

Detailed Message from the Fire Chief

In response to financial and organizational challenges facing small fire departments such as ours, the Fairmount Fire Protection District asked the Arvada Fire Protection District in the fall of 2022 to consider a merger. An emergency response and cooperative services analysis had previously revealed that a merger would improve firefighter safety, expand the level of services to both communities, and strengthen organizational sustainability.

As a result of this collaboration, property owners within what is currently the Fairmount Fire Protection District will vote on this merger as a ballot item on Nov. 5, 2024. If the ballot issue is approved by Fairmount voters, the merger would be effective on Jan. 1, 2025, and Fairmount Fire would become part of the Arvada Fire Protection District as a single, unified fire district. Arvada Fire is a special district, just like Fairmount Fire, and is completely independent of the City of Arvada.

A merger between these two fire districts isn't a new topic and discussions have taken place throughout the past decade. With the challenges facing a small fire district such as ours continuing to mount, we believe now is the right time to move forward with this proposal. Fairmount firefighters, staff and our Board of Directors see the merger as the only long-term way to provide the best fire protection and emergency medical services to our community.

Challenges facing Fairmount Fire

Fairmount Fire does not have an adequate tax base and is therefore no longer capable of providing the same level of services to the community that a larger department can.

For example, nationally recognized standards state that 17 firefighters are needed to respond to a fire in a single-family home. Fairmount only has seven firefighters on duty at a time. Additionally, Fairmount does not have paramedics on the fire apparatus and relies on a private contractor to provide ambulance services. The contracted ambulance is only on duty within our fire district for 12 hours each day resulting in delayed emergency medical response times during the remaining 12 hours.

Fairmount Fire also cannot provide competitive wages and benefits needed to retain firefighters. Our workforce has become a revolving door with new firefighters eventually leaving after a few years of service to larger departments that offer competitive wages. Moreover, reliance on volunteer firefighters has become increasingly untenable, both locally and nationally. Fairmount's volunteer force has dwindled to just 12 personnel, a marked decrease in the past 10 years.

An increase in Mill Levy is needed to sustain our services

Fairmount Fire will not be sustainable or capable of providing its current level of services without an increase in its mill levy. In fact, the mill levy increase needed to merge with Arvada Fire is smaller than one that would be proposed for Fairmount Fire to be independently self-sufficient.

To merge fire districts, Fairmount's mill levy will need to be increased by 3.91 mills to match the mill levy citizens pay to the Arvada Fire Protection District. To be sustainable without merging, Fairmount Fire would likely ask for the mill levy to be increased by at least 5.0 mills. This is a more expensive option for taxpayers, and one that does not include the many service benefits provided by merging.

Proposed service benefits through merging

By integrating districts, Fairmount would be adequately staffed with career firefighters and paramedics on duty at all times. This bolstered firefighting force translates to a more effective response force, enhanced opportunities for training, and improved emergency outcomes.

One significant service enhancement is improved Emergency Medical Services, which makes up most of our call volume. Through a merger, Fairmount would receive Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage 24/7 provided by firefighter paramedics on ambulances and engines. An ALS apparatus brings a higher level of training, equipment, and interventions to medical emergencies.

Other service improvements include enhanced wildfire response capabilities, coverage from a water rescue team, hazardous materials response team, crisis intervention team for emergencies involving mental health or substance abuse, and significantly increased fire and injury prevention programs.

Moving forward, together

The proposed merger between Fairmount and Arvada Fire Departments represents a proactive response to the challenges faced by small fire departments in meeting the evolving needs of their communities. By combining resources, personnel, and capabilities, a unified fire district would be more sustainable while providing an enhanced level of services. This path forward is less expensive than attempting to be sustainable alone.

To approve this merger, Fairmount citizens will need to vote in favor of three ballot items. Information about what you can expect to see on your ballot this year will be provided soon.

Please submit questions and or comments [HERE](#). For information from Arvada Fire, please contact Public Information Officer Brady Johnson at 303-424-3012.