

County Fire Department

County Fire Department (CoFD) provides response coverage to an area of approximately 120 square miles of the county surrounding Grants Pass, primarily to the northwest of the city but, also to areas east and south of the city as well. CoFD responds from a single station located in Merlin. The department staffs two Type 1 Engines with two full-time or part-time personnel and has a minimum daily staffing of four personnel. The department has a total of 12 full-time personnel and eight paid-on-call/volunteer personnel. They do not currently have a recall system to bring in additional personnel for working fires. CoFD has a customer base of 1,891 properties which is a number that fluctuates based on subscriber contracts. CoFD maintains the following apparatus:

- Type1 Engines (Structural) – 2
- Type-2 Aerial/Quint (Structural) – 1
- Type-1 Water Tenders (Dual Role) – 4

The department responds to an average of 150 incidents per year. CoFD is currently not a participant in the Rogue Valley Automatic/Mutual Aid Response System and is not dispatched by the 911 communications center operated by GPDPS, instead, firefighters receive text pages as a courtesy from the 911 dispatch center. The department does not have an FCC licensed radio frequency designated for use by public safety agencies nor does it have access to shared radio frequencies with the 21 fire departments participating in the Mutual Aid Agreement. The department currently lacks senior staff members who meet NFPA 1021: Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications as chief officers nor does CoFD have a full-time fire chief.

Several of the line employees are not yet certified as firefighter I or II as required by NFPA 1001: *Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications* or the requirements by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), driver operator per NFPA 1002: *Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications* or company officer per NFPA 1021 and NWCG requirements. The department also lacks personnel certified as Incident Commander and Incident Safety Officer as required by OSHA.

CoFD does not currently provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) but is intending to implement EMS first response in the future. They currently have staff members receiving EMT training. They do not provide other emergency response services and are not considered an all hazards fire department.

Use of the name "County Fire Department" may create a false sense of department representation, in that residents new to the area may believe the department is a function of the government in Josephine County.

Private Fire Response Area

An important fact for anyone reading this report to consider is that coverage areas for each of the private service providers, 250 – 300 sq. mi. for RMFD and 120 sq. mi. for CoFD are not geographically defined as each of the four fire districts and City of Grants Pass are. Coverage areas for the private service providers can include any property in Josephine County not under the jurisdiction of one of the existing districts or city department. Both service providers have contracts with customers who may, quite literally, border one another. This scenario presents many challenges for the 911 communication center, for residents and for the companies themselves. When a structure fire is reported resources are dispatched based on closest station to the incident. If the closest resource is a RMFD station and those units respond to the incident, arrive first on scene and initiate fire attack only to find out that the location of the fire is a CoFD customer, there could be a dispute regarding payment for services rendered.

A serious complication that rises to the level of safety hazard is the fact that CoFD resources are not dispatched by processes delineated in NFPA1221. The company' on duty resources are "notified" via text message and/or phone call. This results in a time delay, depending on location of the incident the CoFD resources may not be allowed to respond in the emergency mode, (lights/siren), also resulting in delays that may, depending on traffic conditions be excessive. Most critical of the safety hazards is the lack of interoperability between resources responding to the incident and operating at the incident scene. Should a team of firefighters become trapped and need rescue, other personnel would not be able to receive the "May-Day" call by the trapped personnel. Personnel operating at an emergency on different radio frequencies is a very serious safety hazard.

SECTION VI: ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

In October of 2019, the Josephine County Board of County Commissioners created the Josephine County Fire Protection Committee. This ad-hoc committee was charged with conducting an analysis of options available within Oregon statutes to create an organization that could provide fire and emergency response services to an area of the county estimated in size of 330 square miles. This area was initially classified as “unprotected” a term which was considered by many to misrepresent actual service levels present and it was later classified by the Oregon State Fire Marshal, as “under-protected”. The map below represents the portion of the county in question.

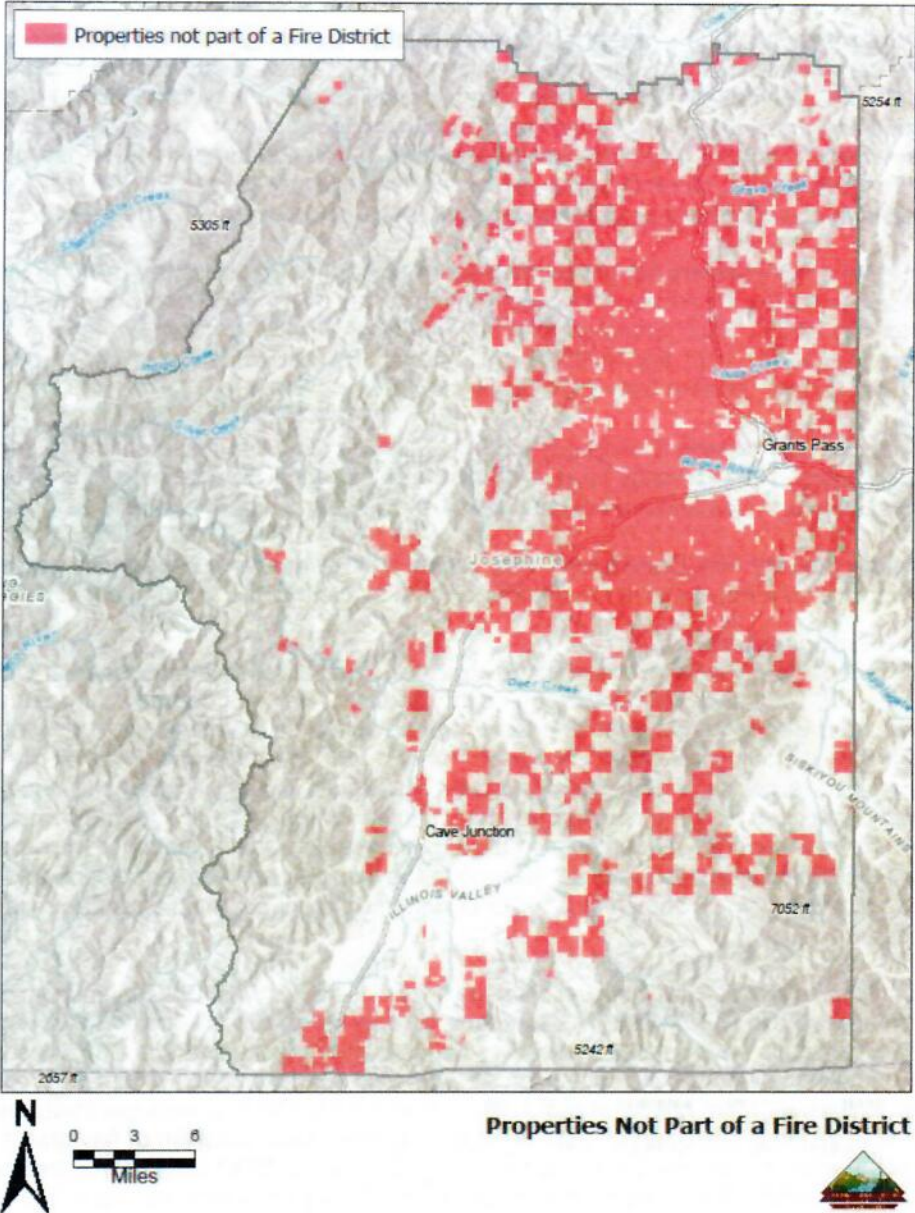


Figure VI.1 Properties Not Part of a Fire District

Previous attempts by elected officials to address the issue of fire protection services (including seeking voter input) have failed. However, in 2019 the question of fire protection was again placed on the ballot: “*In your opinion, should Josephine County begin the process to form a Rural Fire Protection District in currently unprotected areas?*” Thirty percent of registered voters participated in the election and 65% of those were in support of the county forming a RFPD. Charged with this mandate, the Fire Protection Committee members set out on exploring all the different options available. One of the first actions by the committee was to establish “*Principles of Agreement Regarding a Solution*” before engaging in the analysis process for various options. The six principles are:

1. Cost of service cannot exceed today’s highest rate (\$1.94/\$1,000 of assessed value)
2. Needs to keep the same level of service as today
3. Board has their own autonomy
4. ISO rating cannot decrease
5. Needs to be a long-term solution
6. Establish financing

With these principles as their guide, the committee set about thoroughly analyzing a total of seven potential options for resolving the decades-long challenge of having a substantial portion of the county and its residents living in an area identified as “unprotected”. The results of this effort by the committee are detailed below. Although PCG will provide narrative and some context, the bulk of the analytical work outlined here was performed by the Fire Protection Committee members and they deserve both recognition and credit for their outstanding efforts.

The committee’s analysis is divided into three primary categories:

1. Status Quo
2. BCC Enacted Options
3. Voter Authorized

Status Quo Option

Overview

Currently, and since the 1970’s, the unprotected area is being serviced by two private fire service providers. Rural Metro Fire holds the more significant number of service contracts at 11,000 with County Fire holding just under 1,900 contracts. Rural Metro charges a contract fee of \$1.94/\$1,000 of assessed value and County Fire charges a service contract fee based on total square footage of the covered structures ranging from \$0.13 to \$0.15 depending if there is an onsite water supply.

Rural Metro Fire provides not only its customers an all hazards response capability, but also provides emergency response services on a countywide basis through the Rogue Valley Mutual Aid Response System benefiting both Josephine and Jackson County from a resource perspective. According to the Rural Metro Fire leadership team, non-contract customers are billed for certain services. There are a substantial number of services the company does not bill for depending on the situation and circumstances. They view these situations as the cost of doing business and a corporate belief in being a good community business partner.

County Fire is a single function provider in that it can only respond to calls for service from its customers for fires, either structure or vegetation. This is primarily true because County Fire does not have a contract with the Grants Pass PSAP for dispatch and communications services. Because its apparatuses are not dispatched by the PSAP consultants are unable to verify that CoFD meets or exceeds nationally recognized standards for turnout times of 60 seconds or less, 90% of the time during daytime responses and 90 seconds or less during night-time responses. Consultants are also unable to determine if CoFD meets or exceeds nationally recognized response times as they are not part of a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and as such we cannot validate their response times.

According to CoFD managers the department receives courtesy notifications via text messages/pages from the dispatch center and in some instances, crews will self-dispatch by monitoring other fire departments, including Rural Metro’s, radio frequencies via a scanner. These practices are far outside industry standards followed nation-wide by both career and volunteer fire departments. Consultants are unaware of any other private service providers employing such irregular processes for dispatching emergency resources.

PCG consultants believe that such irregular processes result in substantial delays in response for the company's fire apparatus. All CoFD's resources are based out of a single fire station located in Merlin and department managers state that the department provides services to customers over a 120 Sq. Mi. area. This represents a simple mathematical equation for consultants to apply. CoFD cannot meet or exceed nationally recognized response times from a single fire station covering an area of 120 square miles.

Consultants were made aware of restrictions placed on CoFD for emergency response to certain areas of the county. CoFD is prohibited from responding in emergency mode, (lights and siren) through the city of Grants Pass. This represents a significant delay in response to any emergency for customers located in areas that necessitate that CoFD units respond through the City of Grants Pass and are subject to following all basic traffic laws including traffic signals and signs as well as speed limits.

It is estimated that between 25 to 30% of the residences in the unprotected areas do not have a contract with either of the private service providers. In the event of a fire or other type of emergency, citizens must rely on one of the two providers responding to handle the emergency.

Although either company will present a non-contracted resident with a bill for the services rendered, there is no guarantee that they will receive payment from the resident. This creates a subsidy issue for either or both companies that all their contract customers bear the cost for and results in higher service fees for those customers holding contracts.



Perhaps the greatest challenge to residents and contract customers is that neither of these service providers have any statutory authority to enforce county ordinances or provisions of the Oregon Fire Code. This extends into the realm of emergency response as well in that, if either or both companies were dispatched or notified of a fire and responded, once they arrive on scene of the incident the property owner has the legal right to prevent them from coming on the property or even extinguishing the fire. From a legal standpoint, one may argue that any unauthorized mitigation activities such as forced entry if the resident is not home could result in a charge of criminal trespassing, unlawful entry, and destruction of property. If either provider responded to a call for a smoke investigation or someone engaged in an illegal burn of vegetation, the providers have no authority to direct that resident to cease and desist.

Status Quo Strengths

There will be a cost savings to the County should the BCC elect to allow the status quo in that it will avoid paying the \$35,000 by not placing the fire district initiative on the May 2021 ballot. This path will also allow both private service providers to continue to operate in a "business as usual" mode and continue with a free market competition between the two companies. However, County Fire will need to resolve the major deficiencies they currently face.

Doing nothing is always the path of least resistance and there may be merit to the argument that the current system of operation has been in place since the 1970's and, for all intents and purposes, appears to the public to be working with minimal issues. Most of the public has minimal or no knowledge regarding the delivery of fire protection in the unprotected area. Several residents in the county who feel very strongly about no new government intrusions will embrace the status quo.

Rural Metro Fire provides services to 11,000 properties in the area in question and their operation and/or business model provides 24/7/365 coverage from three fully staffed stations and one station staffed half of the time. They also have in place a well exercised procedure to respond from the stations that rely on as needed coverage. Another positive is the fact that Rural Metro Fire is part of the Rogue Valley Mutual Aid Response Systems, and as such both provide and receive resources for working structure fires or wildland fires requiring resources beyond their capabilities.

The same cannot be articulated for County Fire for each of the reasons previously stated. A working fire at the home or business under contract with County Fire would bring resources from Rural Metro Fire and resources from surrounding agencies. This has already been demonstrated on multiple occasions and as such, would remain as a status quo aspect but not necessarily a strength, particularly for the resident experiencing the fire.

Status Quo Challenges

The issue of fire protection for the unprotected areas has been raised periodically over the past 40 years, and although there are currently two private companies filling the fire protection void, there is nothing to prohibit either company from making a business decision to cease services. This is highly unlikely in the case of Rural Metro Fire given their customer base and the extent of resources the company has invested over the past several years. Since GMR is a for-profit company, should a situation or circumstances occur where the leaders believed that providing services above and beyond what is currently provided is not profitable, then nothing will prevent them from scaling back those services. As a publicly traded company, there is always a possibility that GMR could opt to sell off the fire protection division of the operations in an effort to bolster up the EMS side of their business operation, which is their primary means of business revenue.



With respect to County Fire, the status of this company's operation is tenuous, at best. The company will have to make substantial monetary investments in the foreseeable future if they intend to remain both competitive and profitable. There are substantial liability issues for this company to continue operating under their current business model. Findings in this report shed light on significant challenges the company is facing. These challenges must be addressed to provide the established "standard of care" for current and future customers. Should the company owner make the decision that investments needed to bring the company up to the standards put in place by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association and supported by the Oregon State Fire Marshal, and Josephine County Fire Defense Board, the owner could logically conclude that the return on investment is too lopsided and elect to cease service. This could potentially result in 1,900 customers being without fire protection services unless they opted to convert over to Rural Metro subscriptions. Some of these customers may well face a fiscal challenge and simply say they cannot afford to make the conversion and take the chance of having no fire protection services at all.

Legal authority is another challenge. Neither of the current service providers have any legal enforcement authority with respect to the Oregon Fire Code or the Josephine County Ordinances under Chapter 19 regarding abatement of hazardous vegetation conditions. They also have no jurisdictional authority to respond to and engage in firefighting efforts on properties experiencing a fire. Only one of the current service providers is recognized by the Oregon State Fire Marshal and is listed on the OSFM roster of fire service providers, both public and private.

Use of private service providers in a municipal setting is an anomaly, there is only one other such operation in Oregon, Milton-Freewater, located in the northeast portion of the state along the Oregon/Washington border. That area does not reflect anything remotely close to Josephine County with respect to fire hazard severity threat and challenges of topography or density of fuels, so making any comparison is impracticable.

Another challenge comes in the form of the inability of private service providers from being able to access federal grants for critical and costly items such as additional firefighters funded through FEMA SAFER grants or apparatus, facilities and equipment through FEMA Fire Act grants. These grants are limited to publicly funded fire departments and districts.

From an administrative and operational perspective, private providers are not required to gain or seek public input regarding services and programs provided by the companies. As such, there is a lack of public accountability and transparency when dealing with a private company compared to the public sector. Companies can raise their service fees and the only recourse citizens have is to cancel their contracts but may find themselves without access to emergency services during a time of great need. This is particularly true with elderly population groups in the age 65 and older range. This is one of, if not the most, impacted groups with respect to the need of emergency services in Josephine County. This population group accounts for 23% of the overall population.

The administrative and operating cost of providing services to the entire unprotected area are currently born by both service provider companies; however, Rural Metro Fire bears most of the subsidy costs. This is true for multiple reasons, not the least of which is the fact that they have a substantially larger customer base with an estimated 65% of the total properties in the unprotected area. Other reasons include County Fire does not have contracted dispatch services with the 911 center, is not participating in the Rogue Valley Mutual Aid System and has significantly greater response times due to responding from a single station, as well as not being allowed to respond to emergencies using emergency lights and sirens in certain portions of the county. Each of these issues results in greater costs borne by existing customers.

While a majority of the non-contracted residents are willing to simply roll the dice and hope that they never need to use services of either company, and even if that time did come, they could say, "I didn't call you nor did I authorize you to put out the fire so therefore I am refusing to pay for your services." Under this scenario, who bears the cost for the service providers using their personnel and equipment? The answer is the existing customer base, which is obviously unfair to them and the service providers who did the right thing for the right reasons.

Finally, Josephine County has received an allocation of funds from the Oregon legislature in the amount of \$1.5 million that has been encumbered specifically to and for the formation of a county sponsored fire service provider. If the current BCC opts to allow the status quo, this funding will go back to the state for use in other needed areas.

BCC Enacted Options

Rural Fire Protection Zones

Oregon Revised Statutes 476.310 – 476.340 describes rural fire protection zones and under Zone 2 the BCC can create a rural fire protection authority through a resolution that creates a County Ordinance outlining the organizational structure, service area boundaries and levels of service to be provided by the authority. This allows the BCC to exercise control over the method of service delivery and the ability to appoint an authority board or an advisory board. The tax rate not to exceed .0025/\$1,000 of assessed value. There is also a provision under Zone 2 of an optional assessment of .0025/\$1,000 that can be applied for additional funding if approved by most voters. The BCC does have the option of waiving any additional fees and has done so in the past with both the Josephine County Library District and the Sheriff's Office.

Zone 2 Strengths

With the Zone 2 Option, the BCC can direct County Legal Counsel to draft a resolution creating the fire authority option and pass it with a majority vote of the BCC. This will significantly reduce the time constraints and costs of putting the authority formation option on a ballot, not to mention, eliminate the cost associated with putting a measure on the ballot. The Zone 2 option provides the BCC members the ability to determine the delivery method for fire protection services. The BCC could issue an RFP to contract fire protection services with a private service provider, which would allow either of the current companies to submit a proposal to provide the service desired, provided they can meet the requirements/provisions as stipulated in the RFP.

There are several vitally important points to make regarding Zone 2 formation of the fire authority. The BCC can create the authority, determine the levels of service, set the boundaries for coverage area and set dates for these actions to be initiated and/or completed through passage of a new county ordinance. In accordance with the Josephine County Charter, any funding mechanisms required to support the proposed authority must be passed by consent of the voters. This means that, although the BCC can administratively pass the ordinance creating the fire authority and determine the level of service and propose the rate of \$1.94/\$1,000 it is the voters in the areas outside city limits and the existing rural fire districts who must accept and approve.

Nothing in exercising the Zone 2 option prevents the BCC from transitioning to a rural fire protection district at some point in the future. Zone 2 also allows the option of building a capital reserve account over the initial contract period so at the end of the contract period, providing there are sufficient funds available, the BCC in place at that time could initiate formation of a rural fire district and purchase all necessary resources and assets. Additionally, should a group of voters wish to do so, they could circulate a petition and with enough support have formation of a rural fire district placed on a ballot for approval.

Zone 2 Challenges

1. Vulnerable to loss of single provider
2. Citizen vote for first .0025/\$1,000 tax
3. Permanent tax on total acreage – not limited to 5 acres
4. Never been done before
5. Possible long time to make happen
6. Tax may be long term
7. May remain in unprotected status
8. ISO coverage and response time cannot be improved

Franchise Fire Protection

The BCC can also issue an RFP for a franchise service provider much like the one currently employed for EMS services with Global Medical Response (GMR). GMR is also the parent company of Rural Metro Fire. This makes considerable sense from both a business perspective in that the BCC would provide oversight of the franchisee or can designate someone to manage the daily administration and operations of the fire authority for the duration of the franchise contract, the Chief Fire Official.

Franchise Fire Protection Strengths

This option makes sense from a continuity of services perspective. There is a possibility of multiple companies submitting bids for the franchise rights. However, there are very few private service providers who would bid on such a contract given the fact that Rural Metro and County Fire already have a substantial investment in terms of resources such as fire stations, fire apparatus, personnel, equipment, training and community engagement programs. Selecting either one (or both) greatly reduces the time, effort, and energy as well as start-up costs needed to set up and establish operations throughout the county.

A potential improvement of funding for county-wide operations is a possibility given that the revenue stream would increase by approximately 30% because of properties in the unprotected area would be required to participate at some level and the number of opt-outs will be significantly less than current levels. It is possible to determine what the overall operating cost would be for a countywide district franchise by using a comparison model from either Applegate Fire District or even another fire district located in Oregon that is similar, if not identical to the size of Rural Metro's current operations.

Rural Metro has been authorized to share with PCG what their annual operating budget is but not their total profit/loss investment as that information is proprietary and releasing it could harm their business integrity.

We will assume that all property owners in the unprotected area are compelled to contract with the selected franchisee. If this were the case, then this option would improve and expand services as it would ensure that all properties in the county that are outside of the four existing fire districts and the City of Grants Pass Fire & Rescue, would be covered. The funding to support the franchise district will be borne by all property owners and thereby eliminate the current subsidy issue that exists and has existed for more than four decades.

Franchise Fire Protection Challenges

Having posed the question above, it is simply not a possible reality for several reasons. The essential caveat the BCC must strongly consider is an opt out clause for property owners who have legitimate reasons why their property should be excluded such as, the location of the property is so remote there is no practical or even physical way fire apparatus could reach their property in a timely manner to extinguish a fire. The cost of providing the service far outweighs the value of the covered dwelling or that the resident lives in an RV or non-permanent structure. One important opt-out provision should be for any property owner who can provide documentation that payment of fees will result in financial hardship. This last opt-out provision would not exclude the service provider/franchisee from presenting the property owner with an invoice should fire suppression services ever be required on the property or even placing a lien on the property. Such opt out provisions can easily be drafted by fire authority citizen advisory board.

An important challenge to be vetted by the BCC and county legal counsel will entail what authority the BCC would have, if any, to compel or even mandate property owners to participate in an atypical franchise scenario. Even if the district formation language were to include such a provision, it will almost certainly be challenged in court which results in a considerable delay executing the program. Such a delay will result in considerable legal costs to the county and place in jeopardy the funding the county received from the state legislature earmarked for formation of fire protection services in the unprotected areas.

Most franchise agreements involving emergency response services are issued to EMS providers such as AMR, the current EMS service provider for Josephine County. Such agreements are put in place when services are provided and there is fee for those services that the franchisee collects, like ambulance transport services. Given this fact, how then can a franchise fire service provider function at a profitable level if the company only receives revenue upon delivering one of the many different services/functions performed by a typical, all-hazards fire service response organization? Municipal fire service organizations are funded through a variety of taxes collected by municipalities and are part of the general fund just as law enforcement, public works, parks and recreation and administrative services are. The only time municipal fire service organizations bill for a service is if that service falls outside of the departments stated mission or is a service provided that, under certain laws,

allow billing and cost recovery for incidents such as vehicle accidents or mitigation of a hazardous materials release/spill. With respect to emergency response assets such as fire stations, fire apparatus, firefighters and associated equipment and maintenance for these items, funding pays for them to be present, ready, and available for all emergency types. For these reasons, municipal fire service organizations are some of the highest costs provided by a municipality but are deemed essential services just as law enforcement and public works are. Under a franchise model, a company wishing to respond to the franchise RFP will be expected to bear all costs to provide what is known as the "standard of care."

Ambulance companies such as AMR understand this concept and accept that it is the cost of doing business. When a private provider bids on a franchise contract they know full well what the cost will be to provide services because they will have examined the most critical aspects of ensuring profitability, in other words, "call volume". How many incidents will a specific geographical area produce over a 5-10 year period, what are the population demographics, what are the socioeconomics of the area, what levels of response make up the calls, number of calls by day of the week, number of calls by time of the day and locations are all calculated and factored into the cost analysis. In doing so, the company can directly identify with nearly perfect certainty how many ambulances they will need to provide the services, what type of ambulances, how many advanced EMT's or Paramedics are needed, what is the cost for hiring, training and equipping these personnel, what level of pay and benefits are typical for the market they are operating in. These types of trends are far more difficult to calculate when you are assessing a community for fire protection. There are some commonalities which can be used such as call volume and type can be analyzed but this is not how municipal fire departments are structured.

There are so few communities that provide fire protection with private fire service providers for these and more complicated reasons. The return on investment and profit margins are vastly dynamic and uncertain. Fire departments can go several months without experiencing structure fires and then, for reasons totally unrelated or even unknown, a community can have a rash of structure fires and then suddenly drop back to minimal activity. So how can a private service provider gauge what type of resources to provide and when to provide it?

Contract Fire Protection

There are several similarities between the contract formation option and the franchise option in that each are both contractually based. Both can be achieved by the BCC issuing an RFP and selecting a vendor who can provide the desired services to the county unprotected areas. Both options also allow the BCC to set the contract duration and any renewal options and clauses that must be met by the vendors to qualify. But what greatly separates the two options is that with the contract option, especially when executed in concert with the Zone 2 option, allows the BCC to create a fire authority that would encompass the entire portions of the county. The BCC must exclude those areas already covered by one of the four existing fire districts, or the City of Grants Pass Fire & Rescue and land areas under control of ODF, US Forest Service or BLM. The BCC can set a tax rate that equals the current fees paid by the primary service vendor in the county, Rural Metro Fire, at \$1.94/\$1,000 of assessed value. However, although the BCC can establish this rate in accordance with the Josephine County Charter, any programs that require taxation must be approved by voters.

Voter Authorized Options

Annexation by an Existing Fire District

In analyzing this option, the Fire Protection Committee members applied the Principals of Agreement for each of the seven options and concluded that annexation by one of the four existing fire districts was neither feasible nor practicable due to the following reasons:

1. Two of the districts have a rate of taxation that exceeds the \$1.94/\$1,000 of assessed value currently charged by Rural Metro Fire.
2. The districts lack adequate staffing and would result in a reduction of current service levels being provided to the unprotected area by the private service providers.
3. Leadership of the districts did not support this proposition.

Form a New Rural Fire Protection District

The Fire Protection Committee members conducted an extensive analysis of this option under Oregon State Statutes for the creation and formation of a Rural Fire Protection District. Because there is considerable support for this option amongst committee members, there have been comments leveled that the committee formed bias in favor of this option or preconceived notions that this is the best path forward for the county.

PCG consultants would like to offer that neither bias nor preconceived notions were observed from any of the committee members. In fact, PCG consultants believe that all the interactions with committee members demonstrated just the opposite. Committee members demonstrated great objectivity for each of the options under consideration during our interactions with them.

Rural Fire District

1. This action will result in a permanent taxation rate/thousand on assessed value and services would be determined by voters.
2. The district must be governed by a Rural Fire Board elected at the same time with management authority over all business of the district.
3. Because this is a legal government entity the fire district would be eligible for federal and state assistance grants such as the DHS/FEMA FIRE Act, (Equipment, facilities, apparatus and programs), SAFER Grants, (Volunteer Recruitment/Retention, hiring of both full and part-time personnel) and grants from BLM and US Forest Service for surplus apparatus/equipment.
4. Allows for multiple service delivery options such as: Contract, Franchise, (Never been done).
5. Provides options for proposed creation by either BCC action placing it on a ballot measure or by a petition from voters with enough signatures from registered voters.

Strengths

1. No taxation authority without voter approval. **NOTE:** *In accordance with the Josephine County Charter, any funding mechanisms required to support the proposed authority must be passed by consent of the voters.*
2. Tax rate is set on assessed value on five-acres where ODF currently taxes on remaining acreage.
3. District could fund with grants, legislative contributions, (current \$1.5 million) and county funds.
4. Resolves the "Authority Having Jurisdiction" issue currently experienced with private service providers.
5. Citizen oversight by having a five-member elected board of directors.
6. Opportunities to improve ISO ratings in some areas by improving response times resulting in reduced cost of homeowner insurance policies.
7. Will result in removal of "unprotected area" status from Oregon State Fire Marshal.
8. Eliminate current subsidy issue because all property owners will be required to pay for district assessment taxes.
9. Will create a larger operating budget to support district operations.
10. Creates more favorable financing options for capital improvements.
11. Eliminates/removes current billing confusion with private service providers.
12. Ensures all fire district operations are eligible to participate in mutual aid and have access to state resources improving overall response to incidents.
13. Improved wages and benefits for employees gaining access to state provided benefits, (PERS)
14. District can now enforce state fire code and county ordinances and investigate cause and origin of fires.

Challenges

1. If services not contracted, district would have to create employee wages and benefits packages, (PERS).
2. All property owners will be forced to pay tax for services even though they may not be able to afford or access services due to location of property.
3. All options except contract services would require bond passage for capital improvement and funding for start-up costs.
4. Options other than contract will result in disruption of current services during transition if private providers cease operations before district is ready to assume service.
5. Will require complex and extended transition between private service providers and fire district.

SECTION VII: PUBLIC INPUT

PCG consultants developed a public input survey in conjunction with the Fire Protection Committee that served several purposes relevant to conducting the fire service analysis. To gauge public knowledge and understanding of the key issues, PCG first made inquiries as to the number of responses needed to ensure the survey captured a statistically relevant number of responses. The County provided an estimate of the total number of registered voters in the unprotected area as approximately 24,000. PCG then solicited a statistical expert and requested the number of survey responses necessary to achieve their goals. The information provided set the number of survey responses needed at 400. A copy of the survey questions is included below along with a brief explanation as to why each question was asked. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix II.

There were 417 surveys completed, 233 were digital surveys and 186 were paper copies that were mailed to registered voters in the unprotected area. There were over 100 comments submitted with the surveys. The comments are included in Appendix III.

Public Info Survey Analysis and Results

Question #1: In which Josephine County area/community do you currently reside and/or own property in?

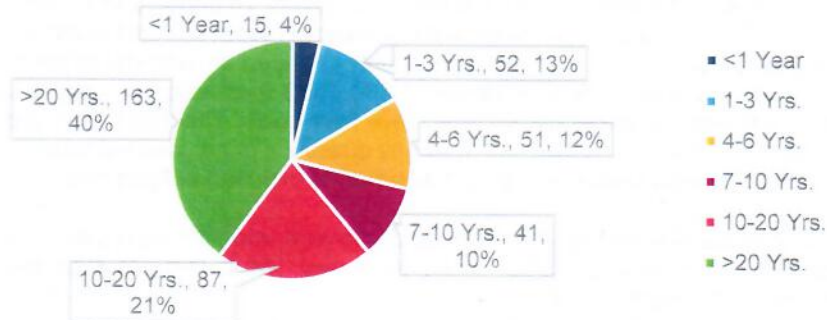
Of the 417 responses received, 128 or 31% were from the unincorporated areas of Grants Pass. This question was asked to ensure the respondent live in a community in the unprotected area of the county and outside of an existing fire district, but also to gauge which communities of the unprotected are more engaged with the issue of fire protection.

Q1: In which Josephine County area/community do you currently reside and/or own			
Area/Community	% of	Area/Community	% of
Grants Pass. Outside City Limits	30.99%	Cloverlawn	2.18%
Merlin	17.68%	Shane Creek	1.94%
Murphy	6.30%	Wilderville	1.69%
New Hope	4.84%	Harbeck	1.21%
Jerome Prairie	4.36%	Jones Creek	1.21%
Other	4.36%	Wonder	1.21%
Colonial Valley	4.36%	Fruitdale	0.73%
Sunny Valley	3.63%	Pickett Creek	0.73%
Redwood	3.15%	Ft. Vannoy	0.48%
North Valley	2.91%	Cave Junction.	0.48%
Hugo	2.91%	Galice	0.24%
Fish Hatchery	2.18%	Redwood & Sunny Valley	0.24%

Question #2: How long have you resided in and/or owned property in Josephine County?

This question was asked because consultants believe that the longer a property owner lives in an area the more engaged, they should be with the myriad of issues impacting their community, particularly one as important as fire safety. The chart below clearly shows this assumption to be correct with a greater percentage of respondents being long-term residents. As the duration of time increases so too does the level of engagement.

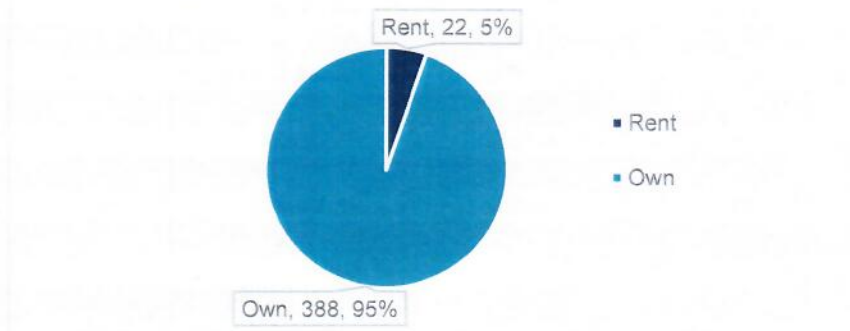
How long have you resided in and/or owned property in Josephine County?



Question #3: Do you currently own or rent your home?

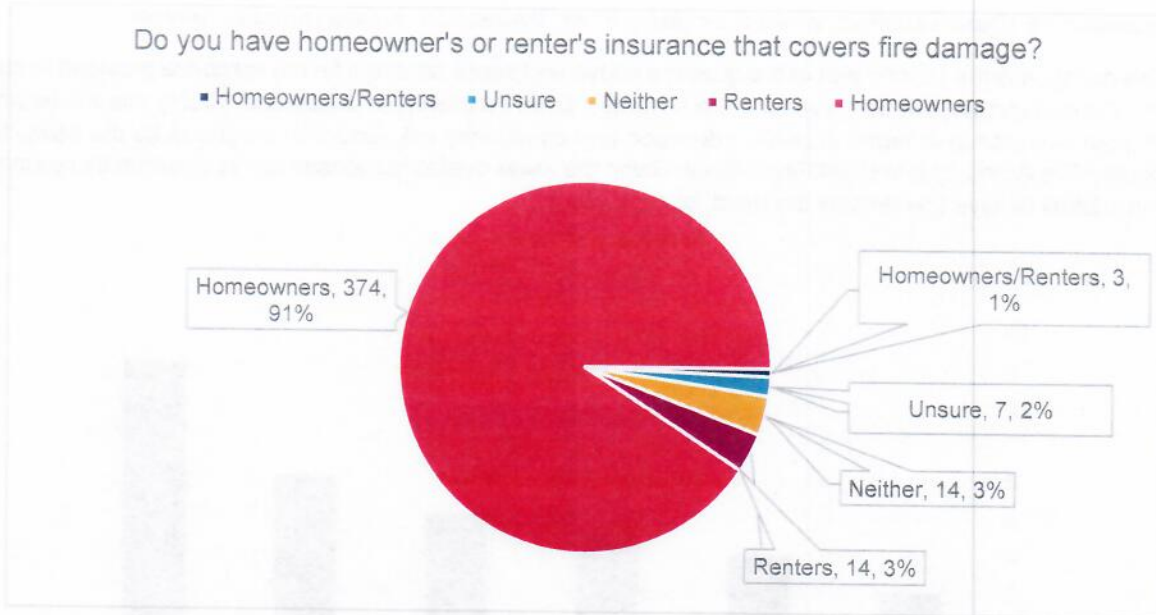
Residents who own a home are far more likely to have a homeowner's insurance policy, particularly if they have a mortgage for the property. Most financial institutions require some form of insurance on the property before funding the mortgage. This also ties directly to the previous question because a good percentage of residents who own their home opt to drop insurance coverage as a means of cost savings after the mortgage is paid off. This played a major role in the Town of Paradise after the Camp Fire left only 10% of the town's buildings standing. The significant number of uninsured homes played a critical factor in the overall costs of that fire. With 95% of respondents indicating homeownership this again validates the consultant's assumptions.

Do you own or rent your current home?



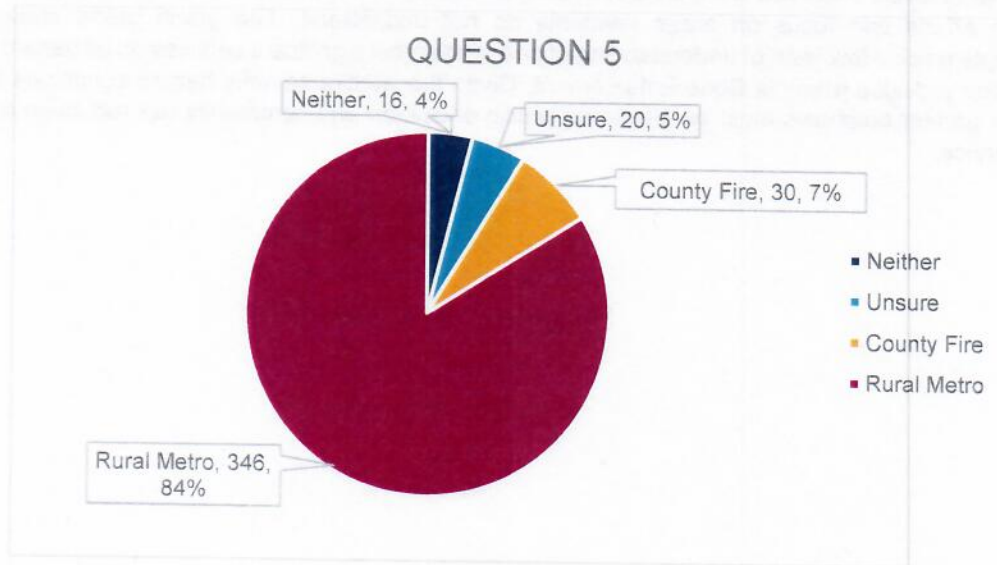
Question #4 Do you currently have either Homeowner's or Renter's insurance that covers fire damage coverage for your home?

This question was asked because one of the key elements of an eventual outcome of the study and report will be educating residents about the importance of providing a more fire safe and fire smart community. Given the high percentage of homes in Paradise that had neither homeowner nor renter's insurance, which added to the considerable costs associated with the recovery effort from the Camp Fire. Given the strong commonalities with Josephine County, this is a critical issue to make residents aware of. As the new county fire authority forms and begins the development of policies and procedures pertaining to Fire Code Enforcement and public education, initial efforts should focus on the 6% of residents who lack enough coverage. Such efforts fall into the category of Community Risk Reduction.



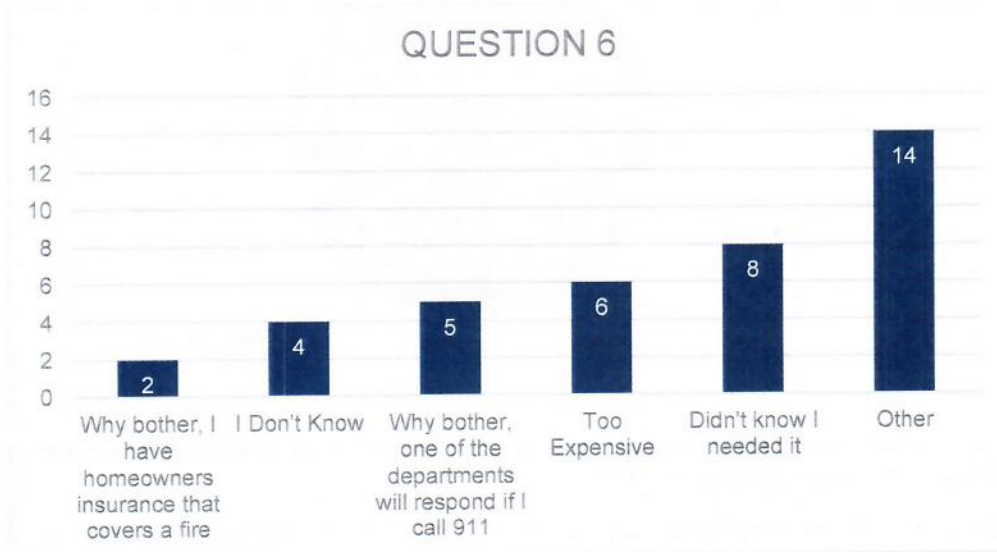
Question #5 Are you currently under contract with a Fire Protection service provider? If yes, with which company or select "Neither".

Given the disparity in the number of customer contracts between Rural Metro, (11,000) and County Fire, (1,900) consultants want to ensure customers from both private service providers are given the opportunity to participate in the survey and are proportionally represented to the extent possible. Given the fact that participants were either randomly selected from registered voters or completed the survey online. We also want to understand why residents choose not to have coverage from either provider or have opted on purpose to not have coverage, and their rationale for such a decision. With 9% of respondents indicating neither or unsure this should become a focus for the new County Fire Authority' public education and community risk reduction programs.



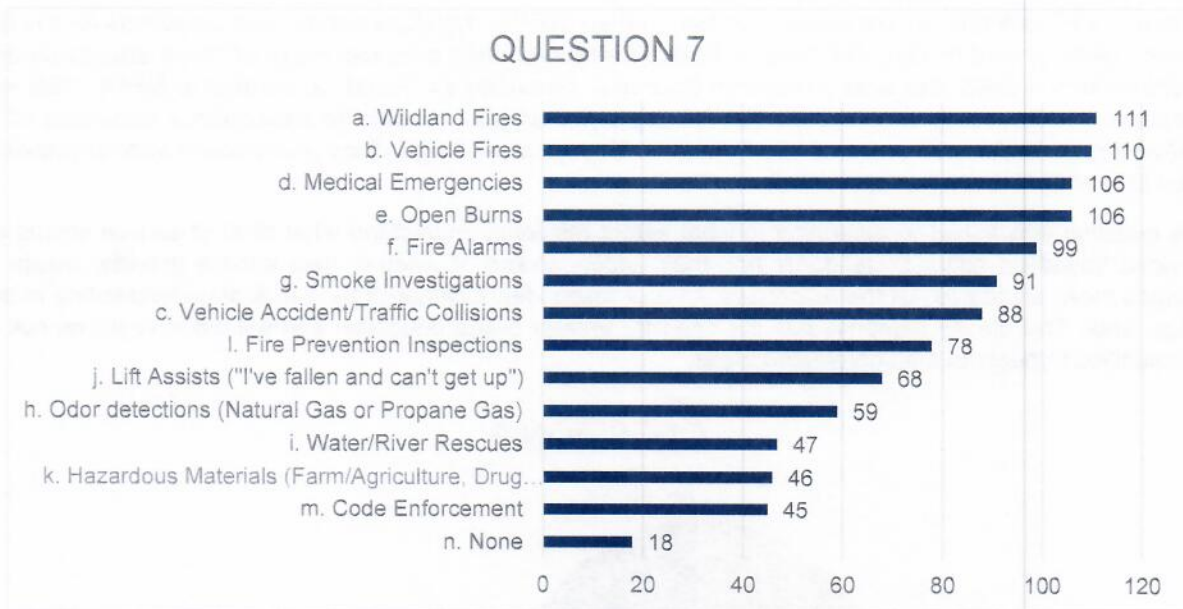
Question #6 If you selected “Neither or Unsure” for Protection, please indicate reason.

This question is the second part of the question above and seeks rationale for the response provided in question #5. Consultants believe that given the fire severity hazard conditions in Josephine County this will be an issue of great importance in terms of public education and community risk reduction programs by the newly formed County Fire Authority and Chief Fire Official. Given the lower overall responses to this question by respondents, consultants believe this reflects the need for such efforts.



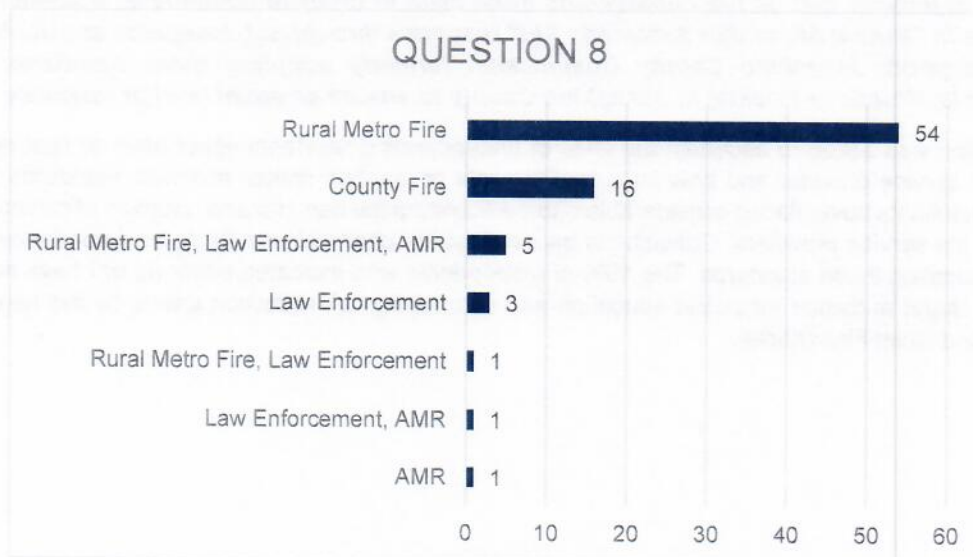
Question #7 Modern fire departments train, equip and prepare to respond to all manner of emergencies and/or disasters. The term “All Hazards” is applied to describe this level of service. Please select the services below you believe you currently receive from your response provider. If you currently do not subscribe with either provider, then select “None”.

This question was asked to specifically gain an understanding of how well-informed Josephine County residents are as to what levels of service are expected to be provided by a fire service response entity so follow-up public education efforts can focus on areas residents do not understand. The graph below shows that most respondents place a low level of understanding of one of the most significant services an all hazards fire service organization provides which is Code Enforcement. Given the wildfire severity hazard conditions in Josephine County, a greater emphasis must be placed on public education and community risk reduction regarding this critical service.



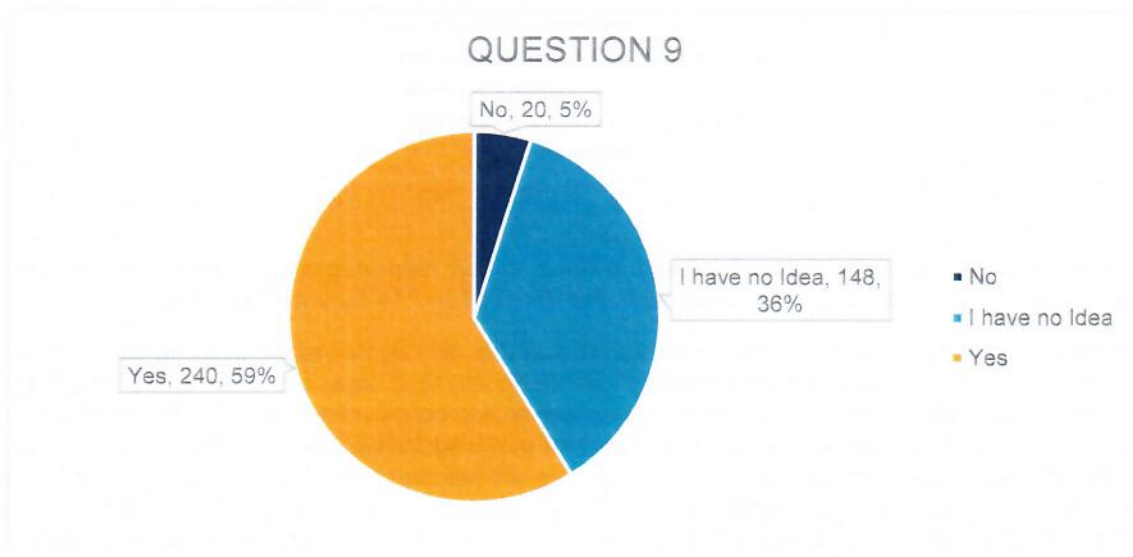
Question #8 *If you selected "None", please indicate which response organization you believe should provide emergency response to your home in the event of an "All Hazards" emergency?*

This question directly ties in with question #7 and is asked to gain some insight of residents understanding of the importance of providing an all hazards level of service equally to all areas of the county. If a resident indicates that either Law Enforcement or a private EMS provider should be providing response to structure or wildland fires, then this would indicate an area of critical focus for public education programs. Consultants recognize that respondents who have a contract with Rural Metro Fire will respond more favorably to this question because Rural Metro Fire provides their customers with more information about the services they provide and are therefore better informed. As more residents from the unprotected areas are added/included under the formation of the new County Fire Authority, efforts to educate these property owners will require targeted efforts as part of the public education and community risk reduction plan.



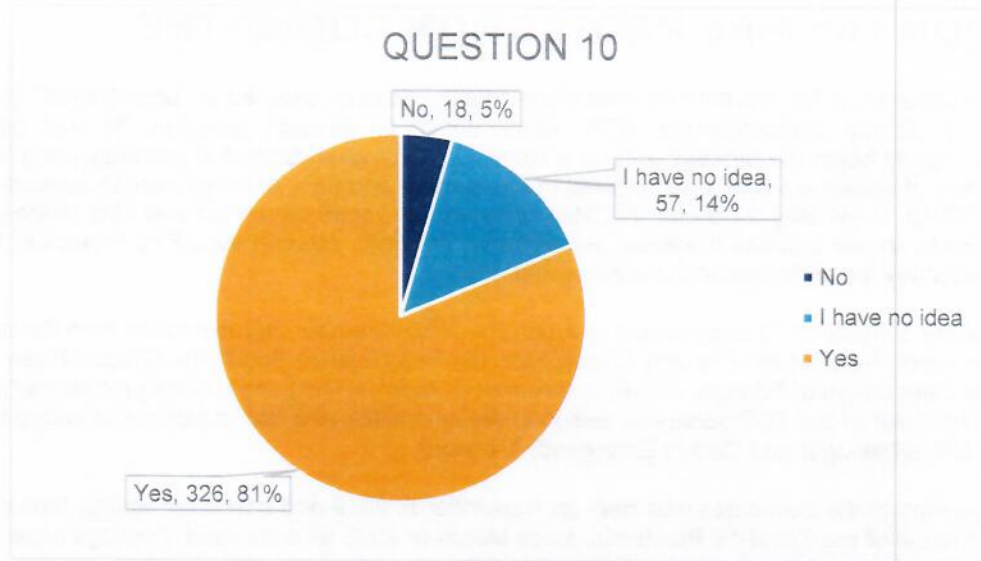
Question #9 *The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) develops consensus standards for the fire service globally and in-fact, the Oregon State Fire Marshal has adopted many of these standards and codified them in ORS. Because Josephine County is classified as "Rural" according to NFPA-1720, any department responding to a residential structure fire should be able to assemble a minimum of 6, firefighters in 14-minutes or less 80% of the time. To your knowledge, does your current service provider meet this critical response standard?*

This question was asked to determine to what extent residents understand what level of service should be provided based on national standards and their understanding of whether their service provider meets or exceeds these standards. Of the responses, 41% of respondents demonstrate a lack of understanding in this critical area. This clearly demonstrates the need for greater public education and will aid in reducing risk to communities throughout the unprotected areas.



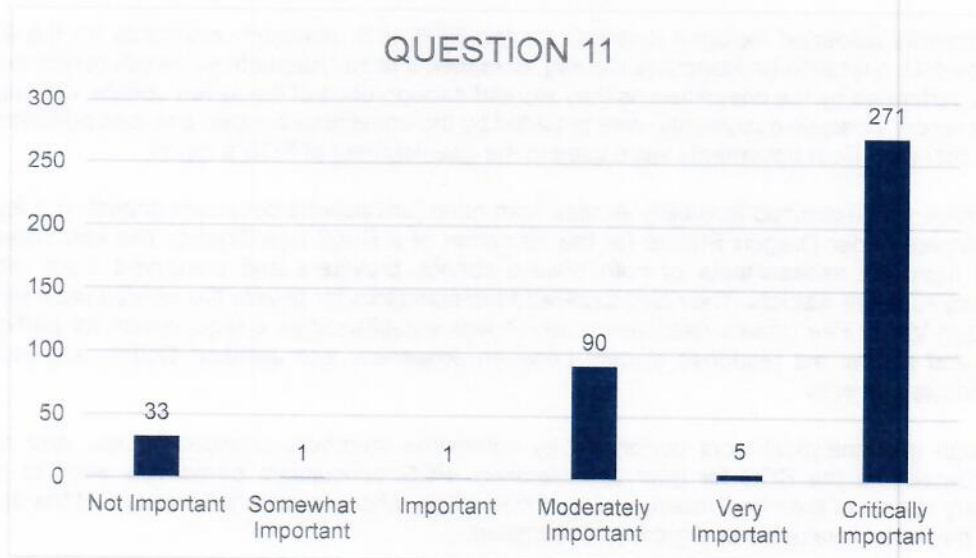
Question #10 *The Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association have established and approved a set of minimum standards that all fire departments must meet in order to continue as a service provider to participate in "Mutual Aid and/or Automatic Aid" response throughout Josephine and Jackson County. Do you support Josephine County Commission formerly adopting these standards for all fire departments, (Public or Private) in Josephine County to ensure an equal level of response service?*

This question was asked to ascertain the level of understanding residents either have or lack regarding their private fire service provider and how important the role of meeting critical minimum standards plays in their safety. Consultants have placed considerable effort articulating the need for and adoption of minimum standards for private fire service providers. Consultants believe that the chart below reflects the importance respondents place on adopting these standards. The 19% of respondents who indicated either no or I have no idea should reflect the target audience for public education and community risk reduction efforts by the new County Fire Authority and Chief Fire Official.



Question #11 Regarding fire protection and emergency services in Josephine County, there are some residents who currently do not subscribe to either Rural Metro or County Fire. This means that current subscriber out-of-pocket costs are greater than they would be if 100% of residents within the unprotected areas contributed. Given this fact, please indicate the importance of passing a ballot initiative creating a fire district for areas of the county not currently protected by a fire department where all property owners contribute equally for delivery of emergency services?

This question is asked so consultants can gauge the level of importance the cost of providing fire protection to Josephine County residents is. Balancing costs for service equitably and equally to all property owners is of great importance as reflected by the overall number of responses. This question also directly addresses the issue of subsidy of the 30-35% of property owners who do not contract with either service provider. With the majority of respondents of this survey being Rural Metro customers the graph below clearly demonstrates that those who hold current contracts feel it is critically important that the cost of providing fire protection services be shared equally by all property owners in the unprotected areas of the county.



SECTION VIII: FIRE PROTECTION COMMITTEE

For several decades, a 330 square mile area of the county has been deemed as “unprotected”. In May of 2019, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) asked voters an advisory question: “In your opinion, should Josephine County begin the process to form a Rural Fire Protection District in currently unprotected areas?” Thirty percent of registered voters participated in the election and 65% of those were in support of the county forming a RFPD. In the May 2019 election, 35% of registered voters turned out and 65% of the voters agreed that the county should address the issue. Accordingly, the BCC established a Fire Protection Committee to “assess and study fire protection in the unprotected areas.”

The committee consists of 13 citizens and includes Ex-Officio Member representation from the two private fire service providers, Rural Metro Fire and County Fire, the Fire Defense Board, the Oregon State Fire Marshal, the Oregon Department of Forestry, (ODF) and American Medical Response, (AMR) the county’s private EMS provider. The Chair of the BCC serves as liaison to the committee and staff support is provided by the County Executive Office Manager and County Emergency Manager.

The first meeting of the committee was held on November 5, 2019 and continued weekly through August 26, 2020. As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, since March of 2020 all committee meetings have been virtually held via zoom video conference which, continues to date.

From the beginning of PCG’s involvement with the project on June 29, 2020, consultants have had extensive interaction with the committee. Consultants have participated in each of the virtual meetings and conducted extensive one-on-one interviews with all but one of the committee members.

These interactions and interviews have provided a very comprehensive understanding of the central question of fire protection in the unprotected areas in Josephine County.

The committee formed sub-committees who gathered information from a historical basis to gain a full understanding of each of the seven options available for consideration in addressing fire protection services. All work performed by the committee was uploaded to a central location on the Rogue Valley Emergency Management website and included committee meeting agendas, meeting minutes and audio recordings of all meetings. The documents provided consultants with a wealth of information, but it was the audio recordings that proved most valuable for understanding providing greater context of the discussions on all the issues before the committee.

Other documents uploaded included research for the RFP/RFQ, minimum standards for the for private fire service providers operating in Josephine County, documents titled “Alternatives” which reflect the progression of analysis performed by the committee as they worked through each of the seven options which are presented here in this report. Analysis documents were provided by the committee but also one was performed by a single committee member. Both documents were used in the development of PCG’s report.

The committee also examined feasibility studies from other jurisdictions because conducting a feasibility study is a requirement under Oregon Statute for the formation of a Rural Fire District. The committee additionally conducted thorough assessments of both private service providers and compared them with operations performed by rural fire districts. They also assessed the standards for private fire service providers put in place by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief’s Association, which was established as a requirement for participation in the automatic and mutual aid response system between Josephine and Jackson County and includes 21 fire districts and departments.

The thorough and analytical work performed by committee members provided a clear and concise set of recommendations to the BCC for their consideration. PCG consultants particularly want to recognize the extraordinary talents of the Fire Protection Committee Chair, whose assistance throughout the development of this report has been invaluable and greatly appreciated.

SECTION IX: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PCG presents the findings and recommendations listed here after conducting a thorough analysis of all available documentation and information provided by key stakeholders which included: Josephine County Fire Protection Committee members, leadership from Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association, Josephine Fire Defense Board, US Forest Service, Rural Metro Fire Department, County Fire Department, the Oregon State Fire Marshal, Josephine County Emergency Management, Grants Pass Department of Public Safety Dispatch Center, Josephine County Legal Counsel, Josephine County Commissioners, Josephine County Administration Staff as well as citizens of Josephine County through the Public Input Survey.

PCG consultants worked closely with the current Fire Protection Committee members to gain insight and support from the extensive analysis the committee conducted on the available options for addressing the critical issue of improving fire and emergency services to the unprotected areas of Josephine County. Although PCG consultants would engage in researching these options in similar processes, having access to information provided by such a highly motivated, skilled, and talented group proved invaluable to PCG's research efforts and the development of this report, the findings and recommendations.

To reach the findings and recommendations presented in this report, PCG consultants also needed to understand the dynamics of fire protection services provided by private, for-profit companies. PCG is grateful for the support and cooperation provided by both Rural Metro Fire and County Fire leadership teams. Information provided by both companies proved invaluable to PCG's research and analysis processes. It was also important for PCG consultants to gain a working knowledge of the fire and emergency automatic and mutual aid systems in place. These processes and systems play a critical role in responding to and mitigating both structure and wildland fires impacting Josephine County.

Equally important to PCG's findings and recommendations was research and analysis of the wildfire severity hazard which poses a serious and growing threat to Josephine County and its approximately 87,000 residents. Research and analysis of the information provided in this report places great emphasis on the growing dangers of the fire threat to communities in Wildland Urban Interface areas. Analysis of such information underscores the urgency of addressing the fire protection needs in the unprotected areas of Josephine County and serves as additional justification and rationale behind PCG's recommendations. When examined in totality, information in this report supports the conclusion that actions should be taken to address fire protection service needs in the unprotected areas of Josephine County and can be initiated by the BCC within the next 90 days.

Recommendations

1. Direct the County Legal Counsel to develop a resolution accepting and executing the minimum performance standards for private fire service providers. These standards were developed by the Josephine County Fire Protection Committee. The standards are very similar to the standards developed by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association and accepted by the Josephine and Jackson County Fire Defense Boards.
2. Establish and appoint a permanent **Josephine County Fire Advisory Board** to serve as citizen oversight of district administration and operations.
3. **Establish the position of Josephine County Chief Fire Official** to ensure the County has a position consistent with Oregon Statutes requiring Fire Districts and/or Fire Departments as legal entities. These Oregon Statutes specify that fire districts or fire departments have the position of "Fire Chief." To address this statutory requirement, this recommendation is made to ensure Josephine County has a position designated with proper jurisdictional authority to enforce all provisions of the Oregon Fire Code and Josephine County Ordinance in Chapter 19.
4. Pass and execute a resolution under the **Zone 2 option** for establishment of a Josephine County Fire Authority with a tax rate **not to exceed** the current rate of \$1.94 per \$1,000 of



assessed property value paid by Rural Metro Fire customers. Although the Zone 2 option allows for an assessment of the market value of a property, BCC will ensure that the resolution is drafted in such a way that it ensures a property tax rate not to exceed the current rate of \$1.94 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

5. In accordance with Josephine County Resolution No. 2005-017, Section 8. 8.D and 8.E that the BCC directs the "Solicitation Agent" to execute a **sole source contract with Rural Metro Fire Department** to fill the critical need of providing an "All Hazards" emergency response service. The proposed service area would encompass all areas of Josephine County not currently covered by one of the four existing fire districts and Grants Pass Fire & Rescue. PCG proposes that the contract period will be for an initial period of 10-years with the discretion of providing and optional extension for an additional five-years.

Recommendation 1: Adoption of Minimum Standards for Private Fire Service Providers

Since the 1970's a large portion of Josephine County primarily west of Grants Pass and surrounding the areas of Merlin have been devoid of a publicly funded, organized rural fire district or county fire department. This void resulted in the area being classified as "unprotected areas", meaning that residents there had no publicly funded structural fire protection services. Many residents at that time, and even now some 50 years later, have believed that because ODF, BLM or the US Forest Service have fire stations situated throughout this area of the county that they provide structural fire protection response services. PCG consultants have received validation of this claim in comments made on the public input survey issued in August 2020. Those resources did not, back in the 1970's or today in 2020, have the capacity to provide the essential training, apparatus or equipment, particularly Personal Protective Equipment, (PPE), to engage in interior structural firefighting operations. Each of those agencies are strictly single function response agencies for wildland firefighting.

This report documented the history of efforts by private citizens and previous BCC's to resolve the issue of fire protection in the unprotected areas but, as documented, those efforts failed. As a result of this void and repeated failed efforts to pass ballot initiatives to create publicly funded fire protection, a group of concerned residents embarked on an effort to provide these badly needed services to the unprotected areas by creating private company ventures and offer emergency response services to fellow residents on a contractual basis.

Although these initial efforts were crude, even by 1970 standards, they served as the foundation for what exists now in a substantially large portion of the "unprotected area" encompassing an estimated 330 square mile area servicing some nearly 16,000 properties. The two current private service providers are servicing the unprotected areas of the county through service contracts with approximately 60-65% of properties.

The current private fire service providers could not be more different in every respect except for one very critical point. The current leadership of both companies are people who have lived in Josephine County most, if not all, of their lives. They have raised their families here and have shared in all aspects of the community. Because of this, both have a sincere and honest desire to do whatever they can to protect the lives and properties of their fellow residents and both are to be greatly commended for this.

Rural Metro Fire Department

Rural Metro Fire has the longer history than their competitor and was started as the grass-roots effort previously mentioned. The current Fire Chief of the Rural Metro Fire Department has served as the driving force behind the development and advancement of a private fire protection service delivery that has become the model that can, and could be emulated on a national level for communities facing similar challenges as Josephine County that may choose a private service provider over a publicly funded traditional fire department.

After conducting a thorough analysis of Rural Metro Fire administration and operations, our conclusion is that this is a community-based fire protection organization that is well organized, well-funded and well equipped in every respect and is capable of meeting the definition of an "All-Hazards" emergency response organization. With respect to personnel and staffing, the department fields a well-equipped, well trained, certified/qualified workforce of both full-time and part-time employees. The only operational deficiency observed and identified however, is the staffing of units with two personnel. Although, it is important that

this staffing model is utilized by most, if not all the departments between the two counties, and as such is the standard of care.

County Fire Department

After conducting a thorough analysis of County Fire Department administrative and operational functions, PCG has determined that this company fails to meet the basic minimum requirements to be classified as a fire department based on NFPA standards. We do not undertake this assessment lightly and are sensitive to what impact our conclusions could potentially have from a business operating perspective. Also, it is our observation after examining historical documents dating back to 2017, that County Fire, despite continued efforts of the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's, has failed to make the necessary adjustments to their administrative and operational capabilities towards meeting the standards adopted by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association. Accordingly, it is our professional opinion that County Fire should cease providing services until the following deficiencies in their operations are resolved:

- Lack of a qualified Fire Chief as delineated in ORS 478.
- No access to an Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) certified Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).
- Lack of an FCC licensed radio frequency designated within the spectrum for use by public safety agencies and non-compliance with APCO P-25 requirements. **NOTE:** *Consultants were able to locate an FCC license for CoFD however, the license is not current with the correct company business name and lists the previous owner as the licensee.*
- Lack of common radio frequencies to communicate with surrounding fire agencies which are needed for interoperability and firefighter safety.
- Lack of enough staffing to achieve compliance with NFPA 1710 on a first alarm assignment with or without automatic/mutual aid – 14 personnel including an Incident Commander, an Incident Safety Officer, and a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).
- Inability to meet minimum requirements established by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association and as supported by the Josephine County Fire Defense Board.
- An inability to meet minimum response time standards in accordance with NFPA 1710 and NFPA 1221 for most of the customers currently holding contracts with the company.
- Inability to meet the OSHA requirements for 2-in-2-out rule, which includes a certified/qualified Incident Commander as well as a certified/qualified Incident Safety Officer.
- Inability to respond to emergencies in an emergency response mode, (emergency warning lights and siren). Consultants were made aware that the City of Grants Pass has prohibited CoFD from responding to emergencies with lights and siren resulting in significant response delays. **NOTE:** *Consultants were able to obtain a copy of the application to respond as an emergency vehicle from Oregon Department of Transportation, (O-DOT) however, this permit was filed in 2014 under the previous company name and lists the previous owner of CoFD as the licensee. Additionally, not all the apparatus currently in use are listed on the permit application.*
- Apparatus which fails to meet NFPA 1901 and NFPA 1911 as well as ISO requirements for minimum equipment complement including fire hose. **NOTE:** *Consultants made repeated requests to CoFD management for records of maintenance of apparatus, copies of the certification of the pumps and aerial but no records were provided.*

During the Fire Protection Committee meeting of October 15, 2020, the operations manager for CoFD expressed concerns over the assessments outlined above referring to them as “factually inaccurate.” Multiple requests for documentation to verify CoFD met these requirements went unanswered. The Fire Protection Committee made similar requests to CoFD management over the course of their research efforts which also went unanswered.

In previous sections of this report consultants identified minimum standards developed by both the RVFCA and the current Fire Protections Committee. The deficiencies identified with CoFD serve as an example of the need for and importance of adopting minimum standards prior to private service providers being issued a business license. Adoption of these standards ensures that current, and future private fire service providers meet these standards before being issued a business license and initiate operations as a fire service provider in Josephine County.

This will also ensure that current and future private services providers can participate in the operationally essential automatic and mutual aid response systems that all departments must rely on to maintain the "Standard of Care" and minimum service levels throughout the two counties.

The Importance of Meeting Standards

In its report titled "*Report on Residential Fireground Field Experiments*" the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) April, 2010 Edition, conducted extensive studies on staffing levels for fire departments conducting fireground operations at the "most common" type of structure fires encountered across the US, which is a "low energy fire" involving a room and contents in a 2,400 square feet, two-story residential structure with an attached two-car garage and a sub-floor basement. The study examined 22 of the most common tasks performed by fire departments mitigating such a fire. The study entailed each of the 22 fire-ground tasks being performed by 2-person, 3-person, 4-person and 5-person fire companies. Fire Apparatus are classified as "Companies" based on purpose and function. i.e. an Engine Company refers to a response unit/apparatus that pumps the water and carries fire hose in combination with the firefighters assigned to that Engine. A Ladder or Truck Company carries extensive ground ladders, and has an aerial device mounted on top of the apparatus used to reach upper levels of a structure as high as the 7th floor of a high-rise building, in combination with the firefighters assigned to that apparatus. Hence the terms, Engine Company and Ladder/Truck Company.

This study concluded that the safest, most efficient, and effective way to complete tasks assigned to the Truck Company was with a five-person crew. The study drew similar conclusions for Engine Company tasks as well. The study concluded that there were very little differences in how tasks were performed with four-person companies as compared with five-person companies. The study concluded that the least safe, least efficient, and effective way to complete tasks was with two-person companies.

The study was structured around the NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments. It is important to point out that both current private fire service companies are classified as "all career" which simply means that all firefighters employed by the department are compensated for their work, whether as full-time or part-time employees.

As was identified in the standards section of this report, NFPA 1710 states that a minimum complement of 14 firefighters are needed to mitigate safely, effectively, and efficiently the "most common" structure fire encountered in the US. This requirement is as relevant in Josephine and Jackson Counties as it is in any location around the country. And although two-person companies is the standard for this area, achieving compliance with NFPA 1710 is still achievable, it simply means that more fire companies are required on initial dispatch and takes longer than the standard outlines for unit arrival of the complete first alarm assignment.

Although both current private fire service providers staff their response apparatus with two personnel, the major difference between the two is that Rural Metro Fire has the ability to meet the requirements of NFPA 1710 on a first alarm-assignment because of their internal daily staffing in combination with either automatic or mutual aid from the surrounding 21 fire departments located throughout both counties. An adequate number of fire companies are dispatched based on closest resources to the incident to achieve the required number of firefighters needed on scene. It is also important to point out that Rural Metro Fire personnel hold the appropriate certifications and qualifications necessary to safely perform assigned fire ground functions.

Currently, County Fire, as previously articulated, does not have the ability to meet any of the deployment benchmarks called for in NFPA 1710. The company's current operations create a serious safety hazard for their firefighters, other departments firefighters, and the customers with which they contract.

County Fire has presented members of the BCC with an estimated timetable to achieve compliance with the RVFCA standards by October 2025. That request is in our view, neither reasonable nor practicable. In making this request, County Fire is acknowledging that they do not meet the RVFCA standards and that it will take them a period of 5-years to achieve compliance with the standards. This acknowledgement creates a significant liability issue for County Fire should a fire occur resulting in serious injury to a citizen or firefighter. By making the request to the BCC, County Fire is asking the BCC to similarly acknowledge that

they, County Fire, do not meet the standards which then places the BCC in the same liability position along with County Fire.

Recommendation 2: County Fire Authority Advisory Board

Although PCG is recommending the BCC form the Josephine County Fire Authority under the Zone 2 option which negates the requirement of a five-member elected board of directors for the fire authority. Consultants recognize the value of having a group of citizens serving the community in an advisory and oversight role. The current Fire Protection Committee serves as a model example of the value such community action boards/committees bring to the county. The current committee members come from a broad range of backgrounds and career experiences. Some of the committee members have extensive backgrounds in the fire service and some had extensive experience in the corporate world. When formed in November of 2019 the committee very soon synergized their life experiences and set about engaging in a very thorough, thoughtful, and well-organized analysis of all options available to establish a county based/taxpayer funded fire service response organization. The efforts in the processes they executed have provided the PCG consultants with a clear and concise road map to follow and have served as the framework for this report's analysis, findings, and recommendations. We at PCG believe the committee members have demonstrated that the body of their work is clear in focus, objective and unbiased.

Given the quality of their work, the PCG consultants recommend that in-leu of an elected board, the BCC appoint a five-member fire district advisory board and task them with assisting the newly appointed Chief Fire Official with executing the recommendations provided in this report. The board members should be appointed by the BCC but should take administrative direction/oversight directly from the Chief Fire Official.

The following is a recommended list of roles and responsibilities the advisory board members could perform:

- Assist the BCC with the selection of the new Chief Fire Official.
- Assist in the development of the Josephine County Fire Authority service provider contract.
- Review, assist, and advise both the Chief Fire Official and the BCC on analysis of all services currently provided by RMFD and ensure that those services align with BCC's scope of services.
- Assist and advise the Chief Fire Official on development of the critical public education/community risk reduction plan as it relates to hazardous vegetation mitigation efforts and establishment of Firesmart/Firewise/Defensible Space programs.
- Assist and advise the Chief Fire Official on any needed revisions to Chapter 19 of the Josephine County Ordinances relating to the control, clearance and abatement of hazardous vegetation conditions on all public and private lands throughout Josephine County except for lands encompassed in existing fire districts, the city of Grants Pass or Cave Junction or lands under the control of state or federal agencies.
- Assist and advise the Chief Fire Official on petitions for opting out of the fire authority as established and adopted by BCC resolution.
- Assist and advise the Chief Fire Official on disputes of citations issued to property owners wishing to appeal citations and fines pertaining to mitigation of hazardous vegetation conditions or violations or defensible space requirements.
- Assist and advise the Chief Fire Official on development of a strategic/master plan for the fire authority as well as a capital investment plan.

To maintain fairness and objectivity in all decision-making processes performed by the fire authority advisory board. PCG recommends that general board members should be selected from geographical areas of the county as established by the BCC so that all areas of the county are equally represented. Board members should be selected on a non-partisan basis. Members should be considered politically astute yet be apolitical. Board members should serve four-year terms, two appointed on even numbered years and two selected on odd numbered years.

The chair-person of the fire authority board should be selected as an "At Large" member and should meet all criteria as the general board members with one exception, the chair-person should serve a five year term so as to maintain a strategic continuity with long-range planning projects of the authority with respect to execution of the strategic/master plan and capital investment plan.

The selection process for fire authority board members should be application/qualification based. The current Fire Protection Committee should develop a list of qualifications that applicants should meet. The selection process should consist of:

- Submittal of an application to the Chief Fire Official by an interested person not less than 90-days prior to the start of the seat being vacated.
- A 30-day application window should be posted via all current and conventional means.
- All applications should be reviewed to ensure applicants meet the criteria established.
- The Chief Fire Official shall select three fire officials from Josephine/Jackson fire districts/departments to serve as selection process interview panel members. Questions are to be specific to all administrative functions, duties, roles, and responsibilities of the fire authority advisory board. Applicants will be graded using standard HR practices.
- Members of the selection panel will forward their recommendations for the top three candidates for each open advisory board position to the Chief Fire Official for their review and consideration.

The Fire Chief Fire Official will then interview all three candidates and select which will be presented to the BCC in open session for approval. Newly appointed board members will be sworn in at the first BCC meeting in January of the beginning term of service.

Another option the BCC can exercise is to, through creating an ordinance, is to have the advisory board consist of elected members. Consultants believe the board can have all the duties, roles and responsibilities detailed above. The terms of service can also be the same as detailed above. The single and most significant difference will be that members will be selected through general election of the voters from the geographical areas defined by creation of the fire authority.

Having an elected advisory board also has the benefit of having a key requirement of a rural fire district in place when and if the decision to convert from a zone-2 to a rural fire district is executed. Additionally, having an elected advisory board overseeing the fire authority administration would relieve the BCC from this responsibility.

Recommendation 3: Create the position of Chief Fire Official for Josephine County Fire Authority

One of the more critical aspects for Josephine Board of County Commissioners to address in resolving the fire protection issue is the authorization and designation of "Authority Having Jurisdiction" or AHJ status. In most jurisdictions across the country this position holds the title of Fire Chief or Chief Fire Official. When one thinks of enforcement of the Fire Code or Fire and Life Safety Code, they immediately think of the "Fire Marshal". Some jurisdictions designated the Fire Chief as the Fire Marshal who may opt to assign this role to a subordinate such as a Deputy or Assistant Fire Chief and grant them the authority to enforce the fire code and its many provisions.

What is clear to PCG consultants is that Josephine County has never designated such a position for areas outside the four established fire districts or the City of Grants Pass. Each of these fire districts and fire department, when established, were required under ORS 478.260 to "select a Fire Chief qualified by actual experience as a firefighter."

By creating the position of Chief Fire Official, the BCC will take a critical step towards addressing the severe fire hazard conditions that currently exist in Josephine County. For several decades, the current and former BCC's have relied on private fire service providers to fulfill the residents structural fire protection needs. Although this model has proven successful in several emergency response categories, it has failed to address several key legal requirements that are essential to ensuring a truly fire safe community. Neither of the current, or past, private service providers have been able to legally provide enforcement of the State Fire Code or investigate the cause and origin of fires and prosecute offenders. This issue cannot be understated, all fires, whether accidental or human-caused must be investigated and both the cause and origin of the fire determined. By lacking jurisdictional authority to investigate the cause and origin of a fire, private service providers assume the role of providing extinguishment, salvage and overhaul services. From the moment the service providers have concluded their contractual responsibilities of providing these services, both the chain of custody and the critical chain of evidence has been broken. Even if the private

service providers had evidence to support that a property owner had intentionally set the fire, because they lack the jurisdictional authority to take action, this offender would not face justice for the crime of arson, all degrees of arson are felonies under both state and federal law. Having a chief fire official eliminates this major void in the current system.

Given the recommendation that the BCC employ Zone 2 formation of a fire authority and then issue a sole-source contract for fire service operations to a private fire service provider. The essential element still needing to be fully addressed, is how to satisfy the requirement of having an individual qualified to be the County Chief Fire Official? Under the current model, Rural Metro employs a highly qualified and experienced individual who hold the position of Fire Chief, but because the chief is employed by a private provider, he is unable to act as an agent of the County as the proper authority having jurisdiction in matters of enforcement. Creating this position will satisfy this legal requirement, but will also provide the BCC with a position that has the authority to serve as the direct liaison to several key organizations at the local, state and even federal levels such as:

- Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association
- Josephine and Jackson Fire Defense Board
- Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office
- DHS/FEMA, (Fire Act/SAFER, SHSGP and FMAG declarations)
- US Forest Service and BLM
- Oregon Department of Forestry

During the recent series of mega-fires that occurred throughout Oregon, each incident required specialized Incident Management Teams to effectively manage each incident. These teams can be comprised of local, county, state, and even federal fire officials. When an incident elevates to a certain level of complexity these specialized teams are brought in the support and augment local resources simply because they are overwhelmed.

Before these teams can assume overall management of the incident, they must first engage in negotiations with the local authority having jurisdiction and execute what is known as a "Delegation of Authority". All jurisdictions have emergency management policies and/or procedures for how DOA's are executed and who has the authority to negotiate and sign such an agreement. Currently, in Josephine County, execution of DOA's is performed by the BCC member assigned oversight of the Emergency Management function. As such, the BCC has options for how to address this aspect of the Chief Fire Official's duties, roles and responsibilities concerning this issue. PCG is simply raising the issue as a point of consideration for further discussion.

Challenges

Fire Chiefs are, by design, the most experienced and knowledgeable person regarding all aspects of the adopted fire code and enforcement thereof. Because Josephine County has never designated such a position, there has been a void in enforcement activities of the fire code in all respects in the areas outside established fire districts/fire departments. An unintended consequence of this has been an absence of an experienced fire service professional to advise the BCC on all matters pertaining to enforcement of the fire code as well as any ordinances needed to supplement the fire code for specific local conditions. A lack of enforcement by an AHJ results in a culture within communities where citizens are left to do as they please or to do what they believe is in their best interest which, may not achieve compliance with provisions of either the fire code or local ordinances.



One of the most important aspects of enforcement of the fire code is programs that focus on education of the code but also stressing the importance of self-adherence, cooperation and participation by all residents as a matter of the greater good for the community. Because the county has lacked a Chief Fire Official there has been an ineffective enforcement effort by the private service providers towards vegetation management ordinances. Both service providers have offered comments to the effect that some customers willingly comply with their recommendations, but such results are on a voluntary basis. While touring the unprotected areas of the County, PCG's consultant personally observed multiple properties that rise to the level of dangerous levels of fuels in multiple categories such as ground vegetation, known as "Light-Flashy Fuels" and extensive instances of "Ladder Fuels" throughout the unprotected areas. This indicates to the

consultant that most citizens are simply unaware of the danger posed not only to their property, but the real threat their lack of understanding of vegetation/fuels management poses to their own properties as well as their neighbors surrounding them. In this regard, once the county designates a Chief Fire Official, the individual will be confronted with the challenges of:

1. Educating the citizens as to requirements under the state fire code and county ordinances that apply directly to them as property owners.
2. Acceptance of enforcement activities the chief fire official will be required to focus on reducing the fire severity hazard that currently exists throughout the county and bring properties/owners into compliance with the fire code and county ordinances.

The BCC will need to fully support the code enforcement activities of the Chief Fire Official because once the Chief undertakes enforcement activities, citizens will initially push back on these efforts and it will become a political challenge for BCC members. BCC members will need to restrain the urge to "Reign-In the Chief" because once that becomes the political path of least resistance, it will only serve to complicate the Chief's responsibility to enforce the code. Such actions by elected officials ultimately undermine the desired outcome of a safer community through code enforcement and community risk reduction efforts.

The question of funding all aspects of the position, full-time or part-time, is a key consideration as well. Given that revenue for the new district will take time to begin accumulating, how will the BCC fund the position in the short term prior to revenue realization? The BCC can consider allocating a portion of the \$1.5 million provided by the Oregon State Legislature to this aspect of fire district formation as it falls within the funding guidelines for those monies as this is an essential function of creating the new Josephine County Fire Authority.

Why should creating and hiring a County Chief Fire Official be the third priority in the overall effort? Adoption of a set of standards is essential towards ensuring the "Standard of Care" is provided equally by the private services providers. Currently as has been documented in this report, the two service providers currently operating have very different service capabilities. Adoption of minimum standards eliminates this serious issue. Second, by establishing a citizen advisory board the BCC can divest themselves of direct oversight of executing the myriad tasks needed to achieve overall success with the detailed recommendations provided in this report. The BCC can delegate a majority of the tasks and functions proposed in this report to the advisory committee members. This includes playing a critical role in development of the position description, duties, role, and responsibility of the new Chief Fire Official.

The importance of appointing a Chief Fire Official as soon as possible cannot be over-stated. Over the past several years, there have been several communities PCG consultants have worked with who elected to form their own fire department such as the City of Placentia in Orange County, CA, the City of Victorville in San Bernardino County, CA and the City of Coconut Creek, FL. In each of these cases, the first position hired for the newly formed fire department was the Fire Chief. In each instance, the new Fire Chief played a key advisory role to the community policy makers with measurable success.

Opportunities

The BCC has an opportunity upon establishment of a Fire Authority under Zone 2 to start the new County Chief Fire Official off with a road map to success by establishing a clear set of roles and responsibilities for the position. Create a position description that outlines the AHJ's authority to enforce the fire code and county ordinances as well as timelines/benchmarks for the chief to meet to achieve success. The BCC should act to adopt the Oregon Fire Code, conduct a review of Chapter 19 of the County ordinance pertaining to fuels management/abatement and defensible space requirements to ensure they are up to date with the State Fire Code and State Fire Marshal policies regarding these matters. A key success indicator for the Chief Fire Official as it relates to code enforcement is a set of standards for notices, citations, fines for non-compliance and processes for appeals prior to hiring the new Chief Fire Official so that when the person is selected, they can focus their first year in the position on educating the public so that when the enforcement period begins the following year, citizens have been provided sufficient time to prepare their properties to achieve compliance, establish a working relationship with the Chief and be a part of creating a successful community risk reduction program.

Recommendation 4: Creating the Josephine County Fire Protection Authority Utilizing the Zone 2 Option

After careful analysis of the seven options studied by the current Fire Protection Committee, interviewing key stakeholders and evaluating the current state of fire protection services in the unprotected area of Josephine County, PCG strongly recommends that the BCC should exercise this option as soon as feasibly possible. This last statement is made because of the current conditions being experienced in Southern Oregon over this summer along with the wildfire severity hazard rating which creates a greater sense of urgency for actions to address such a critical public safety issue.

Given the recent fire events which have occurred throughout Oregon, in particular, in Talent, Phoenix, Ashland and Medford, only serves to reinforce the urgency for action and the need to begin the process of putting in place actions which are critical and need to be addressed between now and the start of the 2021 fire season. Out of all the options under consideration, the Zone 2 option offers not only the most expedient means of achieving the needed and desired results, but also the more efficient and results-focused effective means.

Why is the Zone 2 option preferable to a voter approved option? Foremost is the fact that Josephine County voters have already expressed approval for such actions with the results provided in the 2019 election. The single greatest concern expressed by voters is the question of cost. This concern was reflected by participants of the fire survey as well. PCG, working closely with members of the Fire Protection Committee, have developed the following rationale and recommendations for BCC members to consider:

1. Currently, Rural Metro customers pay on average, \$1.94/\$1,000 of assessed value and with a customer base of 11,000 property owners this rate has become an accepted fiscal impact to most property owners. However, PCG believes that by creating a Zone 2 option fire authority that encompasses all properties in the county which are not currently part of one of the four existing fire districts or in the incorporated city limits of Grants Pass, the increase in the number of properties, both residential and business, will result in a decrease in the currently accepted rate being paid by Rural Metro customers. PCG cannot offer what the impact will be for current County Fire customers as the rates charged by County Fire are based on square feet instead of assessed value. CoFD revealed the cost per square foot ranges from \$0.13 to \$0.15 resulting in an annual cost for a 2,000 square foot structure ranging from \$260 to \$300 annually. It is unclear whether this option will have an overall negative or positive impact on the 1,900 properties currently contracted with County Fire.
2. PCG recommends that the BCC should direct the County Assessor's office to calculate the cost to taxpayers using the Zone 2 maximum rate of \$1.94/\$1,000 of the current rate paid by Rural Metro Fire customers for both residential and business properties. As an incentive to the voters, the BCC can, through its formation resolution, set the tax rate at the current Rural Metro rate as a "not to exceed" clause in the resolution. The BCC should also waive the additional optional tax authorized under Zone 2 as it did with the Library District and Sheriff's Office formations.
3. PCG acknowledges that although the BCC can create the fire authority, dictate service levels, establish its operating area and set taxation rates that reflect guidance under Zone 2, it is the voters that must approve the rates proposed by the BCC. This would serve as the final seal of approval for all processes.
4. An additional option PCG believes the BCC should incorporate with the Zone 2 formation, is to create an "Opt-Out Clause" for those property owners who have legitimate reasons for not being included as part of the County fire authority. In the recommendation for creation of a fire authority advisory board, PCG lists one of the immediate functions that could be performed by the advisory board is establishment of opt-out criteria, but a few examples the BCC should consider would include:
 - ✓ Any property that is situated within the fire authority boundaries but is so remote from any authority operated fire station that it will be a practicable impossibility for fire apparatus to reach the location to provide impactful suppression actions.
 - ✓ Any property that is located within the fire authority boundaries but, is geographically located closer to a fire station in another fire district and therefore, should be annexed into that fire

- district.
 - ✓ Any primary residential dwelling located on the property is not a permanent structure such as a travel trailer.
 - ✓ Any property with access routes to the property are impassible during certain weather conditions including snow and ice and are unplowed making access by fire apparatus impossible.
5. PCG recommends that the BCC should include in its resolution creating the fire authority, that all fire and emergency services will be performed on a contractual basis by a properly licensed service provider. The contract should include requirements ensuring the provider has the capability of meeting the minimum standards adopted by the Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association. That the selected provider can deliver "All-Hazards" emergency response and can meet or exceed deployment provisions of NFPA 1710.
6. PCG recommends that the contract period with the selected service provider should be 10 years with an option, based on performance requirements and at the BCC's discretion, to extend the contract period for an additional five-year period. PCG's reasoning for the recommendation is two-fold:
- ✓ The current operating budget for Rural Metro Fire is **\$4,638,000 annually**. This is just the operating budget which includes: personnel payroll, all operating expenses and amortization and depreciation of equipment. This does not include their capital outlay budget. Given this fact, operating a fire district operation equal in size and scope to Rural Metro Fire's current level of service represents a substantial investment for any potential service provider, so providing a 10-year contract incentivizes bidders and creates healthy competition for the contract and provides the BCC with a wider range of options.
 - ✓ Another advantage of a 10-year contract with a five-year option is that it provides future BCC's with an opportunity to build up a capital reserve account so that if, at the end of the initial and extension contract periods, the BCC in place at that time so chooses, they can execute a conversion from a contract service provider to creating an independent fire district with voter approval.

NOTE: In each of the recommendations for Zone 2 formation of the county fire authority, PCG uses the term "Resolution". This term is used in the context of the document drafted by the County Legal Counsel for consideration by the BCC to present in open session. PCG acknowledges that, under the County Charter, this would become a new ordinance that involves new taxation, and as such, requires approval by consent of the voters.

Recommendation 5: Issue a Sole-Source Contract for Fire Protection Response Services

PCG recommends to the BCC that along with the Zone 2 option, the BCC should issue a service contract with Rural Metro Fire which offers the most expedient means of addressing the current critical need for fire protection services in all areas of the county not currently protected by one of the four existing fire districts or the City of Grants Pass. Zone 2 provides the BCC with the option of dictating service levels as well as the method for how those services can be delivered.

As has been outlined in this report, creating a stand-alone rural fire protection district would take, by conservative estimates, 18-24 months just for the administrative aspects of establishing a rural fire protection district.

Even if the voters were to approve formation of a rural fire protection district, the initial taxation rate needed to begin building up capital funds would make it highly unlikely to receive voter approval resulting in the status quo and the issues remaining unresolved once again.

The question has been raised as to whether creating an independent rural fire protection district would constitute a "take-away" from one or both current private service providers businesses. Given this question, it is a reasonable assumption that such a decision could result in a protracted legal dispute. Were this to unfold, it will once again cause significant delays in resolving this critical public safety issue.

Recommended Solution

In March 2005, the BCC passed a resolution regarding purchasing guidelines adopted by the Oregon Legislature, ORS 279A.060 of the Public Contracting Code, Chapter 8, Solicitation Methods for Classes of Contracts, Section 8.D. Contracts for Goods and Services and Section 8.E. Special Procurements: Contracts Subject to Award at Solicitation Agent's Discretion.

These provisions provide guidelines for utilizing contractors on a sole-source basis and at the discretion of the Solicitation Agent when, "Contracts for goods and services which are available from only one source within a reasonable purchase area." Based on this information, PCG is recommending that the BCC direct that a sole source contract with Rural Metro Fire be granted for the continuation of providing "All Hazards" emergency services to the unprotected areas of the county.

However, if the BCC is uncomfortable with the sole source recommendation, they can issue a competitive request for proposals (RFP) for all-hazards emergency response services including fire prevention services.

Given the extent to which Rural Metro Fire is present and invested throughout the unprotected area and is the only vendor capable of providing a continuation of the current "Standard of Care", PCG believes this is the strongest and best course of action.

Done in concert with executing the Zone 2 option, the BCC will be providing immediate actions necessary towards addressing the critical structural fire protection needs throughout the unprotected areas as well as addressing wildland fire severity hazard.

When the contract for service is issued, something the BCC will need to have analyzed is the call volume for areas of the county currently covered by the remaining non-staffed fire stations. This information would be available through the 911 dispatch center through a standard computer-aided dispatch (CAD) analysis. The analysis will also need to include call volume to areas of the county that are outside response coverage zones for all Rural Metro fire stations. This will be necessary to determine if additional fire stations are needed in these areas based on service demands identified by the CAD analysis.

Consistent with the Fire Protection Committee's "Principles of Agreement", item #4, "ISO rating cannot decrease", distance between fire stations is one factor ISO evaluates when assessing a community fire department response service. Points are awarded based on travel distance with the most ideal coverage being 1.5 linear highway miles travel distance for engine companies. In other words, three linear highway miles distance between fire stations is the optimal placement. This is not necessarily practical when the number of emergency response incidents in a geographical area do not warrant a fully staffed fire station. As population increases in an area, so too does the number of requests for services. This holds true particularly when population increases include elderly residents such as a retirement or assisted living facility or communities for residents ages 55 and older. The BCC will need to conduct a community risk assessment (CRA) and collaborate with Rural Metro Fire leadership to evaluate staffing needs in any portions of the unprotected areas that are remote from current fire station locations and also in areas where properties that are currently not under contract would be included under new boundary lines.

For reasons outlined in this report, PCG believes that County Fire should consider either merging with or selling outright, all their existing customer accounts to Rural Metro Fire as they are unable to meet standards required for continuation as a private fire service provider.

However, PCG believes that the owner of County Fire, through its sister company, does have a critical role to play in providing fire protection and response services to Josephine and Jackson Counties and beyond. The sister company to County Fire currently fields a robust wildland fire response capability through a compliment of bull dozers, water tenders and, as PCG understands it, wildland hand crews. Given the wildland fire conditions being experienced throughout the western states and particularly here in Oregon, there are ample business opportunities for this company to continue and even expand its service delivery.

APPENDIX I – LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

State of Oregon:

- Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Protection Act
- Oregon Revised Statute 477.015 thru 477.061
- Oregon Administrative Regulations 629-044-1000 thru 629-044-1110
- Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards & Training
- Oregon Department of Transportation - ORS 801.260 – Application to Operate Emergency Vehicles
- ORS 476.310 thru 476.340
- ORS 478.001 thru 478.982 Rural Fire Protection Districts – 2019 Edition
- ORS 476.280 and 476.290 – Extinguishing Fire in Unprotected Areas
- ORS 476.330 – Prevention and Control of Fires in Zone 2; Tax Levy
- ORS 279A.060 Public Contracting Code

Josephine County:

- Josephine County Ordinances – Chapter 19.76.010 – Wildfire and Emergency Safety Standards
- Josephine County Ordinance - Ordinance No. 2020-DRAFT – Regulation of Fire Service Providers
- Josephine County Ordinance Chapter 8 – Solicitation Methods for Classes of Contracts

Josephine County Fire Protection Committee:

- Principals of Agreement
- Alternatives Analysis
- SWOT Analysis – January 15, 2020
- DRAFT Minimum Standards for Private Fire Service Providers

Rogue Valley Fire Chief's Association:

- Regional Mobilization Plan: Mobilization #4.04 – March 1, 2018
- Letter to Dan Trader Rejecting admittance to RVFCA Mutual Aid Agreement – April 28, 2017
- Letter to Josephine County Board of County Supervisors RE: Private Fire Service Provider Standard Recommendations – August 1, 2016
- RVFCA Minimum Eligibility Standards for For-Profit Private Fire Service Providers: Organizational Policies - #1.05 – June 19, 2014, Revised – June 2017
- Jackson/Josephine Counties Mutual Aid Agreement – June 16, 2014

PCG Referenced Documents:

- National Fire Protection Association, (NFPA) – 1710/1720
- Insurance Service Office, (ISO)
- AZ Central.com Wildfire Risk: Look Up Every Western Community
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134
- OSHA 29 CFR 1910.156

APPENDIX II – JOSEPHINE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT ANALYSIS – PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

1. In which Josephine County area/community do you currently reside and/or own property in?
 - a. Grants Pass, (Outside of the City Limits)
 - b. Cave Junction, (Outside of the City Limits)
 - c. Cloverlawn
 - d. Colonial Valley
 - e. Fish Hatchery
 - f. Fruitdale
 - g. Ft. Vannoy
 - h. Galice
 - i. Harbeck
 - j. Hugo
 - k. Jerome Prairie
 - l. Jones Creek
 - m. Kerby
 - n. Merlin
 - o. Murphy
 - p. New Hope
 - q. North Valley
 - r. Pickett Creek
 - s. Redwood
 - t. Shan Creek
 - u. Sunny Valley
 - v. Wilderville
 - w. Wonder
 - x. Other, please list

2. How long have you resided in and/or owned property in Josephine County?
 - a. <1-Year
 - b. 1-3 Years
 - c. 4-6 Years
 - d. 7-10 Years
 - e. 10-20 Years
 - f. >20 Years

3. Do you own or rent your current home?
 - a. Own
 - b. Rent

4. Do you currently have either Homeowners or Renter's insurance that covers fire damage coverage for your home?
 - a. Homeowners
 - b. Renters
 - c. Neither
 - d. Unsure

5. Are you currently under contract with a Fire Protection service provider? If yes, with which company or select "Neither".
 - a. County Fire
 - b. Rural Metro
 - c. Neither
 - d. Unsure

6. If you selected "Neither or Unsure", please indicate your reason?
 - a. Too expensive
 - b. Why bother, I have homeowner's insurance that covers a fire
 - c. Why bother, one of the departments will respond if I call 911
 - d. Didn't know I needed it
 - e. Other, (Please provide detail)

APPENDIX III – PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY – RESPONDENT COMMENTS

Q12 - Additional Information regarding Fire Protection Services in Josephine County
yes the voters have said they do not want 1 County Fire Department run by the city. We like choices which we have at present. Quit constantly putting it on ballots every year. You should have to wait 5 years between your ballot initiative in my opinion.
Ambiguous, if this means that only the uncovered would pay for this, Yes. If this means I would pay in addition too the \$240/Year I pay to Rural, No. If it means that I would pay for this but Rural would reduce rates accordingly then Yes.
Any decisions made by Josephine County Comm. would be expensive and of poor quality. This group of elected people make poor decision and are a group of clowns. we do need this service, but they should have nothing to do with it, They have helped make a mess of JOSEPHINE COUNTY.
At a minimum, we need a government agency performing this service. With standards, we can eliminate any person from buying a fire engine and portraying themselves as a 'firefighter'. RM has done a fine job over the years at a basic level they should be given a county contract to provide service.
Climate change. Drought status.
Consider a sliding scale for those residents that cannot afford to subscribe. Let's not punish people for not having enough money--like people on a fixed income.
Cost per year seems a bit expensive
COST The 3 families on our property are retired & on a fixed income
Could not answer until I know what the standards are. Don't agree with minimum language would have to see what that means before I agree
Do not make more then one fire department cover different precincts, 1 fire district needs to be created to cover what Rural Metro is now providing service too. Multiple fire departments does not reduce redundancy and it's a waste of taxpayer money.
Don't become Jackson County and tax people out! Moved the Josephine County for lower taxes!
Due to levels of poverty, lots of people can't pay \$400+ per year, what will be done to assist those residents? Before we vote there needs to be a formal contract that will be presented to people
Enforce laws that require home owners to maintain weed and vegetation control and remove junk in yards that are unsafe for fire departments to preform duties in the event of fire..
Fire Education and inspection for property owners to become more effective in their efforts to prevent fire hazards
Fire Protection cancelled due to Coronavirus
Fire protection services is critically needed in our county. In my opinion Rural Metro is the only private fire company that can provide those services.
Fire protection, like law enforcement should be a basic and essential service provided by government, more important than roads and utilities.
Fire response is a very important infrastructure that should be provided to ALL community members. I was shocked to learn we have to pay a private fire department after moving here. I retired from Montecito Fire Protection District in CA, and the coverage here is unnerving.
Freeloaders have gotten a free ride for decades while Metro customers foot the bill. This has to stop! Typical government, put together a committee, spend a bunch of tax dollars on a fancy consultant just KYA and avoid the fact that an advisory ballot voted for a Fire District. I am a Rural Metro customer and am damn tired of paying more for fire protection because the freeloaders don't want to pay their share. It is hard to believe that this is 2020 and we don't have a fire department (District) why do other areas in the county have fire departments and we don't? Because the County Commissioners don't support it!!
Government cannot, and will not perform as quickly or efficiently as a private entity. If Josephine County was truly interested in protecting their citizens, they would have formed a district for that purpose years ago.
How come I was not told, I'm not covered by a Fire Department. I moved here in April and was told Police response is sparse but not that we are not covered by a Fire Department.

Q12 - Additional Information regarding Fire Protection Services in Josephine County
How much more would it cost, How will it affect my tax bill
I am new here but was surprised that there were not government fire services. We need that. I would be willing to help pass a ballot measure to that effect. We also need help in wildland forest management to reduce the severity of wildfires.
I am sick and tired of subsidizing those who choose not to provide fire protection. It is a service akin to law enforcement and the military. It should not be optional. It is a societal responsibility and it is ridiculous that we are still discussing this in 2020.
I am very happy with the fire departments, law enforcement, and forestry departments here!
I believe the constituents need to understand that "yes" taxes would go up but the cost of private fire protection would be \$0 and ALL property owners would be responsible for paying for the fire district and hence would cost less than that of the private fire protection cost. Better quality over
I believe this county needs uniform STANDARDS. The confusion homeowners face, and the assumption that all Fire Departments are created the same has and will continue to cause loss of property, and response inadequacies endangering the community as a whole until this is mitigated.
I feel that my Rural Metro coverage is terrific & offered at a great price. It's not my problem if a home owner doesn't want to carry this protection - why should I pay for them to have coverage? Let the uncovered owner be financially responsible for themselves.
I feel we already pay to much, More Service, Trained Employees, Less \$\$ Coverage for ALL!
I have had 3 medical emergencies over the 20+ years I have been a Rural Metro member. Thankfully they had a mutual aid pact with GP Fire as once GP answered the emergency Also I was in the path of the Hugo fire. If it were not for Rural Metro and their mutual aid I would not have a home.
I have heard allot of bad things about County Fire!!
I live in a Campground, Fire Protection everywhere is very important! Should Be a priority!
I live in Wolf Creek we do not have the fire protection our taxes pay for
I own 4 homes and Rural Metro is the best as they cover all 4!
I wasn't sure about what Rural Metro covers. The list says it includes: What I dont understand are annual home Safety inspection (although we've never had this done), community programs (don't know what that is) and other exclusive benefits (that I don't know what is included)
I would like standards that all neighbors must meet. I'm tired of supporting others who do not pay their fair share for fire proection
I would like to see a forest clean up/fuel reduction assistance program, funded by land owners whose properties fall under the critical lands to help reduce risk associated with wild land fires.
I would like to see more fines collected from those who blatantly ignore no burning allowed to help offset the costs of fighting fire. Too many get just a warning which isn't much of a deterrent.
I would only vote for a ballot measure if it could be shown that my increased taxes would be equal to or less what I pay per year for Rural Metro services. I would also need to be shown how protection would be improved considering the wonderful reputation and services Rural Metro already provides
I would prefer the county negotiate fire service contracts with private companies instead of setting up its own service.
I would recommend that if a fire district is created, Rural Metro FD should be hired since they already have stations located in key areas in the county, equipment and trained firefighters who are our friends and neighbors. Why reinvent the wheel. It would be cost efficient and expedient. for us.
If the cost is the same or less, if this passes keep the costs down, we don't need a top heavy fire department.
If this doesn't happen, people will die.
If this were to pass and move forward, I would STRONGLY advise that you create a fire district with paid personnel that work directly for the district. NOT contract to a FOR PROFIT fire services company. The difference in levels of service is staggering on all fronts. Safety comes before profits.

Q12 - Additional Information regarding Fire Protection Services in Josephine County
If you choose to live in unprotected area and choose to not subscribe, that's your choice as an American.
Inspection of unimproved properties for weed control within rural residential districts, ie Colonial Valley. Property owners who live in another state do not maintain their property and the high over growth of dead trees and high grasses/weeds.
Is the service the county would provide, be better/less expensive than Rural Metro? What would happen to Rural Metro and it's employee's?
It is about time the county commissioners decided to move forward with this. Everyone should pay for fire service
It is critically important for the county Fire District to provide fire protection to all areas of the county so all pay their fair share of the cost. It is also important that the organization be held to nationally recognized standards for response, training, staffing and equipment
It is extremely frustrating to not have standards for fire departments serving this area. County fire has a long history of not even showing up, and when they do, they have insufficient resources and training to mitigate the fire. Simply put, they are robbing citizens; pretending to be a fire dept.
It would be great to get all properties to meet firewise standards
It would be nice if the no burn days were enforced
It would have been of great value to show each area on a map, colorcoded with the wildfire hazard rating this might have gotten peoples attention. We have people who are ignorant of fire danger in rural areas because they have moved from urban areas seeking the "Good Life" assuming all the protection urban areas provide. No where in this survey or the letter, was it explained who, (Oregon Department of Forestry, ODF), who is responsible for protection our urban land outside of (F.S. & B.L.M) Lands or what that protection really is. People are ignorant of rural fire dangers, and if this district gets created awareness and protection needs to be advertised 24/7 through TV, Radio, Internet, Cell Phone Etc. I am willing to volunteer to help.
JoCo commissioners have no concept of fire safety. 1 No ordinance requiring property owners to maintain property in a fire safe manner. 2. Tremendous fuel loading in most of the county, we're ripe for a devastating fire. We're too busy with sidewalks in Merlin to be bothered with life safety issues.
Josephine County needs to be ready for a major fire to affect the urban interface. I support efforts to prepare for that.
Just want to say Rural Metro does an excellent job in the community. Feel fortunate we have such a great group out there protecting and aiding our Rural community's.
more staffing of our fire engines
Most residents who currently do not subscribe to fire service choose to do so for financial reasons. A fire district could be beneficial to all but I do not expect that you will get the majority of the county populace to endorse this taxing measure.
Mutual aid and automatic aid is a vital part of any large incident or multiple incidents causing the need for greater depth of resources. I also think it is important the the department responsible for responding to an incident, can do so with the proper equipment and training.
Needs to include everyone and all must pay for services - at a "reasonable" cost.
OR is about choice. Fire Protection is a choice, not something to be forced upon the populace. Janet & her group are trying to remove the vote from our elected County Commissioners & ramrod Rural Metro as their choice of fire protection, to be paid for by property tax increases. I want to choose.
OR is about choice. We decide to subscribe to a Fire Svc Agency. Our Supervisors decide whether to allow which Agencies in the County, and what services they should provide. Ms Lancaster is determined to implement a full service agency at our expense thru property tax increase! "Just like CA"! NO!!
Our 911 calls go unanswered, we approved a tax increase for 1 higher level of service yet 911 calls still go unanswered. Why would I or should I believe more money will change anything. When no one cares enough to answer our 911 Calls. Rich Foles
Our fire protection issues should have been solved a long time ago by the Commisioners..This issue should be a priority for them- Our lives and property are at stake.

Q12 - Additional Information regarding Fire Protection Services in Josephine County
Our landscape is such that it requires very quick and efficient response to fire related emergencies... small fires can quickly turn into a huge problem without an immediate response; a qualified agency should have the credentials necessary to be called by 911 and participate in mutual aid.
Passing this proposed ballot measure would eliminate the conflict between Rural Metro and County Fire, here in Merlin.
People doing illegal burns, using fireworks, or gender reveal parties with flammables during "No Burn Season" should be fined.
People should pay for their own fire protection. We pay \$74/Year! Very Affordable
Persons owning property who are below poverty level will need \$\$ Consideration, we know a few people in that situation. Would like to see a cost analysis for homeowners. Would not want to pay more per/yr. than we pay Rural Metro if all homeowners are required to pay. Should be a fair cost.
Please promote the creation of more "Firewise Neighborhoods"
Present survey results and projections of costs using transparent methodology to gain community support
Price? All property owners in the county need to pay their share of our community's fire protection. If a property owner does not have the current financial means to pay for increased taxes, then a lien should be placed against the deed and collected when ownership changes hands.
Private fire protection is an inadequate and dangerous solution and has caused loss of life in Josephine county countless times. Shareholders and profit margins do not equal decisions made to keep the public safe. Ban companies like County Fire, it's astonishing they haven't killed someone already.
Problem is with most homeowners/Tenants not feeling they have to pay. Mentality of most, unfortunate but true, is "they'll come whether you pay for their service or not."
Property owners are required to carry a specific rating with both County and RMFD meet this classification. Why put another layer into the mix to create more expense. Because we live in 97532 Zip some insurance carriers will not underwrite regardless of which service we use.
Regardless of the outcome, I expect to get the same or better level of service I already receive from Rural Metro.
RuralMetro is the only option for our fire district. County Fire doesnt do 1% of what RM does and out of that 1% they are 99% not able to perform They should not be allowed to operate there aparatus in the manner they do and should be held to the same standards as other fire dept but they arent should encourage Firewise communities
Since our area is the most fire prone in the state it's stupid not to have a fire district
So thankful for County Fire Department! They are the best ones in the valley, also they are the nicest firefighters out there. They also don't up there bill every year.
Some areas will need staffing/stations added to lower response times to those residents.
Standards should be adopted. My neighbors subscribe to County Fire with no knowledge of how far away their station is and their lack of standards. Someday we will have a tragic fire in our County that could have been prevented. My first engine to arrive will be from the City as they are closer.
That 1/3 of rural residents do not subscribe to a fire service is unfair to those of us who do subscribe. Time they paid their share. And those who went cheap with County Fire, which is a joke, do not count. It is time we all paid for fire+ service. We are very satisfied with Rural Metro, btw.
The emergency response system was not activated during the fires of 9/8/20, what will be done to push to radio and TV?
There is a camp of homeless people on BLM land about 3 miles up Cheney Creek. They moved their after their home on Fir Canyon was condemned. I'm very worried about the potential fire danger that this may cause. This area has been described as a tweaker camp and was not present last summer.
There is alot of misinformation regarding the service differences between Rural Metro and County Fire. Such as who will come when 911 is called, what department can or cannot provide medical help or the difference in fire protection. Clearing things like this up should probably be addressed as well.

Q12 - Additional Information regarding Fire Protection Services in Josephine County
This is an absolute necessity...The commissioners have put this off for way to long. It is time to have a real Fire District
Tou said, do you support joco commission formerly {sic} adopting these standards I added 290+/- characters on earlier attempt. The survey wouldn't accept them. Don't know why not. I'll send them separately to the Board! But wish I could send them here.
Universal financial support for fire services is critical.
We all need this fire protection. Many do not subscribe to it. A fire district would cover all properties in the area.
We currently contract with Rural Metro. I'm not interested in paying more in taxes to provide services which would inevitably rival those of the county police. ☹️
We do not need more government departments. Private enterprise should provide. Any home with a mortgage is required by the lender to have fire protection.
We have voted the Fire District down several times. Why are they bringing it up again? Who will be in charge of said F D?
We need a fire department with county oversight. The two we have are band aid fixes for the actual solution. Form a fire district, hire firefighters and staff. Do not contract these services.
We need water storage tanks throughout the county where water is not available for firefighting, (Structures)
We would love to have more service available to us in Wolf Creek!!
We're only ones in our hood w/ a fire subscription-NOT FAIR! Wildfires spread 2 homes. We need a prof. fire dept! We've seen RMFD arrive B4 an ambulance. Some private fire depts. weren't properly equipped/trained- there should B requirements B4 theysell their service. This is a life or death issue!
What the projected increase in taxes per home owner.
What would the additional costs be to those not in the city? How would those costs be paid?
Where I live, it's not just a question of home protection. I live very close to the woodland interface and nearly lost my home to the Taylor Creek fire in 2018. I would like to see much more aggressive support for wilderness fire suppression and wilderness management to prevent fire.
Wolf Creek Fire cannot meet any of these standards. The citizens of Wolf Creek are pay more than most everyone else in the county and are MUCH less protected. Rural Metro has most always had to rescue Wolf Creek Fire from themselves. The Cheif out their is a joke!
Wolf creek is on the edge of josephine county and I feel sometimes gets overlooked by the county officials.
Would be great if someone would come & assess our fire-safe zone around our home so we'd know what we need to do to help ensure fire prevention around our dwelling & other buildings.
Would raise taxes which are already too high.