

Ochopee Fire District Services to State and Federal Highways

These two articles were in the last two newsletters and will give you information on the issue:

"Representation Without Taxation"

The following letter was sent to our senate, congress, state representatives, and the Governor concerning I-75 and the services our fire district provides.

"You hear people say many times, "taxation without representation." I am writing to you regarding "representation without taxation." The Ochopee Fire District in Collier County consists of approximately 1,000+ taxpaying households, covers an area of 1100 square miles, and is responsible to respond to emergencies on I-75 Alligator Alley from Mile Marker 80 to 50. This is a 100 mile round trip from the station in Everglades City. The mill rate for this district is just under four mills, an extremely high tax to pay in comparison to other districts around the county and the state.

I would like to know why so few residents are responsible for paying for these services! Millions of dollars are collected at the toll booths, which many perceive is for the services rendered on that stretch of road. Years ago, that is what toll monies were slated for. But not any longer. Not one penny is spent on the emergency services for that road. Should we be funding the replacement of these fire trucks (which run their life span at a much quicker rate)? Should we be paying for the fuel and maintenance of these trucks? Should we provide man hours? Not to mention, our own trucks are taken away from the station for many hours each time they get the call. On average, 50% of all calls Ochopee responds to are on I-75.

Do you know what insurance rates are for property outside a 5-mile radius of a fire station? Do you know how many insurance companies will not even write a policy under these conditions? Right now, one of the communities that pays 48% of this Ochopee Fire budget, is 14 miles from the fire station. The county has just purchased property which has a building that could house a fire station for this community, but the district does not have the monies available for the renovations. Does this seem fair? Discussions of raising our mill rate have arisen. Raise our mill rate so we can continue to fund I-75?

Last month, I drove across the alley to pick up a friend at the airport, then drove her back to drop her off. It costs me \$10.00. I kept thinking, wait a minute, we pay for the emergency services on this road, why are we paying to drive across it too. It's the equivalent to double taxation. I would appreciate your input.

The goal now is to get this into the state legislative session in 2010. We will need everyone's support on this. In the next newsletter we will let you know what you can do to help...stay tuned.

Ochopee Fire District Needs Your Help

In the last newsletter there was an article titled "Representation Without Taxation," which referred to the services provided by the Ochopee Fire District to I-75 from mile marker 80 to 50, not to mention all the way down US41 to the Dade County line. These services are provided free of charge, but as you know, nothing is free. So who is paying? We are!

The Ochopee Fire District in Collier County consists of approximately 1,000+ taxpaying households, covers an area of 1100 square miles. The mill rate for this district is just under four mills, an extremely high tax to pay in comparison to other districts around the county and the state.

We need the state to step up to the plate and pay for these services. Up until a few years ago, we did receive \$300,000 annually from money that the county receives from the state called PILT funds. It was decided to pull that money from our district when more homes were built and the ad valorem tax base grew. But the district didn't shrink and the calls to I-75 continue. Remember, it's 100 miles roundtrip and that's almost daily, about 50% of all calls in the district.

We need everyone's support on this. Please go to our website, click on Community, then Ochopee Fire.

**Please fill out the form and fax to 239-394-8090 or mail to Port of the Islands Realty,
24998 Tamiami Tr E, Naples, FL 34114. Please use your Port of the Islands address in the address line.
Thank you for your participation.**

Ochopee Fire District
Collier County, Florida

**Petition to Collect Funds From the State for Emergency Services
to I-75 Mile Marker 80-50 and US41 to Dade County line from Ochopee Fire District**

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone and/or Email _____

Are you a registered voter in Collier County? Yes No

Are you a property owner at Port of the Islands? Yes No

To whom it may concern,

I/We petition the state to pay their fair share for emergency services provided by Ochopee Fire District on I-75 Mile Marker 80 to Mile Marker 50 and US41 to the Dade County line. I/We feel it is unfair to expect me/us, the taxpayers, to fund fuel, maintenance, labor, and replacement of equipment for these services. It is the equivalent to "Representation Without Taxation."

Comments _____

Signature _____

Signature _____