



# NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Fall - Winter 2023

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 and we are now on the doorstep of winter. Hopefully, by the time you read this letter, 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!

## VOLUNTEERS AND PERSONNEL

You may recall from our Spring 2023 newsletter we indicated we would actively be recruiting full time, paid EMTs/Firefighters. This effort is in response to the challenges of finding and retaining volunteers. Declining participation in volunteerism has been a concern at the NRFPD and is widespread across our county, state and country. At the direction of the Board, and as a result of the efforts of Chief Mathisen, we now have six full time employees. All six are certified EMT-B's and four are also Colorado State Certified Firefighters; the remaining two employees are in the process of becoming Certified CO firefighters. These men are working on a three-shift basis; 2 men are on duty for a continuous 48 hours shift at Station 2, and then rotating off duty for 96 hours. The shift from a volunteer department to a paid employee department has been necessary to provide a minimum level of service to the residents of North Routt.

As we are transitioning to paid staff, and despite the difficulties in finding volunteers, we will also continue to work to expand the number of volunteers. Our current volunteer roster of 2 EMT-B/Firefighters and 4 First Responder/Firefighters is valued and extremely important to the department. If you or someone you know have an interest in volunteering, please contact Chief Mathisen at Station 2 (970-879-6064). The Chief will be more than happy to explain the role of a volunteer, the training program and benefits of becoming a NRFPD volunteer.

We would also like to express our thank you to CPW Steamboat Lake Park Rangers Jared Newell, Colten Hosey and Ryan Crabs who have all served and assisted on a number of calls for emergency services throughout the past year. Much like the volunteers, these CPW employees provided an invaluable service to the NRFPD and our residents and visitors alike. We thank them for their service and hope that they will be able to work with us again next season.

## EMERGENCY CALLS FOR SERVICE

Below are the historical number and types of calls including the first 11 months of 2023.

Yearly Call Volume by Incident Type								
DESCRIPTION	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Structure Fires	2	5	3	3	1	2	3	1
EMS	45	43	45	30	56	46	39	53
MVA	12	11	10	9	13	15	15	12
Illegal Burn					15	11	3	8
Wildland Fires	8	15	15	1	8	11	0	3
Service Call	32	29	29	44	36	30	14	20
Rescues	8	2	7	5	4	8	14	8
False Alarms	46	27	34	28	39	25	31	19
Totals	153	132	143	120	172	148	119	124

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

As shown in the table, through November of this year, the number of calls for service has exceeded the 2022 number by 17%. Not shown on the data table is the decrease in response times, a direct result of EMTs which are at Station 2 around the clock. A review of the elapsed time from when we receive a call for service to our arrival on scene decreased by almost 30%.

### **BUDGET and FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Consistent with the arrival of fall, the Board of Directors commences the budgeting process. We, and all special districts, received the preliminary “Certification of Tax Levies” for the 2023 assessment year from the Routt County Assessor. The Certification provides a total of all property values in the NRFPD taxing district from which we calculate the amount of tax dollars we can plan on receiving in 2024. As property owners in Routt County, “Notices of Valuation” were sent to us this past spring that indicated a substantial increase in the market value of our property and a substantial increase in the assessed valuation, which are related directly.

To further explain the impact of changes on your taxes, on your tax bill are two taxes paid to NRFPD. The larger tax, NORTH ROUTT FIRE DIST-G is the tax that supports general operations of the District. The tax is calculated by multiplying the assessed valuation by the mill levy. The smaller tax, NORTH ROUTT FIRE BOND, is the tax amount needed to pay the principal and interest payment on our outstanding bond and calculated similarly.

The table illustrates the impact of the changes in market values will have on revenues to the NRFPD:

Tax Year	Market Value - all Real Property in NRFPD tax district	Assessed Value - all Real Property in NRFPD tax district	Assessed Value - all Real Property in NRFPD tax district (\$000)	Tax to NRFPD for General Operations at current Mill Levy of \$9.25/\$1000	Tax to NRFPD for Bond Repayment (Current Mill Levy is \$1.634 See Note 1)
2022	\$ 529,508,164	\$ 48,514,760	\$ 48,515	\$ 448,762	\$ 79,260
2023	\$ 903,053,774	\$ 77,255,920	\$ 77,256	\$ 714,617	\$ 78,106

The bond repayment amount is scheduled as principal and interest payments decrease each year.

At the current operating mill levy of \$9.25, the NRFPD can expect to receive a considerable increase in revenues. The increase is quite timely as it allows us to afford the substantial increases in costs associated with transitioning to paid fire fighters and EMTs.

As of this writing, the final budget has yet to be approved and adopted by the Board, however the proposed 2024 Budget contains a number of important points:

1. The budget provides for the employment of our Chief and 6 full-time paid firefighters for the entire year, including all benefits and payroll related taxes.
2. The budget provides for the hiring of an additional paid firefighter, for the entire year, including all benefits and payroll related taxes.
3. The budget provides for the re-roofing and exterior staining and painting of Station 2.
4. The budget provides for all anticipated expenses and is balanced.

The proposed 2024 budget indicates revenues will exceed expenses and therefore, it appears we will be able to reduce the Operating Mill Levy for 2024 tax year. The final Mill Levy for 2024 taxes cannot be determined until the Amended (final) Certification of Value is received from the Routt County Assessor. Based upon the Preliminary Assessed Values however, we expect that the current \$9.25 will be reduced to about \$8.30. The Bond Mill levy is expected to drop from \$1.634 to \$1.011. The reductions in both Mill Levys will serve to lessen the impact of the increases in Market and Assessed Values of your property.

### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, the owners and management of the Steamboat Lake Outpost once again hosted and conducted the North Routt Fire Chili Cookoff, a fundraiser for the benefit of the NRFPD. Not only were the best green and red chilis available for sampling and critiquing, but the event raised \$1900 which in turn was matched by an anonymous donor! It was a great day for all, and we thank you for your attendance and support.

In January of last year, Three Forks Ranch most graciously hosted our annual Fundraising Dinner. The event was a great success and extremely popular. The owner of Three Forks has offered to again host our dinner for 2024 and for which we are truly grateful and appreciative. Once we have received confirmed dates of the event, we will post an announcement at the Clark Store of the event as well as the date that the sign-up sheet for reservations and deposits will be available.

We have also been informed that the Vista Verde Guest Ranch has offered to host the "Barbeque and Barn Dance" event in 2024. Those who attended this evening previously can attest it was a fun filled evening with an awesome barbeque dinner, great music, and a crowded dance floor! The exact date, which is expected to be in May, will be announced and posted at the Clark Store well in advance!

### **EQUIPMENT STATUS**

The Board has begun discussing the condition of our ambulances, particularly considering that approximately 70% of our calls involve them. One unit is a 2003 model, and the newer unit is a 2014 model year. Presently, delivery of new units is currently running 1 ½ - 2 years. We are also pleased to announce the department has been afforded the opportunity, courtesy of one of the NRFPD Directors, to add a drone to our equipment list. The drone has cameras, both conventional and infrared, a range of approximately 10 miles and will be an invaluable asset for wildfire detection, location, and management. We publicly acknowledge and thank the Director for his generosity!

### **WILDFIRES – OPEN BURNING – HOME and FIREPLACE SAFETY**

This fall the NRFPD applied to the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) for a Forest Restoration and Wildfire Mitigation Grant (FRWRM). The amount requested was in excess of \$500,000, and if awarded, would provide funding over a four year period to reduce the risk of wildfire to people, property and infrastructure and promote forest health and restoration. Awards are expected to be announced in early 2024.

Please recall, 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 NRFPD office at (970-879-6064) to set up an inspection or obtain additional information.

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!

**HAVE A GREAT FALL AND WINTER AND STAY SAFE!**

**NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**