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Dear Valued Fire Service Subscriber,

We are proud to say your community-owned, not-for-profit fire department has never been stronger. During the last few years, our organization has updated both our fire and EMS fleet vehicles and equipment, graduated several classes of new firefighters, EMTs and paramedics to ensure sufficient staffing, and met the challenge of recent hurricanes to adequately protect our community's lives and property.

We are proud of our team, our growth, and our service to this community. However, the unique demands of being a combination volunteer and paid professional department continues to grow. The requirements to maintain an ISO 2-rating, thus keeping your property insurance premiums low, has continually increased. Chatham Fire has historically sought ways to minimize the impact to our subscribers by using revenue from cellphone tower rentals and securing federal and state grants. Our organization receives no direct government fire funding, as fire protection is not included in local property taxes.

A professional consultant was recently brought in to review fire cost and pricing as our leadership is constantly looking for ways to do more for less. After much consideration from both our leadership team and board of directors, we have determined that our anticipated future financial needs leave us no choice but to update the fire subscription rates over the next year. Our existing rates are already well below other Georgia County and City fire departments operational costs and we expect our efficiency to continue being below market; thanks to our many valued volunteers. Following the consultant's advice to update our billing software and methods, Chatham Emergency Services will be moving to a more fair, equitable, and objective process regarding rate calculation with new billing software.

With these changes, you may notice your annual invoice is different than previous years. County and City Fire Departments are funded utilizing a millage approach using the total value of peoples' property and range between 2.5-5.0 mills in Georgia. Some departments have additional fees and water flow assessments. Chatham Fire will now use a simple, modern, modified millage approach of 0.5 mills on the calculated assessed value of land and 3.2 mills on building(s). Appraised property values are determined by the Chatham County Board of Assessors (on your tax bill). Each property as identified by their Property Identification Number (PIN) will receive a separate invoice. A minimum \$125 rate is applicable for all buildings and a modified assessment for residential properties above \$160,000. We announced these changes in both our Annual Board meeting in September 2019 and press interviews in November 2019. The story was carried on three local TV stations, one radio station and the Savannah Morning News.

We are proud to be able to continue to be the most economically valued fire department in the area and again provide credit to our many volunteers and leaders who seek funding outside of subscribers' payments. However, a rate revision was required to keep your insurance premiums low and assure optimum safety. We appreciate your understanding and continued support.

Sincerely, Chatham Emergency Services Board of Directors