can be collected is 8.25 percent – 6.25 percent goes to the State of Texas, and 2 percent is reserved for local jurisdictions.

If you bought \$100 worth of taxable goods before the sales tax rate increase, you would pay \$6.75 tax. If the new sales tax rate is implemented, on the same \$100 worth of taxable goods, you would pay \$8.25.

Most residents are already paying the maximum sales tax if they purchase taxable items in San Antonio or the City of Sandy Oaks, which are already at the maximum.

Because the City of Sandy Oaks is already at the maximum, residents there will not be eligible to vote in the May 6 election.

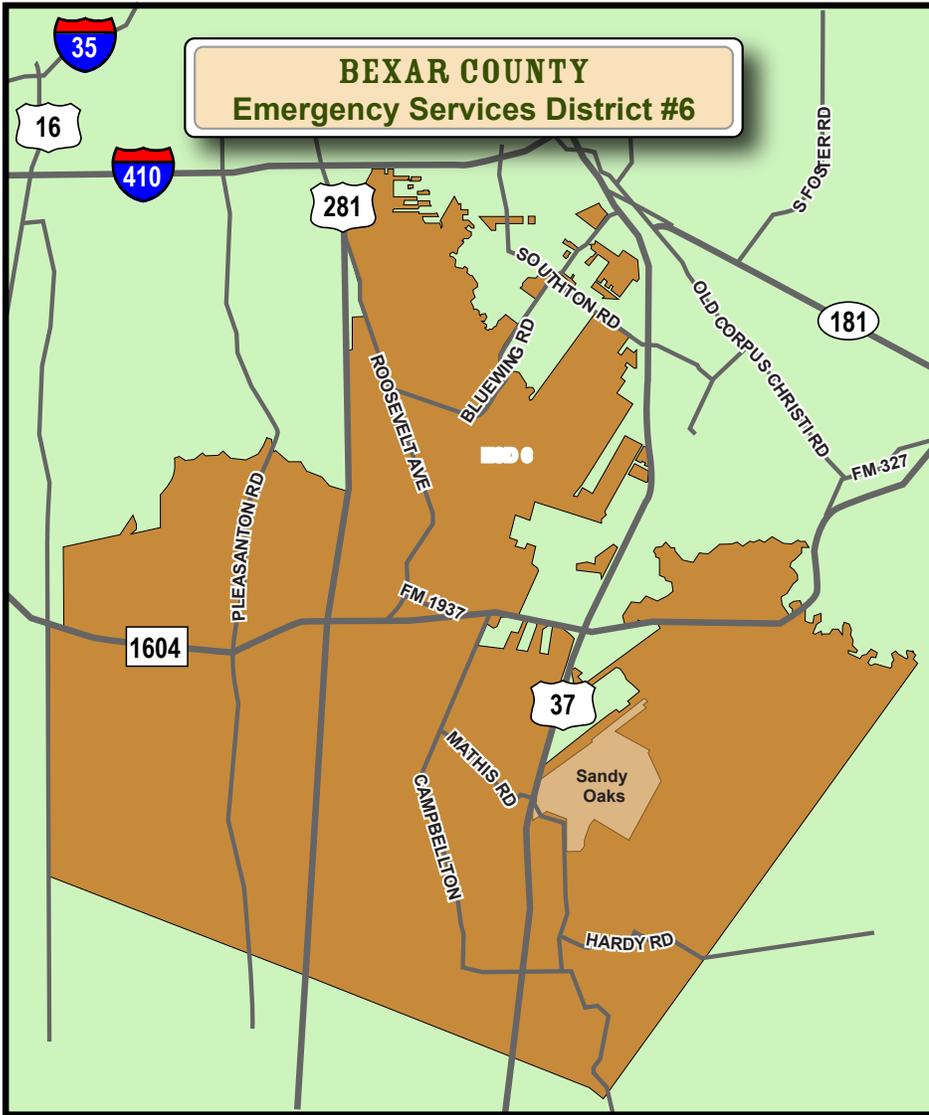
Q: Do many ESDs collect a sales tax?

A: More emergency districts are turning to sales tax as they hit the limits on the property tax rate.

One advantage is that the sales tax keeps pace with growth. With the property tax, construction can begin on a lot, but it may take two years or longer for a jurisdiction to receive any tax revenue. During those two years, though, the ESD is providing fire and rescue protection to the construction workers, the vendors bringing goods to the lot, and to the occupants from the day they move in. With a sales tax, revenues from purchases those people make in the district are paying for some of that protection as soon as construction begins.

The sales tax can also reduce the burden on property taxpayers, as visitors to the district will help pay for the protection upon which they rely. For example, drivers along I-37 may not live in the ESD, but they are protected while they pass through the district. Their purchases in the district will help pay for that protection.

When ESD6 firefighters respond to a traffic accident on I-37, they don't check IDs to see if the victim is a local taxpayer before they begin trying to save lives.



MEET *From Page 1*

If the City of San Antonio's fire department were funded only by property tax, it would require a tax rate of more than 32 cents.

That's more than three times the maximum tax rate an ESD can levy. And that's before calculating in administrative overhead and big-ticket capital improvements like fire stations.

In ESD6, the owner of a home on the tax rolls at \$100,000 pays \$100 a year to know that well-trained, well-equipped, municipal quality firefighters will be at the door in minutes if there's an emergency.

The proposed sales tax would have no affect on a homeowner's property tax bill. In fact, the sales tax will reduce the ESD's reliance on property taxes to fund its operations.

In 2016, ESD6 responded to 2,345 calls for help in the district with an average response time of just more than 9 minutes.

"We hope that ESD6 residents will come to the Town Hall Meeting to let us know how they want their fire department to meet the challenges we face," said Fire Chief Ralph Rodriguez.

Need a speaker? We can help

If your church, club, civic group or youth group needs a speaker, ESD6 and District 6 Fire & Rescue can help.

We'll be happy to tell you about the services we provide at less than half the cost of many municipal fire departments. We can explain the challenges we face.

To arrange a speaker, call ESD6 at 210-626-9999.

GROWTH *From Page 1*

two punch" with some of the oil-field related businesses along I-37 recently. First, the price of oil plummeted, and many businesses closed or relocated as activity decreased in the Eagle-Ford Shale fields. Then the City of San Antonio annexed the remaining businesses, wiping them off the ESD tax rolls.

In residential subdivisions in ESD6, the presence of more people means more calls for help. In 2016, ESD6 firefighters answered more than 6 calls a day on average, and that number is expected to climb.

The result could be a delay in the time it takes to get help to you. With an increase in the number of calls, ESD6 firefighters may already be deployed when another call comes in. When that happens, ESD6 has to summon assistance from another jurisdiction, adding to the delay.

And more people, as everyone who drives knows, means more traffic. More traffic means more accidents and more injuries that need ESD6 first responders. Even without accidents, ESD6 emergency units will find it harder – and slower – to navigate through more cars to get to the scene of an accident.

The ESD6 Board of Commissioners hopes to build, staff and equip a new station on the district's east side to give it faster access to the large number of calls in the area. The price tag for that new station, staff and equipment could easily exceed \$2 million. But the ESD is already relying on reserves to balance its budget, and its property tax rate is at the constitutional maximum.

BEXAR COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 6/

DISTRICT 6 FIRE & RESCUE

2220 S. Loop 1604 East
San Antonio, TX 78264

www.esd6.org

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**JOIN US 7:00pm MARCH 29 AT SOUTHSIDE ISD BOARD ROOM
1460 MARTINEZ-LOSOYA RD.**

FOR A TOWN HALL MEETING ON YOUR FIRE PROTECTION

*Para obtener una copia de esta informacion traducida al español,
visita nuestro sitio web www.esd6.org*



SALES TAX BASICS

In Texas, the sales tax on covered items cannot exceed 8.25 percent. Of that amount, 6.25 percent goes to the State of Texas. The remaining two percent is reserved for local governments, such as ESDs.

In ESD6, the VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority of San Antonio collects a half-percent sales tax, which leaves one-and-a-half percent for other local jurisdictions.

Most residents are already paying the 8.25 percent maximum, because much of their shopping is in San Antonio or the City of Sandy Oaks. They are already at the maximum permissible sales tax rate.

Sales tax reduces the reliance on property taxes to fund the costs of running Bexar County ESD No. 6.

Additionally, when a visitor – driving through ESD 6 – purchases a taxable item during the trip through the territory, the sales tax collected helps reduce the expense to property taxpayers living within the district.

ESD6 firefighters don't check whether a victim is a property owner before they begin saving lives and property.

If voters approve the ESD6 sales tax on May 6, revenues will be used for fire protection and emergency medical first response.

Minutes count

*ESD6 races the clock
to get help to you*

Heart attack. Stroke. Motor vehicle accident. They're scary words; they'll change your life.

The events are time-sensitive and require a high level of initial care to improve survivability. Among the grim figures that ESD6 responders deal with every day:

- **The chances of survival of a heart attack drop seven to ten percent every minute.**
- **Within four to six minutes, permanent brain damage can occur, and the patient can die.**
- **After ten minutes, few resuscitation attempts are effective.**

On average, ESD6 responded to more than 6 calls every day in 2016, and 65 percent of those calls were medical emergencies.