

Message from the Fire Chief:

The recession, which started in 2009, severely hurt fire districts across Arizona which resulted in a substantial loss of funding. Some districts lost as much as 46 percent. This caused layoffs of firefighter paramedics and in some cases the closing of fire stations, creating a public crisis. The Pine-Strawberry Fire District was not immune to this situation and we lost 30 percent of our funding or *1 million dollars!* We also lost firefighter paramedics positions.

Another contributing factor to the fire district funding crisis is the tax levy rate is set by the State legislature and has not been adjusted since 2005. In a sense, Arizona fire districts have not received a pay raise in more than a decade. This past spring the legislature recognized the severity of the funding and public safety crisis and passed a Bill which will allow the Fire District voters to approve a modest, temporary, levy rate increase.

PINE STRAWBERRY FIRE DISTRICT BALLOT MEASURE INFORMATION

This brochure will explain the Fire Districts funding crisis and the proposed November ballot measure which will help restore emergency services. There will be two informational public meetings at the Cultural Center on October X and X at 6 pm that may also be helpful to your understanding of the ballot measure. If you have any questions please feel to call me at 928-476-4272. Chief Gary Morris

About the Pine Strawberry Fire District

The Fire District provides fire protection and full paramedic services from a fire station in each community which reduces response times. In addition to fire trucks each station houses an ambulance to allow quick transport of patients.

The Fire District responds to 700 emergencies a year, about twice a day. So we're busy. About 73 percent are medically related, many life threatening, which illustrates the need for paramedics at each station to save lives.

The Fire District Lost Firefighter Paramedics

The one million dollars loss in funding caused the elimination of three firefighter paramedic positions and two part-time positions. On duty staffing was reduced from 6 to 5. Only 2 firefighters are on duty at the Strawberry

station. This has compromised the Fire Districts ability to fight fires and save lives.

Surviving the Crisis

To survive the crisis, the Fire District also froze pay raises (none since 2008), greatly reduced overtime, suspended replacement of fire trucks and other equipment, plus other budget cuts, and the fire chief is working a 32 hour work week to save money.

Insurance Premiums to Increase

The homeowners insurance industry uses a firm called the Insurance Services Office to monitor the firefighting capabilities of every fire department in the country. In addition to collecting data they conduct an onsite visit and evaluation. From that they establish a rating which every insurance company uses to determine a premium fee. Without restoration of our lost firefighter paramedic positions homeowner insurance premiums will eventually increase.

Local Postal Customer

Inflationary Costs Rise

The other problem hurting the Fire District is inflationary costs to operate the Department are increasing at a rate greater than any gains in revenue. This situation is slowly strangling the Fire District and causing continued cuts each year in the Districts budget.

Less Taxes for Property Owners

The recession also reduced property taxes. A property owner in Strawberry paid \$722.56 in Fire District taxes in 2009 but the taxes this October is \$517.50—a reduction of \$205.06.

What the Ballot Measure Is

The ballot measure on the November 8th ballot asks Fire District voters to approve a 25 cents increase in the levy rate from \$3.25 to \$3.50 per \$100 of Limited Property Value assessment. If approved the measure is only temporary and will return to the \$3.25 rate at the end of five years.

7 Cents a Day to Improve Service

If the ballot is approved most Fire District property owners will pay about 7 cents per day, or about \$24 per year, to help restore lost emergency services.

Where The Money Will Go

- Stabilize staffing levels.
- Replace a 17 year old fire truck.
- Replace a 16 year old ambulance.
- Replace the living quarters at the Strawberry fire station.
- Complete modest repairs at the Pine fire station and the fire chiefs administration building.
- Consider a cost of living increase for firefighter paramedics

If The Ballot Fails To Pass

If the ballot measure fails to pass, the Fire District faces additional budget cuts over the next few years.

Without additional funding, the Strawberry station will eventually be closed. The savings will be used to counter the rising inflationary

costs.

Once closed, fire crews will be dispatched from the Pine fire station which will mean extended response times for Strawberry.

Inflationary costs are expected to continue to increase and will likely overtake the savings from the fire station closing. When that happens, the next step will be to eliminate additional firefighter paramedic positions.

Vote November 8th

The ballot measure will be on the early voting ballot you may have received in the mail. Those desiring to vote in person can go to the First Baptist Church in Pine located at 4039 North Highway 87 on November 8th to cast your vote.