

Merger of Rifle Fire Protection District and Burning Mountains Fire Protection District
into Colorado River Fire Protection District
Frequently Asked Questions

I thought you already did that?

We have consolidated the operations of Burning Mountains Fire Protection District and Rifle Fire Protection District from the Fire Chief to the Firefighters. We have been functioning as a single fire and emergency medical services department under the name of Colorado River Fire Rescue and yet there are still three governing boards overseeing the organization. This step reduces the governance to a single Board, single budget, single attorney, etc. and provides for additional cost savings and efficiencies.

What does this mean?

The Burning Mountains Fire Protection District and the Rifle Fire Protection District are in the process of becoming a single special district. Even though the two organizations have combined their operations and administrative functions into a single fire and emergency medical services organization (Colorado River Fire Rescue), the “underlying” political entities remain. In other words, while there is one fire organization, there are still three Boards of Directors, three budgets, three legal counsels, three auditors, etc. This “behind the scenes” structure is inefficient, cumbersome, confusing, duplicative, and expensive.

What will change? How does this effect me?

There are two answers to this question. The first from an operational perspective, the answer is “nothing” will change. The single operational organization has been functioning for well over a year. It has proven to be less expensive and to provide better service. This does not change the operational components of Colorado River Fire Rescue.

The changes are primarily behind the scenes. It takes three Boards of Directors and reduces them to one elected Board with representation from throughout the service area. It takes three budgets, three legal counsel groups, three audit’s, etc. and reduces them to one, further reducing cost, duplication, redundancy, and bureaucracy. To complete the consolidation the mill levy for property owners in the Rifle Fire Protection District will be reduced by .182 mills, lowering taxes. In summary, it reduces the size of governance, and lowers your taxes.

Why did we combine the Fire Departments?

In 2009 the Town of Silt made the decision that it would no longer be providing ambulance services to the Towns of Silt, New Castle, and the surrounding areas within Burning Mountains Fire Protection District (BMFPD). BMFPD agreed that they would take over the providing of these services and changed their “service plan”. The fire chief’s began having conversations about the increased call volumes to BMFPD as well as call types and necessary certification levels. These conversations resulted in the bringing in of a third party to do a “shared and cooperative services” study. The results of the study found that better services, cost savings, and cost avoidance would be realized by combining the operations into a single agency. A copy of the study is available on our website www.crfr.us .

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Why didn't we take this issue to a vote?

The simple answer to this is cost, and common sense evaluation. The Boards have been discussing this issue for quite some time. With the down turn in the economy, significant reductions in budgets have been experienced. In continued efforts to reduce costs without cutting service levels, the Boards agreed that a consolidation was the right thing to do. The model has already proven to be more effective and efficient as a single department under the fire authority. Since it has proven itself beyond a doubt, the estimated costs of doing an election (approximately \$25,000.00) did not seem to be a wise use of funds.

Is it really better?

Yes. The performance standards of the agency have been evaluated and we are able to provide better services to all of the communities and surrounding areas as a single entity. In addition, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) came and did a fire protection rating evaluation on the combined entity in August of 2013. This survey resulted in an improvement of the classification from an ISO class 6 in Silt and New Castle, and a class 5 in Rifle, to a class 3 in all hydranted areas. This combined effort cut the ISO rating in half in many areas and also lowered the ratings in non-hydranted areas due to the water capacity capabilities of a larger singular organization.

So, give me the short version of what is going on.

1. The Fire Department itself is not changing. These are administrative adjustments that will not affect the day to day emergency operations of the Department.
2. Burning Mountains Fire Protection District (BMFPD) is changing its name to Colorado River Fire Protection District (CRFPD).
3. The tax rate in the Rifle Fire Protection District (RFPD) will be reduced from 6.284 mills to 6.102 mills.
4. The property within the RFPD is being excluded from RFPD and at the same time being included within CRFPD. No disruption in service will happen as Colorado River Fire Rescue (the actual Fire Department) is already providing service to all of the properties and that is not changing.
5. Elected officials from the BMFPD Board and the RFPD Board will be on the Board of CRFPD to provide representation from all of the response area and to give a voice to all communities.

I am a retired volunteer. What does this mean to me and my volunteer pension?

Nothing. The volunteer pension programs, by law, are separate funds for the two retired groups of volunteers. Also, both pension funds are "closed" plans meaning that the people who were started as volunteers for BMFPD, or RFPD are the last volunteers to be included in those particular plans. Volunteers who joined (and will join in the future) with CRFPD are under a separate program called a Length of Service Award Program or a LOSAP. Your volunteer pension is not going away and will continue to be funded for actuarial soundness by CRFPD.

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What legal process of consolidation are you using?

Colorado Revised Statutes allow District's (or Governments) who provide the same services to consolidate for the purpose of efficiencies provided that taxes are not increased without approval of the voters. The mill levy for BMFPD will remain the same under CRFPD and the RFPD mill levy will decrease (taxes reduced) under CRFPD.

Is this happening fast?

While it may seem that this is happening fast, the reality is that various levels of consolidation between BMFPD and RFPD have been in various stages of conversation since 2003. The actual moving forward with a singular operation has been supported and worked on for about four years so this is not "new" or fast. All in all it will have been about a 5 year project to implement the changes and to evaluate the "real world" effectiveness of a single entity. Due to the laws and timelines associated with the consolidation, we must have the "property transfers" completed by May 1st in order to allow the County Assessor the required time to transfer the properties and property taxes.

How much am I paying for Fire Protection and emergency medical services?

The easiest way to identify what fire protection is costing you is to look at your tax bill from the County Assessors office. If that is not readily available then the property tax calculation for a home is done as follows: For each \$100,000.00 in assessed value, multiply that by 7.96% (Gallagher Amendment), and then multiply that number by .006102 to determine the actual taxes paid to the District. Using a home with an assessed value of \$250,000.00 as an example, here is the calculation:

$$\$250,000.00 \times .0796 = \$19,900.00$$

$$\$19,900.00 \times .006102 = 121.4298$$

Taxes paid \$121.43

In 25 words or less, tell me why we are doing this?

It costs less, the department has better response capability, the service is better, it reduces the size of government, and it lowers your insurance rating.