



NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Fall 2016

Dear Resident,

Traditionally, at this time of the year, we send you an Autumn Newsletter in which we talk about changes in personnel and other events at the District. Additionally, the dates for our Annual Fund Raising Dinner at the Home Ranch are announced, which this year will be **Thursday, December 15th, and Friday, December 16th.**

In place of the newsletter, the Volunteers, Chief Swinsick and Board of Directors thought it of value to provide you a "State of the District Letter" in which personnel, equipment and financial information is updated and to provide more insight as to how the District operates as well as its needs and concerns.

OUR DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

Officially formed in 1981, the NRFPD is a Special Tax District, created under Colorado State law. Its purpose is to provide fire response, rescue, and emergency medical services to the residents and visitors in an area of approximately 418 square miles. The general boundaries of the Districts' service area are mile marker 7 on Rte. 129 for the southern border, the national forest on either side of Rte. 129 for eastern and western boundaries, and the intersection of Rte. 129 and FS 550 for the northern boundary. NRFPD also serves as first responder to calls outside of its official District boundaries i.e. north to the Wyoming State line, east to the Continental Divide, and west to the Moffat County line which adds 250 square miles. By most standards, your fire department covers a huge area!

The District's service area is predominantly ranch lands and forest but does contain a number of small subdivisions and only a few commercial establishments. Unlike our neighboring Fire Districts (West Routt/Hayden, Oak Creek and Yampa) the NRFPD has no town/village/commercial centers within the District. As will be explained later, this places NRFPD at a substantial disadvantage in several areas of concern.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

As of this writing, the NRFPD has 12 volunteer members and one full time paid Fire Chief. Chief Mike Swinsick is responsible for the overall operations of the District including volunteer training and certification, District legal compliance, fleet and site maintenance, budget development and many other duties too numerous to list. More importantly, Mike is in effect a "one-man management team" to the

extent that his backups come from our volunteers and as such, are not always available to cover for Mike.

Not having a reliable back up for Mike in the event of illness, injury, or scheduled time off is of great concern and a focus of the District.

The District volunteers are truly volunteers.

- they attend weekly training sessions on Wednesday evenings on their own time
- they attend certified training classes on their own time
- they send and receive District communications on their own time . . . and typically on personal cell phones/equipment without reimbursement
- they drive to emergency medical/rescue calls on their own time . . . and often in their personal vehicles
- they provide wildfire and structure fire services on their own time
- they respond to vehicle accidents and hazardous incidents on their own time
- they service and maintain NRPD equipment on their own time
- they service and maintain NRPD buildings on their own time

Currently, of our 12 volunteers, 7 are EMT-Basic Certified and 6 of them have Intravenous Certifications.

Our volunteers carry voice pagers; when you call 911, their pagers are activated with a voice message, and on their own time, they respond to your call.

In 2015 our volunteers
spent 1628 hours of their own time in training
and
1450 hours of their own time responding to calls!

As of this writing, the number of calls in 2016 is already 121% over the total number of calls in 2015!

Finding volunteers is complicated by a lack of large commercial centers or significant employers from which volunteers can be sought. A great percentage of our residents are seasonal, retired or commuting on a daily basis to work in Steamboat or out of the District.

The NRPD does not have enough volunteers! Our longer term volunteers are moving out of the area or retiring and we need to find replacements for these men and women!

OUR EQUIPMENT

As most are aware, the District has two Stations located on Rte. 129; Station 1 near the Clark Store and Station 2 north of Rte. 62. At each station the following fire/emergency equipment is located.

<u>Station 1</u>		<u>Station 2</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Description</u>
1990	4 x 4 brush fire fighting truck	1978	6 x 6 brush fire fighting truck
2016	pumper truck	2004	pumper truck
2004	4 x 4 ambulance	2014	4 x 4 ambulance
1998	4 x 4 pickup	2008	tender
		2002	4 x 4 pickup

Our equipment consists of new and used purchases financed via District cash and grants received from either State or Federal grant programs. Similarly, personal protective equipment for fire fighters as well as medical supplies for EMS kits, and ambulance medical equipment and supplies are paid for from the District’s budget, and occasionally grants.

OUR FINANCES

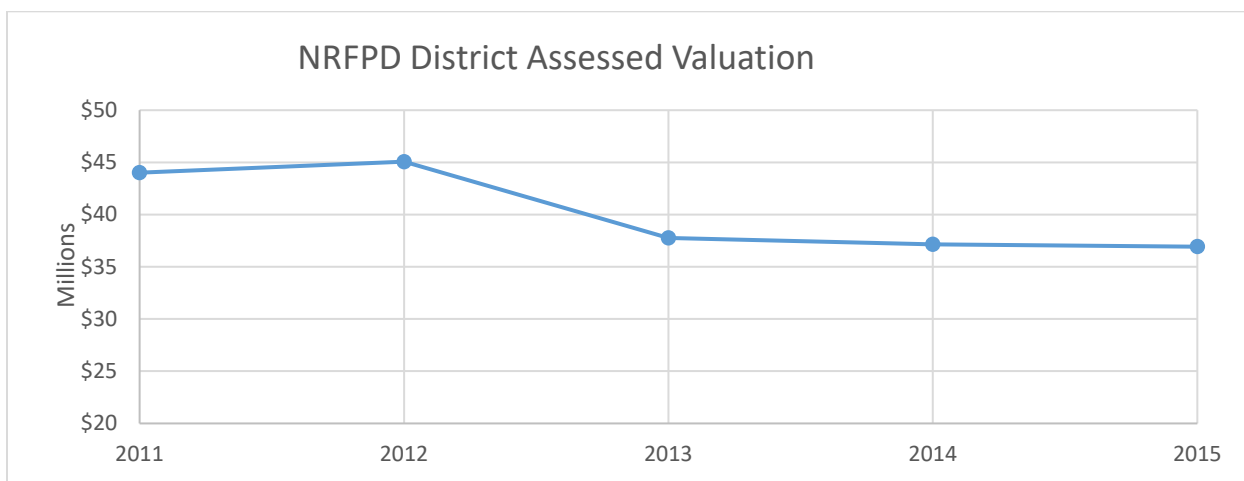
The majority of the District’s income comes from real estate taxes paid by ranchers, home owners, businesses and vacant land owners in the District. While some additional income is generated by fund raising, Federal and State grants, certain emergency services and direct donations, the income from real estate taxes represents the single largest source of operating revenue.

On your real estate tax bill, there are two tax levies associated with the NRFPD: for 2015 tax paid in 2016 the tax rates were \$5.25 and \$2.425. The tax rates are rates per \$1000 of assessed value. As an example, a home in the District assessed at \$25,000 (market value \$312,000) the respective tax paid by the homeowner to support the Fire District would be \$131.25 and \$60.63.

The smaller levy collected and paid to the District is used exclusively to repay a Bond issued in 2002, restructured in 2011, and maturing in 2026. This bond was approved by the voters of the district and was primarily for the purpose of constructing Station 2 and some replacement equipment.

The larger levy collected and for the District is used for general operations of the district i.e. personnel wages, insurance, fuel and equipment maintenance and administrative expenses. In the event the District receives grants for the purchase of equipment or supplies, required matching funds are paid out of the General fund as well.

The market value of properties in our taxing district is the single largest influence driving Assessed Value and as shown below, has not been trending well for our District. The other impact that is not obvious, but is significant, is the lack of commercial and retail development, industrial development, oil production and mining operations within the NRFPD. These “commercial and industrial uses” serve to significantly increase the total assessed valuation.



Due to the outstanding efforts of NRPD personnel, the District has been successful in obtaining grants which have funded replacements for an ambulance, tender and brush truck. We have and will continue to apply for any and all grants that are available to us, however we are competing with fire districts and departments across the State and the United States.

The issue we face and that is of real concern is our ability to provide sufficient staff for the District. As mentioned previously, finding volunteers willing to serve the district is becoming increasingly difficult. The problem is not unique or specific to North Routt; fire districts across the State of Colorado and the US are all struggling to find and keep volunteers.

The consensus among most is the concept of “volunteerism” is generally disappearing; we of the NRPD are experiencing the problem first hand.

As the District moves forward, our focus is to find solutions to our staffing problems and lack of volunteers.

- **Short term and of immediate concern, we are working on a solution to find and fund additional staff for our management.**
- **Long term we are looking for a solution to having fewer and fewer individuals interested in participating in and contributing to our volunteer fire department.**

Hopefully via this letter, you have a better understanding of how the North Routt Fire Protection District operates, and an appreciation for the problems we are facing. Your comments and suggestions are more than welcome, and feel free to contact any volunteer, Board member or the Chief with your thoughts or questions. The Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month, at 7:00pm at Station 2. Board meetings are open to the public and you are more than welcome to attend.

If you have an interest in becoming a North Routt Fire volunteer, please contact

Chief Mike Swinsick Office - 970-879-9094 Cell - 970-846-4311 mike.swinsick@northrouttfire.org

As we move forward we will do our best to keep you abreast of our efforts and accomplishments.

Sincerely,

NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT