

Public Safety Planning Update

Spring
2021

COLORADO RIVER FIRE RESCUE



Why is Colorado River Fire Rescue (CRFR) considering returning to the ballot with a funding proposal?

Last year, voters turned down a mill levy proposal that would have addressed CRFR's highest priorities: staffing, equipment, and apparatus needs. Without additional local funding, more cuts will need to be made, further impacting response times and emergency services.

If approved by voters last spring, what would the mill levy have funded?

CRFR wanted to hire six first responders to partially fill the 10 positions that had been lost over the previous year. With rising call volume, these firefighter and paramedic positions would have allowed the Fire District to keep Station 43 open, maintain response times, and provide essential support throughout the communities we serve.

CRFR TAKES MAJOR STEPS TO CUT COSTS AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL REFERENDUM

What happened following the unsuccessful May 2020 mill levy election?

CRFR implemented more cost-cutting measures, including:

- Closure of Station 43 in South Rifle
- Six vacant first responder positions were not filled
- Daily staffing was lowered from 13 to 11 first responders
- Administrative positions were reduced, and responsibilities were combined
- Firefighting apparatus and utility vehicles were sold to supplement revenues

CRFR seeks your thoughts and recommendations on a phased-in funding proposal. You have the final word on how we protect response times and emergency services.

— Leif Sackett
Fire Chief
Colorado River Fire Rescue

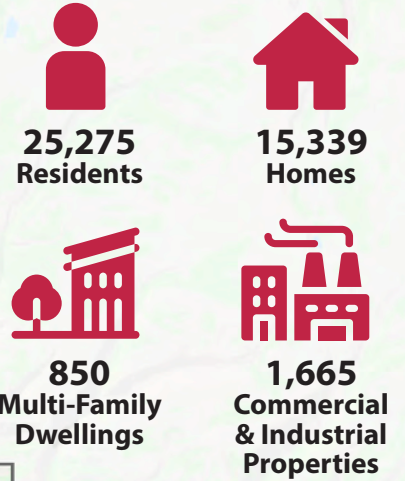




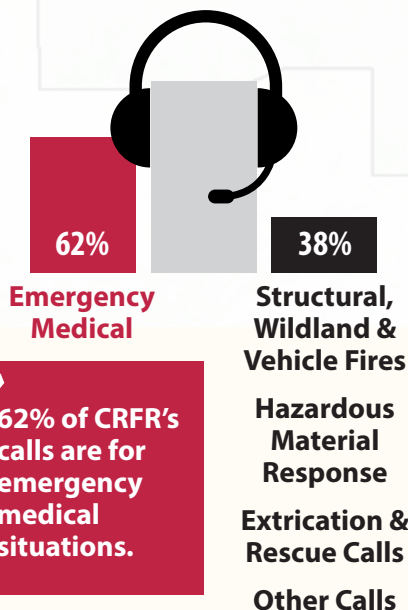
Service Area & Station Locations



851-SQUARE-MILE SERVICE AREA

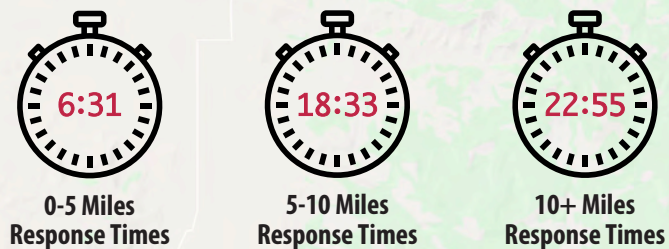


TYPES OF CALLS



✓ 62% of CRFR's calls are for emergency medical situations.

CRFR'S AVG. RESPONSE TIMES



CRFR's staffing cuts, station closure, and growing emergency call volume have resulted in increased response times districtwide. Average response times currently range from six and a half minutes to almost 23 minutes depending on the distance traveled.



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COLORADO RIVER FIRE RESCUE



Has the closing of Station 43 had negative impacts?

Yes. Response times have increased by one minute and three seconds for the homes and businesses previously served by Station 43. Fire can double in size every 30 seconds and cardiac arrest survivability rates decrease by 15% every minute without medical care.

Have insurance rates been impacted by the closure of Station 43?

Yes. Insurance rates increased for some residential and commercial properties within the Station 43 response area.

Why are all district residents affected by the closure of Station 43?

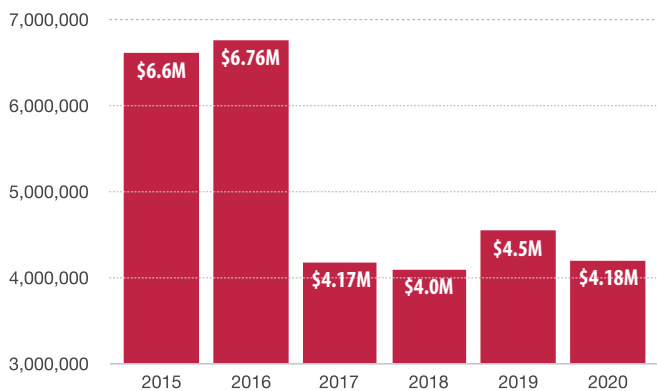
Call volume that was once addressed by Station 43 has shifted to the District's other stations, resulting in increased response times districtwide.

FUNDING NEEDS ARE NOW GREATER THAN EVER

How much have CRFR's property tax revenues decreased since 2015?

The Fire District's revenues have dropped by almost \$3 million due to a decline in assessed property values within the District.

CRFR TAX REVENUES



The Fire District's revenues dropped by almost \$3 million in 2017 and remain flat. This is due to a decline in assessed property values.

Are the Fire District's operating reserves being drawn down?

CRFR has drawn down 58% of its general fund balance over the past five years. At the current pace, reserves will be depleted by the end of 2023. The Fire District's Capital Reserve Fund will, however, enable critical apparatus and equipment replacement over the next several years assuming additional local funding is received and these reserves do not need to be redirected for operations.

When is the last time voters approved funding for CRFR?

It has been 27 years since voters in Rifle and surrounding areas have approved a tax measure for fire protection services. In New Castle, Silt, and surrounding areas it has been 17 years.

What about getting grants to help fund the District's needs?

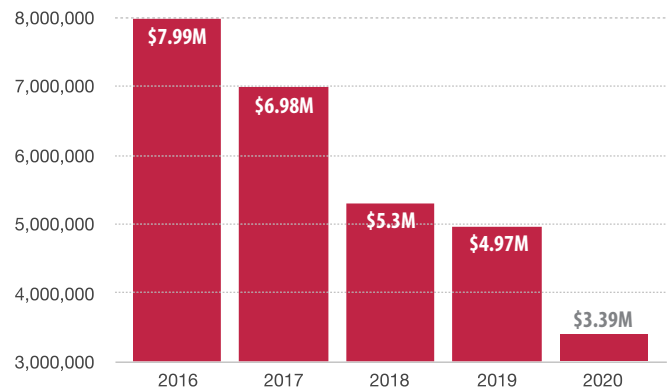
Unfortunately, many grants require sizable matching funds which CRFR is unable to fund at this time.

DEMAND FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES CONTINUES TO INCREASE

Do 911 calls continue to increase?

CRFR has seen a steady increase in 911 call volume in each of the last five years. In 2020, the Fire District's 911 calls increased to more than 2,300 calls, up 6.1% from 2019.

CRFR YEAR-END GENERAL FUND BALANCE



At the current pace, CRFR's general fund balance will be depleted by the end of 2023.



Are the Fire District's calls still dominated by emergency medical calls?

Yes. About 62% of CRFR's calls are for medical emergencies. The Fire District also responds to structural, wildland and vehicles fires; hazardous materials calls; extrication and rescue calls; and other calls for service.

How many people, homes and businesses does CRFR protect?

The Fire District serves more than 25,000 residents, 15,000 homes, 850 multi-family dwellings and 1,600 commercial and industrial properties over an 851-square-mile area.

What else does CRFR protect?

The Fire District addresses emergency needs along I-70, Hwy 13, the railroad, the Colorado River including tributaries of its watershed, wildland urban interface areas, critical infrastructure, and the numerous recreational areas within the district.

Do other fire districts continue to aggressively recruit first responders?

With a continuing national first responder shortage, fire districts in Colorado and nationally seek to fill open positions. Over the last three years, CRFR has lost personnel due to our inability to fully fund competitive wages.

CRFR SEEKS COMMUNITY'S INPUT ON PHASED-IN FUNDING PROPOSAL

What is the new funding proposal being considered by CRFR?

CRFR is considering seeking voter approval of a mill levy that would be phased in over multiple years. Rather than increasing the current tax rate by 6 mills in the first year, which was the original proposal, the new proposal calls for a rate increase of 3 mills in 2022, an additional 2 mills in 2024, and up to an additional 1.75 mills in 2026, totaling 6.75 mills.

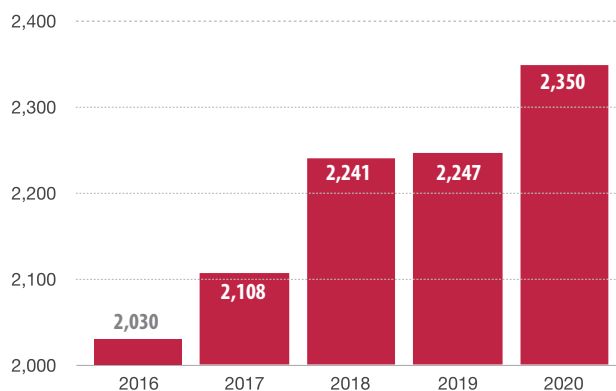
How would the funds be used as the mill levy is phased in?

To protect current response times and emergency services, additional local funding would be used to maintain existing staffing and emergency services. The need to close an additional fire station and cut additional staffing would be eliminated. Funds would also be allocated to the training of first responders on life-saving medical, fire and emergency response techniques. Additional staffing would likely not go into effect until the 6.75 mills are fully implemented.

There's a lot riding on the proposed mill levy. Closing yet another fire station and eliminating more first responders would significantly impact response times and emergency services.

— Alan Lambert, Board President, Colorado River Fire Rescue

911 CALL VOLUME



CRFR's 911 call volume surpassed 2,300 calls in 2020 and continues to increase.



UPCOMING INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

Learn more about the CRFR's funding proposal

- Webinar 1, 7:00-8:00 pm, June 16, 2021
 - Webinar 2, 7:00-8:00 pm, June 23, 2021
- Go to www.crfr.us for webinar links.

What is the estimated tax impact of the phased-in funding proposal?

With the phased-in approach, the added annual tax amount per \$100,000 of a home's actual (market) value*—as determined by the County Assessor—is estimated to be as follows:

2022: Up to \$21.45 per year, \$1.79 per month, or \$0.06 per day

2024: Up to an additional \$14.30 per year, \$1.19 per month, or \$0.04 per day

2026: Up to an additional \$12.51 per year, \$1.04 per month, or \$0.03 per day

In total, CRFR is asking up to \$48.26 per \$100,000 of a home's actual market value.

*Actual value is the market value for a property that the County Assessor determines for tax purposes. The actual value is multiplied by the assessment rate (e.g., 7.15% for residential property) to determine the assessed value of a property.

What oversight would be in place?

To ensure financial transparency and accountability, the District's budget and audit would continue to be posted online at Colorado Department of Labor and Affairs (DOLA) <https://bit.ly/3gRo8UN> and at www.crfr.us.

Would there be tax relief for seniors and disabled veterans?

For those who qualify and apply, the Senior/Veteran Property Tax Exemption would reduce the property tax on a homeowner's primary residence by exempting 50% of the first \$200,000 of market value.

FURTHER CLOSURES ARE AN UNFORTUNATE REALITY

What if voters turn down CRFR's new proposal?

Without a successful mill levy, the Fire District would need to further reduce staffing, including layoffs throughout the organization. The District would also need to consider closing another station, selling a station, and continuing to sell apparatus. Efforts to seek stable funding would also continue.

If another fire station is closed, how would response times be affected?

Due to CRFR's coverage area of 851 square miles, geographical limitations would increase response times. The Fire District would be unable to adequately meet call demand. The extent to which response times further increased would depend on which station is closed, a decision that would require additional data collection and analysis.

YOUR INPUT IS CRITICAL

How can residents learn more about the mill levy proposal?

CRFR will be hosting informational webinars. The dates, times and Zoom links will be posted on the Fire District's website: www.crfr.us. District residents will be able to ask questions during the webinars.

PHASED-IN FUNDING PROPOSAL

2022	2024	2026
3 Mills	2 Mills	1.75 Mills
Up to \$1.79 per month	Up to an additional \$1.19 per month	Up to an additional \$1.04 per month

The new funding proposal is based on the District's assessed valuation and would be phased in over time.

If you have questions/comments, please contact:

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