



NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

P.O. Box 758 Clark, CO 80428
970.879.6064 • 970.879.6726 fax

Fall 2022

Greetings to you and your family! We trust you are well and staying safe. North Routt enjoyed a brilliant display of fall colors, perhaps even a little longer in duration than normal. Near the end of October, we received a significant snow fall reminding us that our traditional long winters are "just around the corner"! Hopefully your wood is split and stacked, the propane tank is full, the snow blowers and plows are ready to run, and the shovels are just outside the door!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

We have a couple of new and exciting events of which to inform you. A previous tradition, the North Routt "Chili Cookoff", is being resurrected at the Steamboat Lake Outpost on Sunday, November 13th, 2022, from 2:00pm – 5:00pm. The owners and management of the Outpost have graciously offered to host the cookoff which will include a contest to determine the finest green and red and "alternative" chilis in the County. Get out your best recipe and call Katie at 970-879-4404 to enter your chili! Please come out and enjoy a family fun afternoon and vote for your favorite! We will even have the District Ladder Truck on hand for the kids (and adults) to see! An announcement poster can be found on the North Routt Fire Protection District Facebook page.

In addition to the chili cookoff, we are pleased to announce a change in venue and dates for our annual Fundraising Dinner. Three Forks Ranch has most graciously offered to host and completely donate our traditional winter dinner on Friday, January 20th. They would like to limit this exquisite dining experience to 30 people, so if we have enough folks desiring to sign up, they will host a second event on Friday, January 27th! Tickets are \$175 per person. They will also provide shuttle service from the parking lot at The Cabins at Historic Columbine to the Ranch before and after dinner! Watch for a sign-up sheet at the Clark Store several weeks before the event!

WILDFIRES – OPEN BURNING

We truly "dodged the bullet" this past wildfire season as we enjoyed a wetter and greener spring/summer season. Our rain gauge at Station 2 indicated 5.8 inches of rain fell from April to mid-October, which for our area is considerable. There were a few grass fire service calls, but in comparison to previous years, this year was a welcome reprieve. The United States Forest Service continued to act on its Fuel Reduction Plan for the Hahns Peak Steamboat Lake areas. Work to date has included the shaded break behind Captains Cove and some cutting/cleanup around Pearl Lake, mainly on the south side from the campground eastward.

Relative to fire mitigation and fuel reduction plans, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) has grant funding available to municipalities, local fire departments, and homeowners associations for projects that help restore forest health, promote the use of biomass energy, and reduce wildfire risk. Willow Creek Pass Subdivision has expressed an interest in obtaining a grant and most recently the Columbine residents have met with our Chief to discuss the application process.

Fall is an excellent time to inventory, cut down and remove standing and fallen dead trees. These trees are fuel for wildfires and their removal enhances the perimeter protection of your home. If you are governed by an HOA, its Covenants likely state that dead and fallen trees must be removed.

The burning of slash piles requires a permit and may only occur between the months of November and April with a minimum of 6" of snow on the ground. The Fire District, in cooperation with Routt County Department of Environmental Health, and the State Air Pollution Control Division continues to follow the Routt County Open Burn Plan and can issue you a burn permit at **no cost!** Call the office (970-879-6064) to set up an inspection or obtain additional information.

As a resource and guide to minimizing the risk of wildfire exposure to your home, consider visiting the CSFS Forest Service website at <https://csfs.colostate.edu/csfspublications/>. On the website under the section "For Homeowners and Landowners" go to "Wildfire Mitigation & Education" and then to the subsection **Home Ignition Zone Guide**. This publication is extremely helpful as a guide and checklist that can be used in protecting your home and property from the dangers of wildfires. For additional consideration, relative to wildfire mitigation, the State of Colorado offers a tax credit for some expenses incurred in mitigating wildfire. The program ends in 2024. For further information go to: <https://tax.colorado.gov/sites/tax/files/Income65.pdf>.

WOOD BURNING FIREPLACE SAFETY

In preparation for the winter season, we encourage you to ensure that your heating system, fireplaces, wood burning stoves and chimneys, CO2 monitors, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and alarm systems are all functional and in good working order. One of the more common calls we receive is for a chimney fire; we suggest you keep a Chimfex (chimney fire extinguishing device) near your wood burning fireplace or stove. It resembles a flare in size and shape and is available at most local hardware suppliers.

One additional comment on home safety; please make sure that the street/road number of your home is clearly posted near the road, ideally on a post or tree and prominently displayed in large numbers, preferably in white numbers on green reflective background. Also ensure that the sign will not be buried by a snow berm. When called to respond to a fire or medical need, the maps we use are good . . . but not always perfect!

EMERGENCY CALLS FOR SERVICE

Below are the historical number and types of calls including the first 10 months of 2022.

DESCRIPTION	Yearly Call Volume by Incident Type						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Structure Fires	2	5	3	3	1	2	1
EMS	45	43	45	30	56	46	38
MVA	12	11	10	9	13	15	14
Illegal Burn					15	11	0
Wildland Fires	8	15	15	1	8	11	0
Service Call	32	29	29	44	36	30	12
Rescues	8	2	7	5	4	8	14
False Alarms	<u>46</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>
Totals	153	132	143	120	172	148	104
							through October*

EMS – Emergency Medical Service MVA – Motor Vehicle Accidents
Service Call – Inspections, citizen assistance, carbon monoxide alarms, etc.

VOLUNTEERS AND PERSONNEL

In the Spring 2022 newsletter we discussed our success in hiring three paid firefighter/EMTs. Also noted was the ongoing difficulty in finding volunteers. Ten years ago, our District volunteer staff numbered between 16 and 18. Unfortunately our volunteers now number only six, as one volunteer has moved out of the area and longtime volunteer Stu Koci has announced his retirement. Stu has volunteered since 2010 and during his tenure served as Safety Officer and Captain EMT. Stu contributed significantly to the District, the volunteers, and our community - we will truly miss his presence on the roster! We are searching for a replacement of one of our paid fire fighter/EMTs, who needed to leave due to ongoing personal schedule conflicts.

The District is desperately in need of additional volunteers! If you or someone you know, may have an interest in serving the community as a volunteer fire fighter or EMT, please call Chief Mike Swinsick at the office at 970-879-6064 or his cell at 970-846-4311. Also, the next time you see one of our volunteers, remember to thank them for their service and tell them how much you appreciate their dedication to our community!

BUDGET and FINANCIAL MATTERS

Earlier this fall, Board Directors Jim Standish, Paul Slivon, and Chief Swinsick commenced the process of developing the 2023 Budget. We have received the Preliminary Notice of Assessed Valuation from the Routt County Assessor which gives us the total assessed value of all properties within our district. This total, multiplied by the mill levy, provides the initial estimate of tax revenues we will receive in 2023. This amount is key to our budget and the District's principle source of income. It appears that new construction within the District, valued at approximately \$9 million, will provide the District an additional \$1860 in tax revenue. A Final Certification of assessed values from the Assessor will be issued in early December.

A priority of the 2023 budget will be to provide funding for two additional paid fire fighter/EMTs. As described earlier, our ability to find and retain volunteers is becoming more and more difficult and the total number of volunteers is as low as it has ever been. We will begin the search for additional staff shortly after the adoption of the 2023 budget. We hope to be successful in adding paid staff and bolstering our existing volunteer staff. Again, if you are interested in volunteering, we are in **DIRE** need of **YOU**!

EQUIPMENT STATUS

While several units are older, our fleet remains in good working order due to a few extremely talented volunteers and paid staff who possess mechanical skills and abilities. These folks give of their time and talent to ensure our equipment is always available for use. We thank them for their efforts and hard work!

Our Facebook page (North Routt Fire Protection District) contains important information and is updated frequently. Additionally, if you have not signed up for the Routt County weather/special warning system, please take some time to visit the site for details on how to sign up and what notifications are available:

<https://member.everbridge.net/index/892807736727602#/login>

Have a great fall and winter in North Routt and please stay safe!

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