

***RUTHERFORD COUNTY
FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE DISTRICT REPORT***



PREPARED BY RUTHERFORD COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

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Fire Protection Service District Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information concerning the changes in adjoining Service Districts for fire protection and the effects of this on property owners and fire departments. Its intent is to provide direction for how the County may assist in providing a reduction in fire insurance premiums to property owners.

In preparing this report, the standards set out in N.C.G.S. 153A-304.3 were all reviewed and considered. The proposed boundary relocation meets the requirements of N.C.G.S. 153A-304.3(a).

The primary reasons for the changes are a result of the construction of a new fire station operated by Sandy Mush Volunteer Fire Department and located at 841 Chase High Road. This includes an extension of the Sandy Mush Fire Protection District and a realignment of adjoining Service District lines between Sandy Mush and Danielstown (Served by S.D.O. Volunteer Fire Department. This is referenced in the map marked Exhibit "B" and further detailed in Exhibit "D".

Fire protection in Rutherford County is currently provided by thirteen volunteer and four municipal fire departments. Additionally, the County also contracts with three outside County volunteer fire departments to provide services within Rutherford County. All of these departments respond to calls outside their primary district and provide automatic and mutual aid to other departments and agencies.

Primarily, services provided by the County volunteer fire departments are dependent upon tax revenue generated within the individual fire districts. The departments submit budgets based on individual needs within their respective districts.

This proposed change would be consistent with the original goals of the establishment of the county service districts, one of which include allowing for insurance, tax and service district lines to be synonymous. Everyone living within six road miles from a rated fire station as shown by Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping would pay a tax rate approved by the Board of Commissioners and be eligible for a reduction in business and homeowner insurance premiums.

Fire protection in the area affected by the proposed relocation of district boundaries would be provided in a similar manner as it is now. Rutherford County would contract with each fire department to provide services in their respective fire protection services districts and a designated portion of the Outside Response Area.

It is the recommendation of the Rutherford County Fire Departments that the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners call for a public hearing for the purpose of relocating the boundary lines between adjoining county service districts for fire protection as outlined in N.C. General Statute 153A-304.3.

This request for your consideration is based on the following reasons:

1. Approximately 2 property owners outside an approved fire insurance district will be included in the service district giving them eligibility for reduced insurance premiums.
2. There is and continues to be a demonstrable need for providing fire protection services in those areas of Rutherford County not presently in an insurance district or municipality.
3. It is impractical to provide those services on a countywide basis.
4. It is economically feasible to provide the proposed services in the district without unreasonable or burdensome annual tax levies.
5. There is a demonstrable demand for the proposed services by persons residing in the district.

Following is additional information that will be important for you to review as you consider this request.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Fire Protection Service District?

The Fire Protection Service District is a service tax district created to finance fire protection to the residents of Rutherford County's fire districts.

What areas will be included in the Fire Protections Service Tax District?

The Service Tax District includes all property within six miles of a rated fire station. Additionally, all property outside of six miles is in a tax district called Outside Response Area.

What is an Outside Response Area?

An Outside Response Area is comprised of all properties in the County which are outside of six miles of a rated fire department. All this area will be considered one service district. This area will be taxed at a minimal rate due to the fact that it does not qualify for reduced insurance premiums; however, fire protection and other emergency services are provided by the fire departments. The County Fire Chiefs will develop a budget for this area as has been submitted previously and a rate will be set by the Board of Commissioners.

How will the money collected from these taxes be distributed to individual contracting fire departments?

Fire departments submit budget requests annually to the Fire Marshal's Office. Budgets are included in the County's annual budget package. The County Commissioners make the final decision on appropriations. This is the process we are currently using.

What are the advantages for the fire departments?

Insurance, tax and response districts will be identical. Maps can be easily updated and vital information such as hydrant locations, landing zones and automatic aid zones can be identified.

If I live in a municipality, how will the Fire Protection Service District affect me?

Municipal fire departments will continue to provide services to their citizens.

In addition, the County will contract with each municipal fire department to provide fire protections service within designated portions of a Service District. The municipal fire departments will submit a budget and a rate will be set by the Board of County Commissioners.