

El Dorado County Fire Protection District Frequently Asked Questions About Local Funding

What area does the El Dorado County Fire Protection District (EDCFPD) serve?

The EDCFPD provides fire protection and emergency medical response services to Apple Hill, Camino, Coloma, Cool, Gold Hill, Kyburz, Lotus, Oak Hill, Pacific House, Pilot Hill, Placerville, Pleasant Valley, Pollock Pines, Salmon Falls, Shingle Springs, Sierra Springs, Silver Fork, Strawberry, Texas Hill and Twin Bridges. Our district has a population of approximately 74,000 residents in 281 square miles.

Local firefighters and paramedics proudly help maintain our safety and quality of life by responding to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How was our local fire protection district impacted by the economic downturn?

The El Dorado County Fire Protection District relies primarily on property tax revenue for funding, and the recession and its associated decrease in property values led to a significant loss in funding for fire protection and emergency medical response services.

What steps has the EDCFPD taken to respond to decreased funding?

Due to decreased funding and an increase in the cost of providing services, it took our fire protection district nearly six years to recover from the effects of the economic recession. This impacted local emergency response services by reducing EDCFPD's operating budget by \$1.5 million annually, which led to the elimination of public safety staff, salary reductions and restructuring of pension benefits.

These salary and benefit reductions have led to almost a third of local firefighters leaving for jobs in other districts in the last 10 years. Over the past few months, our fire protection district has explored options to maintain services and retain firefighters as the cost of 9-1-1 emergency response continues to rise.

What does the future of the fire protection district's budget look like?

Unfortunately, additional funding from the State for our fire protection district's annual budget is unlikely. Because of increased fire danger and the higher cost of providing emergency services, further elimination of local firefighter and paramedic positions may be necessary if an additional source of funding is not identified.

How would anticipated budget cuts impact emergency response in our area?

Additional anticipated budget cuts could require the elimination of an entire fire engine company and result in 9-1-1 emergency response time increases of up to 15 minutes in some areas. This could mean closing a fire station, having fewer firefighters and paramedics on-duty to respond to emergencies and reducing our firefighters' ability to prevent and fight wildfires.

Could public safety service reductions be avoided?

In an effort to prevent further eliminations of firefighter and paramedic positions in our community, the El Dorado County Fire Protection District has already eliminated administrative

positions, reduced salaries and restructured benefit packages, including pensions. These \$1.5 million in annual cuts have already impacted our fire protection district's ability to recruit and retain safety personnel.

In order to prevent future service reductions and restore public safety positions, the EDCFPD Board of Directors voted to place an emergency response parcel tax measure on the August 27, 2019 all-mail ballot at a rate of \$96 per parcel.

What would a source of local funding provide for our fire protection district?

An emergency response revenue measure could maintain firefighting and emergency medical response levels, including by:

- Equipping firefighters to better respond to wildfires
- Keeping firefighting and lifesaving equipment and facilities up-to-date
- Maintaining rapid response times for fire protection and 9-1-1 emergency services by preventing further cuts to first responders
- Restoring needed firefighter and emergency responder positions
- Maintaining emergency rescue and fire prevention services

How do we know that local funding would be spent wisely?

The EDCFPD is committed to fiscal accountability as it works to maintain local emergency response services.

- All funds from an emergency response revenue measure would be controlled locally, could only go to local emergency services and could not be taken away by the State
- No funding could ever be used for administrators' salaries
- Annual audits and reports to the community would be required to ensure all funds are spent as promised

What would happen if this emergency response revenue measure does not pass?

Because the cost of providing emergency services is rising faster than the amount of funding that our local fire protection district receives from property tax revenue, additional budget cuts will be required if a new source of funding is not obtained. The funding generated by the emergency response revenue measure would help the EDCFPD continue to be prepared to save lives during emergencies as fire seasons get longer and hotter.

Does the EDCFPD have access to other significant sources of funding?

No. Our local fire protection district does not have access to the County's General Fund or the funding resources of any city within the district. While the EDCFPD receives limited revenue from area-specific special taxes that were passed prior to our district's consolidation, these existing funding sources are not adequate to prevent future cuts to fire protection and emergency medical services.

Does our local fire protection district receive funding from the California Fire Protection Fee?

No, the El Dorado County Fire Protection District has never received funding from the California Fire Protection Fee (also known as the CAL FIRE fee or the SRA Fee) and this fee is not currently in

effect. In 2017, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill 398, which suspended the California Fire Protection Fee until 2031. This fee suspension took effect on July 1, 2017.

How has the EDCFPD worked to plan for the increased risk of wildfires in our community?

Unfortunately, we have all been recently reminded of the devastating threat posed by wildfires in California. As we saw in Paradise, Redding, Santa Rosa and elsewhere, we need to be taking proactive steps to reduce the risk of wildfires and ensure we are prepared in the event that our community is threatened.

The increased risk of wildfires has not led to increased funding for our fire protection district to fight these fires. The emergency response revenue measure could help equip our firefighters to better prevent and deal with wildfires.

How have local firefighter and staff salaries and pensions contributed to the budgeting process?

To help address increasing costs within our fire protection district, local firefighters have willingly had their salaries and benefits reduced over the last six years, including paying a larger portion of their own pension costs. Additionally, multiple administrative staff positions were eliminated and paid vacation days, sick days and holidays were forfeited to cut costs. These concessions contributed to \$1.5 million in annual savings, but were not significant enough to prevent all future cuts.

That is why the EDCFPD Board of Directors voted to place the emergency response revenue measure on the upcoming August all-mail ballot. If passed, this could help prevent future cuts to fire protection and emergency response services in our community.

What is the state of local fire stations and fire equipment?

Some of the District's fire stations are more than 60 years old, don't meet current earthquake codes or fit current firefighting trucks. Updates are needed to ensure local fire stations can continue be open and staffed to respond to emergencies.

Additionally, while the EDCFPD recently purchased new ladder trucks, many of the District's other emergency vehicles and equipment are getting older and more costly to operate, repair, and maintain. The emergency response revenue measure could help replace public safety vehicles and equipment before they are no longer usable.

When can I vote on the emergency response revenue measure?

The emergency response revenue measure will be on the August 27, 2019 ballot. This election will be conducted entirely by mail. For questions about voting in this election, please contact the El Dorado County Elections Office at (530) 621-7505.

How can I register to vote in this election?

To register to vote in this election, please visit www.registertovote.ca.gov or call (800) 345-8683. For questions about voting by mail, please call (530) 621-7505.

Where can I find more information about local funding and my fire protection district?

For more information about the El Dorado County Fire Protection District, please visit www.eldoradocountyfire.com. For information about local funding, please contact Division Chief Paul Dutch at (530) 919-7705.