



168 N. Mesa St.
Fruita, Co. 81521
970-858-3133

FACTUAL SUMMARY

OF

REFERRED BALLOT ISSUE SEEKING A MILL LEVY INCREASE

As part of the May 8, 2018 regular District Election, the Lower Valley Fire Protection District Board of Directors has referred to electors of the District, a ballot issue, seeking a 3 mill levy increase from the current levy of 5.313 mills to 8.313 mills, beginning in 2018. By law, the Election will be conducted by mail ballot, with a ballot mailed to each “eligible elector” of the District.

“Eligible electors” include all active, registered Colorado voters who either reside within the District and who or who’s spouse, own taxable, real or personal property within the District, in the name of the individual voter or spouse. (Property held in the name of a corporation, partnership or trust may not result in voter eligibility.)

Rationale for Proposed Mill Levy Increase:

Since the District’s formation, the Lower Valley Fire Protection District has been very reluctant to pursue mill levy increases and has prided itself on sound yet conservative spending. As an organization we have never been nor sought out to be an organization based on having the newest, shiniest apparatus or equipment with all the bells and whistles. Rather we have always maintained a focus of quality service to the community in the most fiscally responsible manner. Therefore the decision to pursue a mill levy increase was not entered into lightly.

The District was organized as a purely volunteer organization, using such equipment as available or as donated from local citizens or other fire departments. Over the years, the District has grown to include paid staff to provide; fire prevention and education, fire suppression, emergency medical response and medical transport to the local community on such basis as its limited resources allowed. By State law, fire districts can only secure revenue from property taxes and charges for medical response and transport.

As a governmental entity, the District must operate on a balanced budget to be determined annually. This annual budget process, by its very nature, favors a short-term focus on expenses, rather than a longer term view of future needs. Despite this, the District Board of Directors and the Fire Chief believe the long-term sustainability of solid volunteer/paid-per-call program, combined with paid personnel to provide full-time emergency response and transportation services to the residents of the District, demands not only long-range planning, but an annual budget process which involves future/capital needs.

Fire and emergency medical response equipment, including communications equipment, firefighter safety gear, and emergency apparatus is expensive to purchase and to maintain. Due to past budgetary



constraints, the District's equipment are aging and in need of replacement. Our Loma Fire Station is in need of upgrading and expansion to meet the growth on the west end of our district yet, due to limited sources of revenue, the Board recognizes that the stress upon future budgets will be significant, such that continued capital planning for future needs, is required to focus on sustaining a reasonable level of service to the community.

The average amount of tax revenue has remained relatively flat and, at times, decreased, so as to force the District to act in a fiscally-conservative manner, while maintaining a full service response agency providing emergency medical services and transport, structural and wild land firefighting capabilities, technical rescue operations, public safety education and fire code enforcement. Had it not been for the securing of grants, we would not have the facilities that we are housed in today.

Finally, the cost to train personnel to the appropriate levels for both fire and emergency medical response is a significant expense. This training is vital to the success of the organization and to ensure every member goes home safely to their family after each shift. A new firefighter will easily spend 280+ hours in their first two years obtaining their necessary basic certifications regardless if they are career or volunteer/paid-per-call. After that, all members must attend recertification and continuing education trainings in addition to various advancement courses. The average cost to train one person to the Firefighter I level with their EMT is \$3,000 to \$4,000 depending on course location. The average initial cost to provide the necessary protective equipment and uniforms for a single firefighter is \$3,500.

Significant Factors Requiring a Mill Levy Increase:

1. Years of flat or declining property tax revenues, coupled with regularly increasing operational expenses, have left the District with insufficient funds to readily replace worn-out equipment or maintain or improve aging apparatus to necessary levels for safety of the community and District staff, paid and volunteer.
2. Changes in Colorado's automobile insurance laws, combined with State and Federal restrictions on Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements for services, permanently reduced the District's revenue from emergency medical and transport services, in half.
3. Increasing medical premiums for both, automobile and health insurance, as well as the state of the economy, have left more people unable to afford insurance to cover emergency medical/transport services.
4. State and Federal grant monies are increasingly difficult to secure, since more fire departments are applying and lesser amounts of grant monies are available.
5. Impacts from the Gallagher Amendment have resulted in a decrease in the amount of tax revenues that can be collected under the current Mill Levy.
6. Steadily increasing call volumes are placing a significant toll on the number of personnel on duty each day. It is not uncommon for our crews to respond to 5-12 calls per day. We are frequently seeing back-to-back-to-back calls for service.



Fire District Information

Fire District Summary:

The original Fruita Fire Department was formed in 1921. The Lower Valley Fire Protection District was first formed in 1973 as the Lower Valley Rural Fire Protection District. In 1980, the Town of Fruita and the Lower Valley Rural Fire District merged to form one district with one board of directors known as the Lower Valley Fire Protection District (LVFD) according to Colorado Special District Title 32 laws and the then existing laws of the State of Colorado. The LVFD covers 405 square mile area within Mesa County and in addition to our designated response area (Grand Junction city limits west to the state line, north to the Garfield County line and south to the B/S Road turnoff on the National Monument) we have an intergovernmental agreement with Garfield County to provide coverage on Highway 139 to mile marker 36 which is the Rio Blanco Bounty line along with an inter-state agreement with the State of Utah to cover Interstate 70 to mile marker 214 which is the Cisco exit.

In addition to the rural residential properties, agricultural property/businesses, we service significant rural/residential subdivisions with lots between 2.5 acres and 35 acres. The District also contains typical suburban residential subdivisions with a moderate amount of commercial and/or industrial properties centered in and about the downtown center of Fruita.

The boundaries as described are general in nature and not precise legal description of the District's boundaries and have some alcoves of properties that have been annexed into the City of Grand Junction. The District has provided and intends to continue to provide service outside its service area under our Ambulance Service Area agreement and mutual aid contracts with other districts, cities or other governmental bodies within Mesa County.

The District has a current population of approximately 25,000. Fruita has become a national destination for mountain biking, hiking and a gateway to hunting, fishing and almost every kind of outdoor recreation. On top of our permanent resident population, the Interstate 70 brings a large number of commuters through the area as we are the first stop into Colorado when traveling from the west. In addition, I70 itself serves as a throughway for industrial and hazardous materials transport, daily commuters and recreational commuters. There is also a railway that travels through the heart of the fire district which serves to transport everything from hazardous materials/chemical cargo to passengers on AmTrak on a daily basis.

The District currently operates as a Combination Department and is established as a "Special District" pursuant to the Special Districts Act of the Colorado Revised Statutes §§ 32-1-1001, *et al.* It is governed by an elected five member Board of Directors. The District provides emergency medical, fire suppression, fire prevention, code enforcement, public safety education, hazardous materials response and technical rescue services.



ISO Rating:

The LVFD currently maintains a community fire insurance rating from the Insurance Services Office (ISO) of “4”-“10” (1 being the highest and 10 rated with no fire protection) within the boundaries of our district. Areas within the District which are within 5 travel miles of the Fire Station, maintain an ISO rating of “4” and all other areas beyond that are rated as a “10.”

Fire Stations:

The District is covered by two fire stations: Station #31 is located at 168 N. Mesa St. in downtown Fruita. Station #32 is located at 1341 13 Rd Loma. The current fire station was originally built in 1980 and served to house a couple of emergency apparatus operated by a dedicated group of volunteers. Throughout the years the organization has been able to adapt to an increasing demand on services. With the acquisition of funds from the Colorado Energy Impact Grant and the Mesa County Federal Mineral Lease District, we added on to, and remodeled the Fruita station in phases over the last years. This remodel/addition was to add the addition of a training room, board/conference room the addition of required dorm rooms that serve as sleeping quarters on a rotational basis, and a large dayroom and kitchen for an increased number of personnel.

Staffing:

The District currently employs a career Fire Chief, Captain, Lieutenants, and 8 career firefighters with a full-time Administrative Manager and Billing Specialist. Additional staffing is supplied by approximately 20 volunteer/paid-per-call members who live both within and outside of the District. All volunteer/paid-per-call work shifts at the fire stations. Those living within the District may also respond to calls, from their homes, when available.

Volunteers/paid-per-call members often provide a substantial time commitment which goes well beyond department requirements. For example, volunteer firefighters donate an estimated 280 hours in their first year alone just for initial training.

Call & Response Profile:

The LVFD is an all-hazard response organization which means we provided emergency services to include; emergency and non-emergency medical response and transport, structure fires, wildland and urban interface fires, vehicle fires and accidents with and without extrication, river and technical rescue and hazardous materials incidents. In addition we provide non-emergency services as well such as; public education and fire prevention activities, building plans review and inspections.

In 2004 the LVFD responded to a total of 1265 requests for service. Since that time the organization has seen a significant and steady increase in the requests for service. As this increase has remained steady we as an organization have been able to keep up with the demand primarily due to the support of the community and through strict fiscal responsibility.

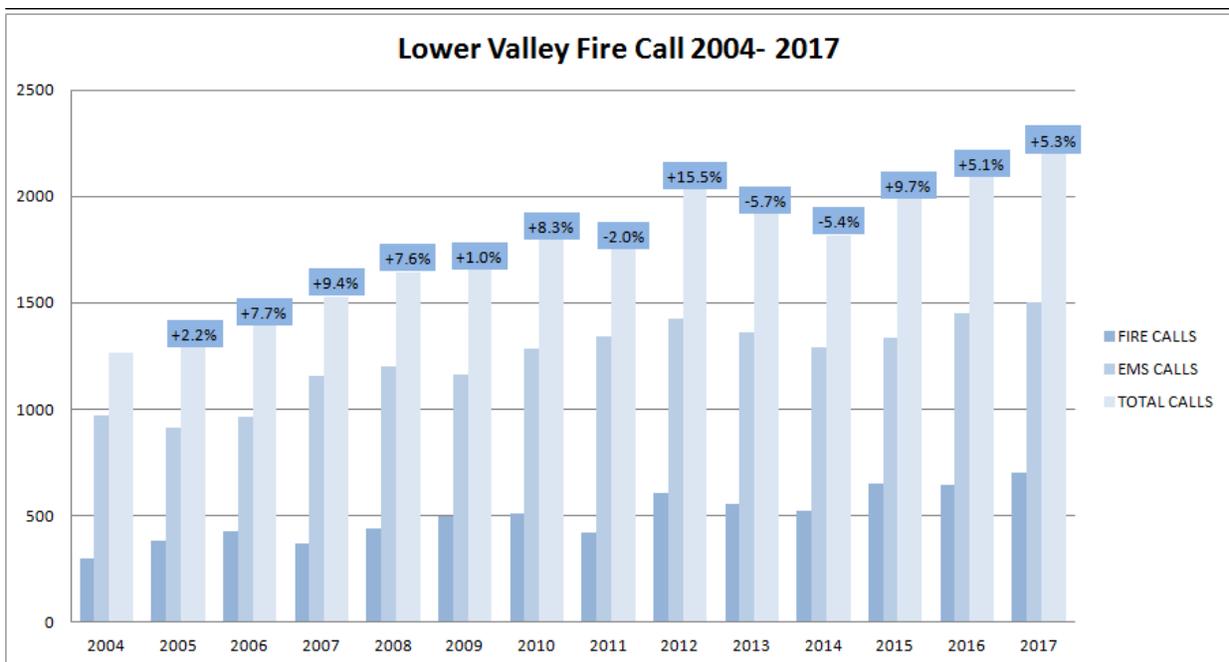


In 2017 the LVFD responded to 2203 calls for service, a 74.15% increase from 2004 when the last mill levy increase was approved. In the years spanning 2004 to 2017 we responded to 24381 calls for service and is broken down in the following:

LVFD Call Comparison 2004-2017															
YEAR	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	14 YEAR TOTALS
FIRE RELATED CALLS	296	379	429	369	439	497	510	422	608	554	524	651	644	704	7026
EMS CALLS	969	914	964	1156	1202	1161	1287	1339	1426	1363	1289	1338	1448	1499	17355
TOTAL CALLS	1265	1293	1393	1525	1641	1658	1797	1761	2034	1917	1813	1989	2092	2203	24381
ANNUAL +/-		2.21%	7.73%	9.48%	7.61%	1.04%	8.38%	-2.00%	15.50%	-5.75%	-5.43%	9.71%	5.18%	5.31%	74.15%

The majority of responses are for emergency medical services (EMS) which account for 71.43% of all calls (in line with national statistics for the fire service). LVFD personnel respond to a daily average of 4 EMS calls per day. Advanced Life Support (ALS) response (accomplished by paramedics) account for approximately 59% of all EMS calls. The District responds to an average of 2 fire calls per day.

The following graph shows the steady rate of increase in calls from 2004 to 2017 for Fire and EMS related emergencies.





Apparatus and equipment:

The Lower Valley Fire Protection District provides service through the use of a fleet of emergency apparatus. The average age of our apparatus is 14 years. According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards front line apparatus should be moved to reserve status between 10 to 15 years and not maintained in a fleet more than 20 to 25 years due to safety concerns, maintenance issues, obsolete parts and cost of ownership. Our current fleet consists of the following apparatus:

Unit Identifier	Make	Model	Type	Year	Age
Chief 31	Chevrolet	Trailblazer	Command	2005	13
Squad 31	Chevrolet	Trailblazer	Fire Prevention	2008	10
Brush 31	Ford	F-450	Type 6 Brush	2000	18
Brush 32	Ford	F-450	Type 6 Brush	1999	19
Engine 31	Pierce	Dash	Type 1	2005	13
Engine 32	Pierce	Dash	Type 1	2006	12
Tender 31	Sterling	Custom	Water Tender	2007	11
Tender 32	International	E-One	Water Tender	2000	18
Truck 31	Simon	Duplex	Ladder	1984	34
Ambulance 31	GMC	G350	ALS/BLS	2014	4
Ambulance 32	Dodge	4500	ALS/BLS	2009	9
Ambulance 33	GMC	G350	ALS/BLS	2015	3
Boat 31	Grumman	OMC	River Rescue	1997	21
Utility 31	Dodge	2500	Utility	2013	5

Threats to the District Future:

Part of the operational revenues that the LVFD relies on come from our Ambulance Billing for patients we transport to area hospitals. While the actual service is provided and funded partially comes from those ambulance bills, the operation and maintenance of the ambulance service is funded by tax revenues. The unfortunate thing is each year the collection rate for ambulance transports steadily decrease as Medicare and Medicaid continue to cut their reimbursement amounts.

The assessed valuation for the LVFD has remained relatively flat with slight increases and decreases over the past several years. The assessed valuation is determined by the County Assessor and is based on the current and expected growth of an area. Without increases to the assessed valuation the District continues to face financial hurdles as we are expected to continue doing more with declining revenues and raising costs.



District Administration:

As previously stated the Lower Valley Fire Protection District is governed by a five member Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has hired a Fulltime Fire Chief to serve as the District's Chief Executive Officer and to ensure the daily operations of the organization. The Board of Directors includes;

Terry Nash, Board President
Derek Elder, Board Vice President
Larry Overbye, Board Secretary
Mike Ryan, Board Director
Cullen Purser, Board Director



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is this mill levy increase necessary?

To continue to provide a highly trained and qualified public safety service for both fire suppression and EMS services, as well as comply with all required state and national safety regulations.

2. What would the revenues from the proposed mill levy increase be used for?

The tax revenues from the mill levy increase would be used for:

- Implementation of an established Apparatus Replacement Program of aging emergency response vehicles.
 - The District currently has two **Type 1** Engines for primary fire/rescue response capacity (Engine 31 and Engine 32). A **Type 1** Engine is one that is specifically designed to carry the necessary tools, equipment, personnel and water to safely and effectively respond to and deal with structural fires. Engine 32 also doubles as our rescue pumper to handle auto extrication, hazardous material responses etc. While less frequent, there are numerous scenarios within the District which may require the deployment of multiple engines in order to meet demands of a larger fire. Such scenarios include: fires in commercial structures and large residential buildings, water shuttle operations, flammable gas impingement, and wild land structural protection. Additionally, it is important the district have the capability to quickly place a second engine in service for multiple calls such as; additional calls in our response area, mutual aid purposes or in the event of a mechanical breakdown of the primary engine.
 - The District currently maintains a fleet of three ALS/BLS (Advanced Life Support/Basic Life Support) capable ambulances. Due to the increasing call volume we frequently respond to multiple medical calls at the same time. This causes significant wear and tear on ambulances. These units are utilized to provide quick treatment and transport to the hospital for those individuals that are suffering from either a medical or traumatic complaint.
 - The District currently utilizes a 1999 & 2000 brush trucks with one being a modified flatbed pick-up converted into a brush response unit. Due to the unique nature of the mixture of agricultural and open wildlands, these vehicles need to be capable of operating and transporting personnel into areas with limited access and little to no water.
- Upgrade and modification to Fire Station #32 (Loma), which was originally built in 1983. Due to the age of the building it is necessary to bring this building up to modern code and safety standards to properly house employees. An additional truck bay needs to be added to accommodate the larger fire apparatus that is needed to protect the west end of our district. We also need to install an emergency generator to protect the station from power outages as



required for all protective infrastructures. Due to the increase in responses in this area, we are anticipating staffing this station in the future.

- Replace out dated safety equipment to include self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing to include structural turnout gear, and fire hose and nozzles.
- To improve the recruitment and retention of qualified emergency responders. We are continually losing our personnel to larger organizations that provide higher pay and better benefits to employees and their families. Upon approval we would increase the pay for our firefighters in attempts to keep them from leaving our organization for other agencies.
- Increase in the daily staffing level. If approved we will hire an additional 4 firefighters.
- Further development of a community based fire and EMS prevention education programs.

3. Will the mill levy increase be limited in duration?

No, in view of the fact that the District will only continue to see increasing costs necessary to provide fire and EMS services expected by a growing and aging local community.

4. What happens if an increased mill levy is not approved?

- If the increase in funding is not approved, the District Board will be forced to make difficult decisions regarding services. We will attempt to do so in a manner which minimizes the impact on its residents. This may include but not limited to spending more on outdated, obsolete apparatus and equipment and delay additional staffing levels to meet the increased demands of the district.
- Without a mill levy increase, the Fire Department could be faced with the inability to maintain the current level of service and faces the real prospect of no future increase in the level of service.
- Without a mill levy increase, the District will not be able to improve living conditions for our Loma station to be sufficient and to ensure appropriate comfort and safety of firefighters. This may lead to increasing response times and negatively impacting service in a high growth area.

5. When was the last mill levy increase for fire protection services?

The last mill levy increase the District successfully sought and received was in 2004. The purpose was to purchase 2 pumpers. In 2011, this increase was absorbed into the operations of the organization and used for maintenance costs for apparatus, staffing costs and day to day operations of the district.

6. How does the current mill levy rate compare with surrounding Mesa County Fire Districts?

Provided below are the current mill levy rates on file for agencies within Mesa County:



Agency	Mill Levy	Square Miles	Residents	Calls 2017	Stations
Central Orchard Mesa	4.035			139	1
Clifton Fire District	11.502	33	33,000	3,771	1
City of Grand Junction	8.000	726	83,000	15,686	5
Grand Junction Rural	5.938				
Grand Junction Redlands	4.904				
De Beque Fire District	4.000	767	1500	232	1
Gateway/UnawEEP	10.000	815	410	88	1
Lands' End Fire District	5.000	193	2,200	186	1
Lower Valley Fire District	5.311	408	25,000	2,203	2
Palisade Rural Fire District	6.242	60	3800	965	1
Plateau Valley Fire	5.169	800	4000	232	2

7. How are my taxes determined and compare to a mill levy?

Colorado State Statute provides that the actual value of property is not the taxable value. Rather, the taxable value is a percentage of the actual value. The percentage is called an “assessment rate,” and the resulting value is called the “assessed value.” The assessment rate is 29 percent for all non-residential properties. The residential property assessment rate is established by the legislature every odd numbered year. After remaining at 7.96 percent since 2003 it is now 7.20 percent. The intent of having the ability to change the residential assessment rate is to maintain the tax burden balance between residential properties and all other property types.

Your property taxes are calculated by multiplying the mill levy or tax rate by the assessed or taxable value of your property. Please keep in mind that tax rates are not finalized until December of each year and are subject to change.

Calculation of Property Taxes:

Actual Value x Assessment Ratio (Percentage) = Assessed Value

\$150,000 Actual Value x 7.20% (.072) = \$10,800

Assessed Value x Mill Levy Percentage (mill levy divided by 1000) = Taxes

\$10,800 x 8.313 (8.313/1000 = 0.008313) = \$89.78

8. What will the additional 3 mills due to my annual residential property tax bill?

- \$150,000 Residence would increase \$2.70 per month (150,000 x .072 x 0.003 mills)
- \$200,000 Residence would increase \$3.60 per month (200,000 x .072 x 0.003 mills)
- \$300,000 Residence would increase \$5.40 per month (300,000 x .072 x 0.003 mills)
- \$400,000 Residence would increase \$7.20 per month (400,000 x .072 x 0.003 mills)
- (Non-residential property increase: \$1,500,000 x .29 x 0.003 mills = \$108.75 per month)



The average cup of coffee is \$2.38 with the average person drinking 3.2 cups per day. This equals \$7.62 per day spent on coffee or \$228.48 per month by the average American. (<http://www.e-importz.com/coffee-statistics.php>)

9. How can I vote in the upcoming May 8, 2018 election?

If you are registered to vote in the State of Colorado and you are a resident, property owner, or a spouse or civil union partner of a property owner, and the property is owned in the name of an individual (corporation, partnership or trust) within the Lower Valley Fire District, **or**, if you are registered to vote in the State of Colorado and own property within Lower Valley Fire District, you will receive a ballot in the mail in April. Simply fill out the ballot in accordance with the enclosed instructions and mail it or drop it off at the designated location no later than May 8, 2018 at 7:00 pm for your vote to be counted.

10. Do I have to vote by mail? Can I vote in person at a polling booth?

By statute, this election is a mail ballot election only and as such, there will be no polling place to vote at on May 8, 2018. You must vote the ballot that is mailed to you.

11. How can I register to vote in the May 8, 2018 election?

Colorado law allows you to register to vote through Election Day, but please note that how you register to vote is important.

If you register to vote by mail or online through www.govotecolorado.com at least eight (8) days before the election, you may contact the Designated Election Official to receive a ballot

If you register to vote less than eight (8) days before the May 8, 2018 election, you must contact the District's Designated Election Official.

If you register to vote through a voter registration drive, your application must be submitted no later than 22 days before the May 8, 2018 election.

You may register to vote by appearing in person at the Mesa County Clerk & Recorder's Office.

12. Where do I mail my ballot, and when does it need to be received by in order to count?

Your ballot needs to be returned to Lower Valley Fire District by 7 p.m. on Election Day, May 8, 2018. Postmarks do not count. ***Your ballot must be received by 7 p.m. on Election Day, May 8, 2018.***

13. What are the locations and deadlines for dropping off my ballot in person?

The Lower Valley Fire Station, at 168 N. Mesa St, Fruita CO. 81521, is the location to drop off your ballot no later than 7:00 pm on Election Day, May 8, 2018.