

27. SUTTER CREEK FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Sutter Creek Fire Protection District (SCFPD) provides fire and emergency response services.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Background

SCFPD was officially formed in 1906 and is an independent special district.⁵²⁹ The District was formed to provide fire and emergency services.

The principal act that governs the District is the Fire Protection District Law of 1987.⁵³⁰ The principal act empowers fire districts to provide fire protection, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material response, ambulance, and any other services relating to the protection of lives and property.⁵³¹ Districts must apply and obtain LAFCO approval to exercise services authorized by the principal act but not already provided (i.e., latent powers) by the district at the end of 2000.⁵³²

Boundary

The SCFPD boundary area consists of two non-contiguous areas: the first generally encompasses the City of Sutter Creek and the second encompasses Amador City and an area of unincorporated territory west of Amador City. The cities are in central-western Amador County, and together total approximately three square miles. By comparison, the District's primary response area is 55 square miles.

LAFCO records indicate there have been seven annexations to the District since LAFCO was created, affecting a total of 97 acres.⁵³³ The most recent annexation occurred in the 1990s and involved 44 acres. A number of reorganizations to annex land to the City of Sutter Creek included annexation to Sutter Creek FPD.

Sphere of Influence

LAFCO records indicate the original SOI was adopted in December 1976, but the record does not provide a description of its boundaries. There is no record of LAFCO amending the SCFPD SOI. From the records, it can only be assumed that sphere amendments were assumed to be "automatic" when changes of organization occurred. After adoption of this MSR, LAFCO will update the SOI for the District.

⁵²⁹ Formation date reported by the District in the 2008 MSR.

⁵³⁰ Health and Safety Code §13800-13970.

⁵³¹ Health and Safety Code §13862.

⁵³² Government Code §56824.10.

⁵³³ LAFCO resolutions 69-16, 69-20, 69-22, 72-45, 72-47, 72-51, 83-173. The resolution and adoption date for the seventh annexation were not found in the LAFCO archives.

Local Accountability and Governance

The principal act stipulates that a fire protection district's board of directors must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three and a maximum of 11.⁵³⁴ Directors may be appointed or elected to staggered four-year terms. Boards are to internally elect directors to the positions of president and vice-president. Accordingly, SCFPD is governed by a five-member, elected board of directors. The Board has a chair and vice-chair. Current board member names, positions, and term expiration dates are shown in Figure 27-1.

Figure 27-1: SCFPD Governing Body

Sutter Creek Fire Protection District			
Governing Body			
Members	Name	Position	Term Ends
	Harold Gamble	Chair	2016
	Reed Shugart	Vice Chair	2014
	Ron Watson	Commissioner	2014
	John Motto-Ros	Commissioner	2016
	Bob Lonh	Commissioner	2014
Manner of Selection	Election at large		
Length of Term	Four years		
Meetings	1st and 3rd Tuesdays, Location: 350 Hanford St., Sutter Creek, CA		
Agenda Distribution	Mailed and posted		
Minutes Distribution	Mailed and provided upon request		
Contact			
Contact	Chair		
Mailing Address	P.O. Box 365, Sutter Creek, CA 95685		
Phone	(209) 267-0285, Fax: (209) 267-0587		
Email/Website	suttercreekfire@sbcglobal.net, suttercreekfire.com		

With regard to customer service, complaints may be submitted to the District via phone or letter. The District is not aware of any complaints submitted in 2012.

The District reported that it has had no Brown Act violations in recent history.

The District demonstrated adequate accountability in its disclosure of information and cooperation with LAFCO. The agency responded to LAFCO's written questionnaires; however, the District did not provide recent financial statements.

⁵³⁴ Health and Safety Code §13842.

Management

The Chief and the district secretary manage the daily operations of the District. SCFPD does not perform employee or performance evaluations.

The District has a mission statement, which is “Save lives, protect property, and be safe.”

District financial planning efforts include annual budgets. While the District reportedly conducts biennial financial audits, the most recent audit was completed for FY 10, and the District has not yet conducted audits for FYs 11 and 12. The District does not have a capital improvement plan.

Service Demand and Growth

Existing land uses in the SCFPD boundary area are diverse, including single-family residential, commercial, industrial, mining, and institutional uses. Commercial and industrial land uses are concentrated in the Sutter Hill area and along Old Highway 49.⁵³⁵ Large, vacant parcels are located on the outskirts of Amador City and Sutter Creek. Land uses in the District’s service area, which includes about 52 square miles outside the District’s bounds, are predominantly agricultural and vacant, and include commercial and industrial uses in the Martell area.⁵³⁶

Major employers in the District’s bounds include the City of Sutter Creek, and hotels in Sutter Creek and Amador City. There are several small restaurants and shops in both cities. The District’s primary response area includes a portion of the unincorporated Martell community with its many retailers.

The District’s population is estimated to be approximately 2,686—the combined population of the two cities in 2010.⁵³⁷ The District’s population density is 866 per square mile, substantially higher than the countywide density of 64. The population that the District serves is greater than the estimated district population, due to the fact that the primary response area extends outside district bounds.

SCFPD has experienced negative growth over the past few years. The population in the District’s boundary area declined by 11 percent from 2008 to 2010. In contrast, over a ten-year period from 2000 to 2010, the District’s population grew by 7 percent, compared to countywide population growth of 9 percent in the same period.⁵³⁸ The SCFPD service area includes the Martell area, where significant retail development occurred in recent years.

In 2008, the District reported that service demand was increasing, due to developments both inside and near its bounds and that it did not have the capacity to serve this growth, due to financing constraints. In 2013, the District confirmed that this trend in demand

⁵³⁵ City of Sutter Creek, *General Plan Land Use Element*, 1994, Map LU-1.

⁵³⁶ Amador County, *General Plan, Existing General Plan Land Use Classifications*, 2007.

⁵³⁷ Population as reported for each City by Census 2010. Population in the minimal unincorporated territory served by the District was not available.

⁵³⁸ Department of Finance, April 1, 2010 estimates compared to January 1, 2000 estimates.

continued to be the case, and limited financing continued to constrain capacity to adequately serve demand.

The 2008 MSR reported that there were six planned and proposed residential developments in the Sutter Creek vicinity. These developments projected an estimated 1,602 residential units, of which Gold Rush Ranch constituted over 80 percent of these proposed units. In 2013, the City of Sutter Creek reported there are now four planned developments, projecting 1,463 units on 989 acres. Gold Rush Ranch constitutes over 90 percent of the proposed units. For more information on these developments, see the City of Sutter Creek profile in Chapter 8.

There are a small number of lots available for development within Amador City.

The District is not a land use authority, and does not hold primary responsibility for implementing growth strategies.

Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities

LAFCO is required to evaluate disadvantaged unincorporated communities as part of this service review, including the location and characteristics of any such communities. A disadvantaged unincorporated community is defined as any area with 12 or more registered voters, or as determined by commission policy, where the median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide annual median.⁵³⁹

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has developed a mapping tool to assist in determining which communities meet the disadvantaged communities median household income definition.⁵⁴⁰ DWR identified nine disadvantaged communities within Amador County—three of which are cities and are therefore not considered unincorporated.⁵⁴¹ One of the identified disadvantaged communities is within SCFPD's bounds; Martell has a population of 153.

However, DWR is not bound by the same law as LAFCO to define communities with a minimum threshold of 12 or more registered voters. Because income information is not available for this level of analysis, disadvantaged unincorporated communities that meet LAFCO's definition cannot be identified at this time.

Financing

The District reports that current financing levels are not adequate to deliver services currently, and would not accommodate projected increases in service demand. SCFPD has provided service over the years, due to a strong volunteer firefighter base. The District reported that with the adoption of Measure M, SCFPD has transitioned to a combination fire district including both volunteers and some paid staff.

⁵³⁹ Government Code §56033.5.

⁵⁴⁰ Based on census data, the median household income in the State of California in 2010 was \$57,708, 80 percent of which is \$46,166.

⁵⁴¹ DWR maps and GIS files are derived from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) and are compiled for the five-year period 2006-2010.

The financial information for FY 11-12 discussed in this section was reported directly by the District, and substantiating documents were not provided. Therefore, the information could not be reviewed and confirmed for accuracy.

Total revenues were \$481,852 in FY 12. The primary revenue source is Measure M revenue (55 percent). Property taxes comprised 40 percent of total revenue. Service charges composed 5 percent of revenue. Although the District did not report any mitigation fee revenue in FY 12, it has received mitigation fees in past years.

The District's expenditures in FY 12 were \$441,499. Expenditures were composed of employee compensation (13 percent), services and supplies (26 percent), AFPD contract (59 percent) and capital expenditures (2 percent). The category of services and supplies includes protective clothing, maintenance expenses, and utilities, among others.

The District had no outstanding long-term debt at the end of FY 12.

The District did not report a fund balance for the end of FY 12. As noted, FY 12 financial statements were not provided and therefore the nature of SCFPD's fund balance is unclear. The District does not have a formal policy on reserves, although it does aim to keep as much as possible for contingencies in case of economic downturns and unforeseen emergencies.

FIRE AND EMS SERVICES

Nature and Extent

SCFPD provides fire prevention, fire suppression services, emergency medical response, and rescue services. In addition, the District provides public assistance, building inspections, and public education.

Portions of the SCFPD primary response area are in the State Responsibility Area (SRA), which are areas located outside of the Local Responsibility Area (LRA). LRAs are typically located either inside the boundaries of a city or are more urbanized areas surrounded by SRA. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is a seasonal fire agency in Amador County that operates from May through October and is responsible for the protection of SRA lands in the State of California.

In the SRA, CAL FIRE is responsible for wild land fires; SCFPD is responsible for structure fire, medical aid, vehicle accidents, public assists and first response on rescues. In the LRA, SCFPD is responsible for all of the aforementioned services with the addition of wildfire.

Personnel

The District is staffed by one chief, one operations chief, one battalion chief, three captains and 12 volunteer firefighters. All non-probationary firefighters are certified Firefighter 1 level or higher. All firefighters are certified BLS First Responder or EMT-1.

The District also contracts with Amador Fire Protection District (AFPD) for paid personnel. The contract provides for one paid captain, two paid engineers, one paid firefighter, and a portion of a battalion chief for supervision.

The paid captain and engineers work a 48-96 schedule, whereby they work 48 hours in residence at a station and then have 96 hours off. They are assigned to three shifts, A, B, and C. Currently the captain is on C shift and the engineers are on A and B shifts. The paid firefighter works from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. This is to maximize coverage during the time volunteers are generally working regular jobs.

Volunteer firefighters are recruited by word of mouth and via presentations at career day at Amador High School. The District reports an average turnover of three volunteer firefighters per year.

Non-sworn personnel consist of a district secretary.

The District provides stipends to captains and above to offset costs. The chief receives \$570 a month, the operations chief receives \$700 a month, the battalion chief receives \$600 a month, captains receive \$150 a month and the secretary receives \$550 a month. All volunteer personnel from captain rank and below receive ten-dollars per emergency call response.

The District also has a stipend program in place to augment the paid staff. The stipend program allows for a volunteer firefighter to spend a 12-hour shift at the station and the District allocates \$50 to cover food, fuel, personal and safety items. The stipend program is available seven days a week with a day shift and a night shift.

The District reported that training of cadets (16 to 21 year-old trainees), is challenging, due to the limited number of classes available and the cost. Cadets are required to train 110 to 150 hours annually. Regular training is held on Wednesday nights and special training is offered on Saturdays and as needed. In addition, the County offers an initial training through a 67-hour course, which is held annually and is open to all service providers in the County.

Regional Collaboration

SCFPD collaborates with other fire providers in the County through the Amador Fire Protection Authority (AFPA). AFPA is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that is tasked with allocating Measure M funds to local fire agencies and to look at consolidation of the fire agencies. The AFPA Board is made up of SCFPD, Amador County FPD, Lockwood Fire Protection District (LFPD), Jackson Fire Department (JFD), Ione Fire Department (IFD), Jackson Valley Fire Protection District (JVFPD) and the City of Plymouth. Additionally, SCFPD provides automatic aid to adjacent areas through an agreement with AFPD.

SCFPD has been in talks with AFPD about consolidation or reorganization of the two districts for the last four years. AFPD and SCFPD cooperate in many areas to ensure optimal service provision. SCFPD currently contracts for paid personnel, plan checking and inspections. Command staff also work together to ensure coverage throughout AFPD and SCFPD.

Dispatch and Communications

All 911 calls made from landlines in Amador County are automatically routed to the Amador County Sheriff's communication center in Jackson, which is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Cell phone 911 calls are answered by the California Highway Patrol in Stockton, and then are routed to the Sheriff. Fire and EMS calls are routed from

the PSAP to Secondary Public Safety Answering Point (SPSAP), or Camino. Camino is the designator for CAL FIRE's Interagency Command Center in El Dorado County. Camino receives calls from PSAP's as well as direct calls and is responsible for dispatch for the Amador, Eldorado, Alpine and Sacramento CALFIRE Unit (AEU). Camino is responsible for all fire dispatches in Amador and El Dorado County as well as medic dispatch in El Dorado County. SCFPD is dispatched to all calls within its primary response area by Camino.

All fire providers in Amador County, including SCFPD, communicate through the same radio systems. Amador County uses AEU Local for dispatching and Amador Command for incident traffic. SCFPD is designated a tactical frequency, if the emergency call dictates. Because of the shared radio frequencies, SCFPD is able to communicate with all the other providers in Amador County. As with all agencies that use Incident Command System (ICS), the first unit to arrive on scene is responsible for incident command. The first responder notifies other providers whether and when sufficient personnel have arrived on scene. For incidents such as vehicle accidents, law enforcement becomes responsible for incident coordination once it arrives on scene through Unified Command. Prior to law enforcement arriving on scene, the first responding fire provider remains responsible for incident command.

Location

The District serves its primary response area (approximately 42 square miles), which is much larger than its legal bounds (approximately three square miles). The area encompasses the District's legal bounds and extends three to five miles beyond in all directions to form one contiguous area. The primary response area extends east of Sutter Creek to Carpenter's Gulch, north to the intersection of New Chicago Road and North Quartz Mountain Road, west to the intersection of Varia Ranch Road and SR 49, and south to the intersection of SR 88 and SR 104. The area includes territory north of the railroad tracks in the unincorporated community of Martell.

Infrastructure

SCFPD operates three fire stations. Station 141, the main station, is located on Hanford Street (Old Highway 49) and houses two Type I fire engines (6433 and 6434), a Type III fire engine (6422) and a tactical tender (6440). Station 141 was finished in 1988 and has a kitchen, multiple bathrooms, day room, offices and living quarters. Station 141 houses the AFD personnel that are paid for by Measure M.

Station 142 is located in downtown Sutter Creek next to City Hall. It is unknown when it was built. The station is currently used to house equipment. Station 142 has a Type II engine (6420), and a squad vehicle (6446).

Station 143 is located in Amador City and is currently being rebuilt along with a new bridge in Amador City. Station 143 houses the District's antique fire engine as well as antique hose carts. No emergency calls are dispatched out of Station 143.

All stations are considered by the District to be in good condition. Station 141 has had new floors installed, painting and upgrades of appliances over the last year. The parking lot is scheduled to be repaved in 2014 and ramps sealed at the end of 2013.

A new station will be needed if the Gold Rush Development is developed. The development will include a site for a fire station or provide funds to offset the site at another location. Fire access roads will be constructed on the east and west sides of the development. In addition the Gold Rush Development plans require adequate fire flow, fire sprinklers and a fuel management plan.

The District reports that its fire apparatuses are 15 years old or older, and therefore, new fire vehicles are necessary. The District does not typically buy new equipment, rather it chooses to purchase lightly used fire engines from other agencies.

The District did not provide information about its source for water reserves or the water carrying capacity of apparatus, but did report that all areas in the District are equipped with fire hydrants.

Service Adequacy

There are two general indicators of service adequacy for municipal fire providers: ISO rating and response times. The Insurance Service Office (ISO), an advisory organization, classifies fire service in communities from 1 to 10, indicating the general adequacy of coverage. Communities with the best systems for water distribution, fire department facilities, equipment and personnel and fire alarms and communications receive a rating of 1. SCFPD has an ISO rating of 5, and was last evaluated by ISO in 2000.

Emergency response time standards vary by level of urbanization of an area: the more urban an area, the faster the required response. The response time guideline established by the California EMS Agency is five minutes in urban areas, 15 minutes in suburban or rural areas, and as quickly as possible in wilderness areas. SCFPD's bounds are classified as urban in Sutter Creek and rural in Amador City. The average response time in 2012 within District bounds was approximately four minutes and approximately 10 minutes outside of district bounds. The District's 90th percentile response time in 2012 was 8.8 minutes, meeting the rural but not the urban guideline.

The District reports that there is room for improved efficiency in all areas of service.

Figure 27-2: SCFPD Fire Profile

Fire Service				
Service Configuration			Service Demand	
Fire Suppression	Direct		Statistical Base Year	2012
EMS	Direct		Total Service Calls	717
Ambulance Transport	ALA		% EMS	70%
Hazardous Materials	Calaveras		% Fire/Hazardous Materials	5%
Air Rescue & Ambulance Helicopter	Out of Region		% Miscellaneous	16%
Fire Suppression Helicopter	N/A		% Non-emergency	7%
Public Safety Answering Point	Sheriff		% False Alarms	2%
Fire/EMS Dispatch	CAL FIRE		Calls per 1,000 people	267
Service Adequacy			Resources	
ISO Rating		5	Fire Stations in District	3
Average Response Time (min)		4 minutes (urban), 10 minutes (rural)	Fire Stations Serving District	2
90th Percentile Response Time (min)		8.8	Sq. Miles per Station ¹	27.5
Response Time Base Year		2012	Total Staff ²	23
Training			Total Full-time Firefighters	3
Personnel are required to train 110 to 150 hours annually, as specified by a training officer. Regular training is held on Wednesday nights and special training is held on Saturdays.			Total Volunteer Firefighters	15
			Total Sworn Staff per Station ³	11
			Total Sworn Staff per 1,000	8.2
Service Challenges			Staffing Base Year	2012
Service challenges include providing adequate response to service calls, finding training opportunities that are affordable, and the cost of replacing equipment.			Fire Flow Water Reserves ⁴	NP
Facilities				
Station	Location	Condition	Staff per Shift	Apparatus
Station 141	350 Hanford St. Sutter Creek, CA	Good	1 to 1.5 + stipend	2 Type I engines, 1 Type III engine & Tactical Tender
Station 142	18 Main St., Sutter Creek, CA	Fair	Unstaffed	1 Type II engine, 1 squad
Station 143	10791 Water St., Amador City, CA	Under construction	Unstaffed	Antique fire engine and hose carts
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies				
The District will eventually need a new station in the Sutter Hill area. The District also requires new fire engines to replace the current old fleet.				
Facility Sharing				
Current Practices: Station 141 is used by different community groups and city governments for various uses.				
Future Opportunities: Consolidation with other county fire providers poses an opportunity to maximize efficiency through facility sharing.				
Mutual & Automatic Aid Agreements				
Mutual aid agreements between ACPD, CAL FIRE, City of Ione, City of Jackson, JVFPD, LFPD and SCFPD. SCFPD has an automatic aid agreement with ACPD.				
Notes:				
(1) Primary service area (square miles) per station.				
(2) Total staff includes sworn and non-sworn personnel.				
(3) Based on ratio of sworn full-time and call staff to the number of stations. Actual staffing levels of each station vary.				
(4) Reserves include public and private water sources.				

SUMMARY OF DETERMINATIONS

Growth and population projections

- ❖ While the District's population has experienced a slight decline in recent years, the District continues to experience growth in demand for services, mostly likely attributable to nearby growth, tourism and increased commuting through the District.
- ❖ Service demand in the District's bounds is largely dependent on the development of the proposed Gold Rush Ranch residential development. The proposed development does not appear to have made any significant progress towards construction since the 2008 MSR.
- ❖ Residents and businesses may desire or expect higher levels of service than what is currently available and provided.

The Location and Characteristics of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities Within or Contiguous to the Agency's SOI

- ❖ There is one disadvantaged unincorporated community within the District's service area, based upon mapping information provided by the State of California Department of Water Resources. The community of Martell has a population of 153 residents. This area currently receives services consistent with those provided within the district.

Present and planned capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services, including infrastructure needs and deficiencies

- ❖ The District's current facilities have sufficient capacity to serve current demand in the short term. The District does not have the capacity to serve future growth with existing fire stations and financial resources. In the absence of a master plan or capital improvement plan, it cannot be known whether the District will be able to maintain service levels over the long term.
- ❖ Although the District has identified that its vehicles will need replacing eventually, it has not developed a master plan or a capital improvement plan in order to systematically prioritize replacement, identify funding, and outline a replacement schedule. It is recommended the District develop a 10-year capital improvement plan to address these planning deficiencies.
- ❖ The District has begun to renovate Station 143, which was identified as being in poor condition in the 2008 MSR. Improvements to this station will likely have a minimal impact on level of services offered by the District, given that the station is not staffed and is not planned to be staffed.

Financial ability of agencies to provide services

- ❖ The District reports that current financing levels are not adequate to deliver services currently, and would not accommodate the projected increase in service demand. In the absence of enhanced financial planning whereby a long-term plan could be developed to address financial constraints it cannot be known if the District would have the ability to maintain service levels over the long term.
- ❖ The District relies on volunteers for some of the services it provides. While this is currently an effective arrangement, the long-term availability of able volunteers, which is often unpredictable, may affect the sustainability of service provision.
- ❖ SCFPD effectively supports services provided by other government agencies through contracts, agreements and cooperative efforts. Reorganization and/or consolidation of services with those agencies may further improve the financial ability of SCFPD and other participant fire service providers to offer the highest level of services at the lowest possible cost to citizens.

Status of, and opportunities for, shared facilities

- ❖ Station 141 is currently used by various community organizations and other public organizations.
- ❖ SCFPD collaborates with other fire providers in the County, providing and receiving automatic and mutual aid and as a member of AFPA.
- ❖ Consolidation/reorganization or further functional consolidation with other fire service providers will likely offer increased opportunities for shared resources, including facilities and vehicles, as well as pooled finances to hire full-time staff.

Accountability for community service needs, including governmental structure and operational efficiencies

- ❖ SCFPD demonstrated some accountability and transparency during the MSR process. While a majority of the requested information was ultimately received, the District did not respond in a timely manner and did not provide up-to-date financial information.
- ❖ There is a close working relationship among the fire providers in Amador County. The similarity of challenges faced by each agency and potential cost savings offered by consolidation or reorganization suggests that fire agencies will need to review opportunities for reorganization in some form, including functional consolidation.