



EASTERN ALPINE COUNTY FIRE SERVICES PLAN

Prepared for the Ad Hoc Committee
Of the Alpine County Board of Supervisors
And
The Alpine Fire Safe Council

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Eastern Alpine County Fire Services Plan

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Eastern Alpine County Fire Services Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Existing Conditions (Section I)

The purpose of this Fire Services Plan is to guide management of the fire prevention/suppression services and emergency medical services within Eastern Alpine County. The primary service area includes Markleeville, Woodfords, and the Woodfords Indian Colony. It is bounded by the Nevada Stateline to the East, El Dorado County to the North, USFS area to the South, and West to Picketts Junction. Importantly, the fire and medical staff respond to emergency calls that are received from time-to-time outside of this primary area. A map of the service area is shown in the Fire Services Plan.

A brief description of how fire and emergency medical services programs are organized, financed, and operated at the present time is found in Section I. Several major concerns were identified: recruitment and retention problems for volunteers, limited training opportunity, and severely imposed demands on existing volunteers for incident responses. The geographic area served is very large with seasonal limitations on road access and limited water supply sources. The capital facilities lack necessary improvements, and resources are lacking to install improvements and to replace or upgrade equipment. The Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating ranges from six to ten (the poorest possible). This means high fire insurance premiums and in some cases, reluctance by insurers to issue policies.

Organizational Alternatives (Section II)

Ten options are summarized for organizing the fire and emergency medical services. Three options are presented in more detail for the committee to consider in framing the recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. These are: forming a single department; forming a Public Safety program; or forming a modified status quo program. The estimated costs for three years in each of the three options are shown below.

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
Single Department	\$172,155	\$202,175	\$256,205
Public Safety	\$200,155	\$231,375	\$298,641
Rev. Status Quo	\$192,175	\$204,385	\$196,080

These costs include repayment of a loan to start the assessment proceedings and a reserve for the future.

For the first two years, the single department and public safety department alternatives require a full-time Fire Chief and a full-time technical assistant with a part-time volunteer coordinator. In year three, a full-time Assistant Chief is added to be responsible for the merger of the fire and emergency medical services.

The modified status quo has two part-time Fire Chief positions—one for Markleeville and one for Woodfords.

Financing (Section IV)

Financing the proposed fire and emergency medical programs is based upon four sources of income:

- No reduction in current county funding
- New development impact fees
- State and federal grant assistance
- Assessment proceedings

The actual assessment per property is not possible to estimate, because an engineering analysis is required. It could range between four and six cents per square foot of the improvements posing fire risk. The engineering analysis would cost approximately \$45,000. This cost would be required up front as a loan from the County or STPUD Reserves with repayment from assessment proceeds over a three-year period. Consent from property owners to be assessed must be obtained from owners paying 50% + \$1 of the total assessment. Approval is not required from registered voters.

Impact fees are costs charged to new construction, to off set acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to serve the new development. The fees are collected countywide, but are allocated to the point of origin, so that Eastern Alpine County would benefit from the development fees paid within that service area. Impact fee revenue could only be used for capital outlay and administrative costs related to setting, collecting, and reporting the fees. Operation expenses for fire and emergency medical services are ineligible impact fee costs. Analysis would be needed to develop a capital improvement plan for the County and to show the proportionate costs between projected new development and existing properties. It is recommended that the County undertake this analysis at the earliest possible time.

Along with impact fees and property assessments, a brief description is offered for several miscellaneous new revenue sources, because if adopted by the County, a fraction of those revenues would be applicable to Eastern Alpine County. Two sources are transient occupancy tax and sales tax, both would require voter approval with a 2/3 majority. A property transfer fee increase is estimated for discussion, but is not likely permissible even with voter approval. Three other miscellaneous revenues could be activated by the Board of Supervisors without voter consent. They include: cost recovery for incidents involving drug/alcohol use; search and rescue activity; and fees for service to new commercial property. Caution is noted that these miscellaneous revenue sources would have a cost burden associated with administration, and a delayed period of time before funds are received.

Staffing, Facilities & Equipment (Section V)

This part of the Fire Services Plan emphasizes continued reliance on a volunteer program with each of the three organizational options covered in the Fire Services Plan. A full-time Fire Chief and technical services assistant would be proposed for both the single department and the public safety options, during the first two years of program implementation. In the third year, a full-time Assistant Chief position would be added to manage consolidation of the emergency medical services program with fire services. In the public safety scenario, deputy sheriff positions are cross-trained for fire suppression and work with the volunteers. It is noted that the Sheriff has requested voter consent before starting the public safety approach for operation of fire and emergency medical services for Eastern Alpine County.

The modified status quo option calls for two part-time Fire Chiefs—one assigned to Markleeville and one to Woodfords, with the expectation that they would work cooperatively for best use of resources available to the County.

Funding for facilities and equipment under all three organizational alternatives would be limited to the amount of income available from property assessments without causing an undue burden. In order to hold assessments to a minimum amount that still provides for needed capital outlay, it is proposed that these costs not exceed \$750,000 over fifteen years. Details describing what these capital assets would be are shown in the Fire Services Plan. The total procurement cost may be reduced by state/federal grant assistance, impact fee income, and assistance from the Woodfords Indian Colony.

Fire Services Goals/Performance (Section III) and ISO Criteria (Section VII)

These sections of the Fire Services Plan describe standards for measuring performance for fire and emergency medical responses. Guidelines are offered for response times, crew size, water demand, equipment size, and other technical elements of service delivered to the public. Criteria used by the Insurance Service Office (ISO) to rate fire service are presented to offer as a guide to what is needed to achieve an improved rating. Property owners would find lower fire insurance costs after a new rating has been set.

Implementation Program and Calendar (Section VI)

Implementing the Fire Services Plan will take a concerted effort by the Ad Hoc Committee, the Alpine Fire Safe Council, property owners, and the Board of Supervisors. This section of the Fire Services Plan identifies several action steps that could be used. These steps, not ranked by priority, are offered for review and selection. They include: voter surveys, community meetings, voter information, public officials endorsements, review of the USFS-CDF working agreement, designating a manager to oversee the process, special legislation, and local fund raisers. A calendar for pursuit of these action steps is also offered.

Emphasis is made that implementation efforts should start immediately upon presenting this Fire Services Plan to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. The momentum built-up to

produce this Fire Services Plan and engage the community in seeking improved fire and emergency medical services must be sustained. In order to accomplish this, it requires strong leadership, commitment and perseverance.

In closing this summary of the document that follows, I want to complement the Ad Hoc Committee for their patience, their willingness to be flexible in setting a meeting schedule, and their interest in the fire and emergency medical services. I also want to thank all of the many, many people who contributed to this Fire Services Plan through interviews and correspondence.

Foreword and Committee Roster

The preparation of this Fire Services Plan for fire and emergency services was directed by an Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Alpine County Board of Supervisors at their meeting of June 1, 2004. The members of this Ad Hoc Committee have been dedicated, committed and unselfishly took time from their personal lives to assist with planning for the future safety of Alpine County residents.

The Ad Hoc Committee consists of appointees from: Markleeville Fire Department, Woodfords Fire Department, Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Alpine County Fire Safe Council, Alpine County EMS, Alpine Disaster Council, Alpine County Sheriff's Department, Alpine County Building Department, Woodfords Tribal Council, and members of the interested public. Financial support was provided by the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, Title III funds through the Alpine County Board of Supervisors, and Title II funds of the same act through the Alpine Fire Safe Council. Administrative support was provided by the Alpine Fire Safe Council.

The Ad Hoc Committee consists of:

Al Petit
Bill Morgan
Chris Gansberg
Clint Celio
David Griffith
Don Jardine
Gunter Kaiser
Jeff Brees
John Crawford
Kathleen Andrews
Lynn Doyal
Mahlon Machado
Nancy Thornburg
Pete Spansail
Randy Gibson
Rob Levy
Shirley Taylor
Skip Veatch
Stacey James

Members of the Alpine Fire Safe Council include:

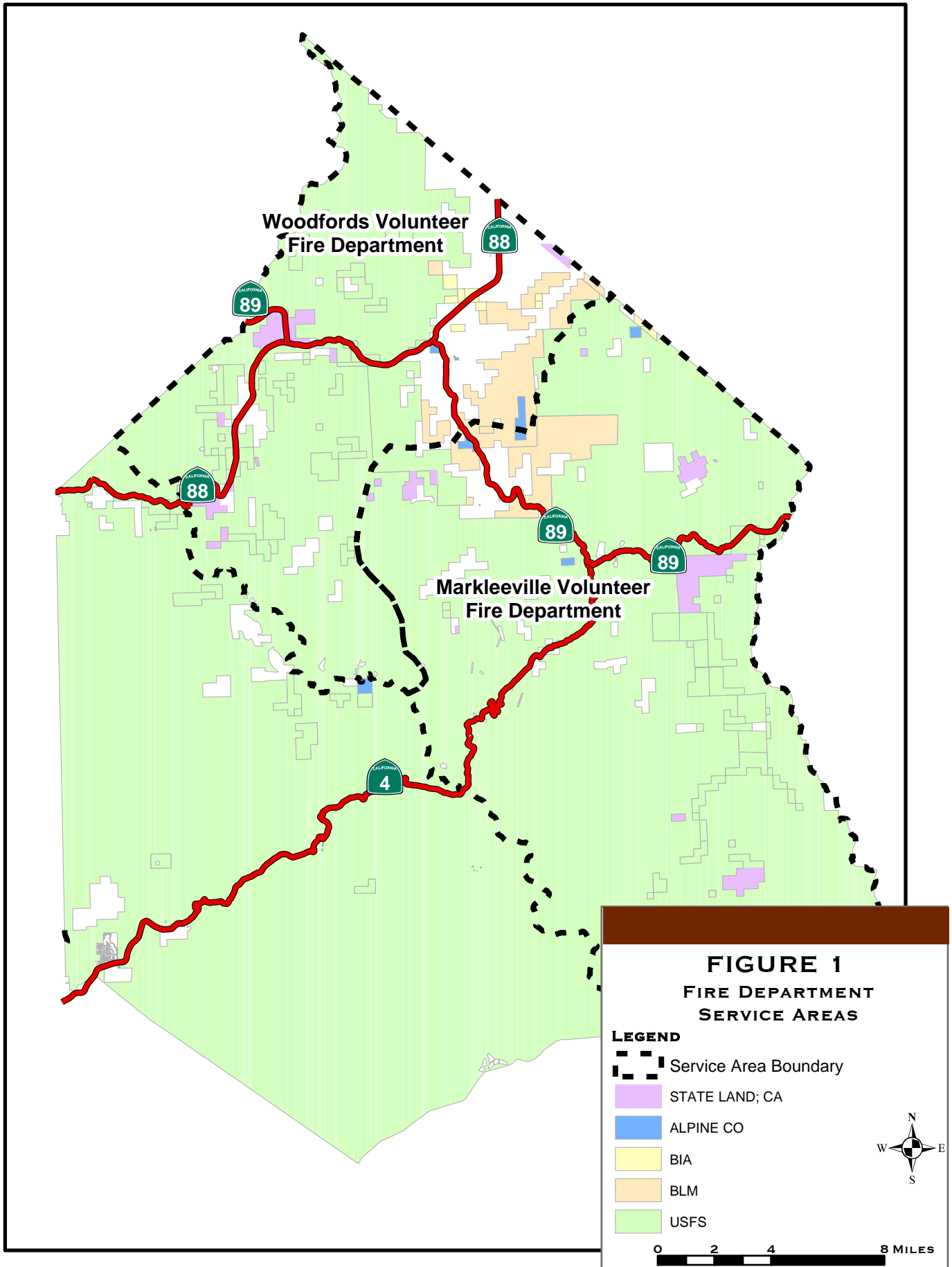
David Griffith, Chair
Don Jardine
Kim Chatfield
Nancy Thornburg
Pete Spansail
Stacey James

Essential to the formulation of a Fire Services Plan and to reflect the ideas and concepts of the Ad Hoc Committee would be a Mission Statement that could be used by the volunteers and others associated with the fire and emergency services program. Following is a suggested Mission Statement for that purpose.

Mission Statement

To serve our community, its people and our environment by providing the highest level of responsive and effective service for fire prevention, fire suppression and emergency incidents requiring assistance to prevent personal and/or property injury; to constantly monitor performance results and to engage the community in setting policies, goals and standards of operation In carrying out this mission, to work as a team with frequent and open communication; consideration for safety, training and professional development.

The following page is a map of Eastern Alpine County. The area set forth in this Fire Services Plan is shown within the white border. Please note the yellow lands. These are the Indian tribal properties referred to throughout this document.



I Overview of Existing Conditions

The present operation of fire and emergency medical services in Eastern Alpine County was documented in the Part I report filed with the Ad Hoc Committee. A complete text of that report is available from the Committee or from the Alpine Fire Safe Council. A summary of current conditions is provided here to serve as background for the recommendations contained in the Fire Services Plan.

A.) Fire Service

Fire service is organized under the County Board of Supervisors through two separate units—Woodfords and Markleeville. Staffing is exclusively through volunteers. A Fire Chief would be designated for Markleeville and an Interim Fire Chief for Woodfords. The two stations house equipment used by the volunteers. The Markleeville station is in better physical condition than Woodfords, but improvements are needed, especially if lodging and meeting facilities are required of the volunteers. The Woodfords station has severe limitations and is primarily a garage to house and store the equipment. No facilities are available for housing of volunteers or conducting training and community meetings. Major improvements are needed and are addressed later in this report.

The fire operations are funded from county general fund sources. Some grant assistance and new development impact fees are used to finance capital improvements and rolling stock. Alpine County faces extreme financial hardships with the general fund. Current obligations and restricted revenue sources have resulted in a critical situation. Any new service or expanded service, such as the fire program, must have a dedicated revenue source in order to succeed. Reliance on allocations from the general fund is not realistic.

Wildlands fire coverage is provided by the U.S. Forest Service and may, depending upon the incident and the location, engage local fire volunteers.

East of Woodfords is the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California Colony (hereafter referred to as the “Tribal Council”). The Woodfords Tribal Council is represented on the Ad Hoc Committee and wants to participate in the long-range fire protection/suppression program. There is a vacant fire station at the tribal headquarters that was funded by the Community Development Block Grant program. Future grant assistance may be possible to assist with implementation of the fire services program. The Bureau of Indian Affairs in Carson City reports that the Woodfords Indian Colony has independent sources of grant funding available.

Water supply is a critical issue facing fire suppression efforts. Surface water storage and tanker truck delivery is the primary source of water for suppression. One new subdivision in Markleeville has been designed to include a hydrant system and storage for fire purposes. Generally, the water distribution systems available do not have hydrants and have modest water storage available for emergencies.

Climatic conditions and very low density of development impose problems for fire service responses, because of roadway access limitations and travel time to incidents.

Retention and recruitment of volunteers is a major problem. The population of Alpine County is low and the changing demographic of the population has reduced the number of potential volunteers. This issue is dealt with at length in this Fire Services Plan.

Homeowners are finding that fire insurance coverage may not be available when current policies expire. In one case, a new home applying for fire insurance was denied because of the rating assigned to Eastern Alpine County by the Insurance Service Office. This is an agency that measures capability of fire services delivery against a set of criteria established by insurance companies to help measure risk levels. The current rating for Eastern Alpine County ranges from six to ten on a scale where one is best. One of the major goals of this Fire Services Plan is to assist the community in establishing an improved fire service rating, and to qualify for insurance renewals at less cost than at present. While funding for fire protection/suppression would cost more money than is currently spent for county services, this added expense would be offset by reduced fire insurance premiums following an assigned lower number for fire risk.

Most apparatus available for fire suppression meets minimum standards for small volunteer departments, but replacement of older units of equipment is not funded but is an essential goal. Maintenance and training on use of equipment is also a current problem.

Both the fire and EMS programs have back-up service provided from the Lake Valley Fire District (El Dorado County, to the north) and East Fork Fire District (Nevada, to the east) through mutual aid agreements, that call upon Alpine County service units to respond for back-up to these agencies, if needed.

Search and Rescue services are also provided by Alpine County. This may involve some of the same volunteers assigned to fire and emergency medical service operations.

B.) Emergency Medical Service (EMS)

Emergency medical service is provided by a third unit of local government, also responsible to the Board of Supervisors. A group of volunteers serves this operation. Equipment is housed in Woodfords at the premises of the service director. The County Health Officer is responsible for oversight on the EMS program and coordination with other EMS providers.

The EMS is funded from county general fund sources, grant assistance, and a regional program that involves other agencies. The County Health Officer has received grant assistance funds for acquisition of biohazard equipment and supplies. These materials are currently stored in the Woodfords area. Concern has been expressed that staff lacks training in the use and maintenance of this equipment, although grant funds are available to finance such training. Essentially, a lack of qualified volunteers impair the opportunity to conduct the requisite training.

EMS serves a wide geographic area from Markleeville to Woodfords to Kirkwood. With this large of an area to cover, the time lag between receipt of a call for service and arrival at the incident site often may exceed national standards. There are also reports of 9-1-1 calls without response, but these reports have not been verified. Again, as with fire responses, climatic conditions and low-density development are major factors in delayed response times.

Availability and frequency of training opportunity for Alpine EMS staff has been noted as a concern. Access to such training, when it is available for Alpine staff, is also a problem because of the small pool of volunteers. Work conflicts and other calls for service limit training opportunity. During the course of this study, the consultant received observations from emergency medical practitioners responding to calls in Alpine County to the affect that the level of service offered does not meet generally accepted standards.

The EMS program receives back-up service from Lake Valley Fire District in El Dorado County and from East Fork Fire District in Nevada. Lake Valley back-up service faces a distance/response time concern, but will continue to provide support as needed. Continued support from Nevada, however, is uncertain. East Fork Fire District faces competition from other service calls in Nevada, which reduces the capability to back-up Alpine County. The personnel on the response teams lack California certification, which raises a serious liability issue for the District.

II Organization for Service Delivery

There are at least nine options for the organization of a Fire and Emergency Services Program. Each of these have been reviewed and discussed with the Ad Hoc Committee and with the volunteers for each of the two existing fire departments. Presented below is a summary of the entire range of options. Following that summary is a more detailed analysis of the three preferred choices.

1.) Independent Special District. This would be a new agency not in existence currently. It would be the responsibility of five members of an elected board of directors. The process to achieve formation of this new district would take time, and an election would need to be scheduled also requiring time. Estimating these time requirements is not possible, but is likely to be at least one year in duration.

Forming a new public agency overlays one more government agency among those already in place, and does not have a tax base vested in it upon formation. Some time would be needed to formulate a financing plan, seek voter approval, and commence operation. The need of Eastern Alpine County for an improved fire and emergency services program is so critical; consideration of this option is not warranted.

This organizational form is not recommended.

2.) Dependent Special District. This would also be a new form of government, except that the governing board of directors would be the Board of Supervisors. Again, the formation of this type of district does not include any financing sources. The Board of Supervisors would be responsible for the appointment of a Fire Chief and the overall direction of the fire and emergency services program. They would act as a separate district board of directors, although they remain county supervisors. The budget, expenditure of funds, application for grant assistance, and other administrative functions would be performed through the special district, and not as a general county purpose. The need for start-up capital and probably long-term financial assistance would require the County Board of Supervisors to advance funds to the special district, and thus, the new district becomes a competitor for the already limited county funding capability.

Formation of the district would take time and energy that could best be used working under the current structure of government to improve the fire and emergency services program. At a future date, it may be appropriate to consider organizationally separating the fire program from county government operations.

At this time, formation of a dependent special purpose district is not recommended.

3.) Community Services District. This form of organization is similar to that in use now at Bear Valley and Kirkwood. It represents forming a new agency of local government — a community services district. Voter approval is required for the formation and for the election of a five-member board of directors. As with the above-mentioned special districts, no new revenue base is established at the time of formation.

Until an independent revenue stream could be developed, it is very likely that a community services district would need to borrow capital from the county general fund. Additionally, the time delays required to form a new district, submit the issue to voters, get a new board elected, and begin operating, represents time lost that is best used to improve the existing fire and emergency services program.

This alternative is not recommended.

4.) County Service Area. A county service area is a mechanism authorized by the legislature to provide a level of service for a designated area that property owner's desire, over and above the standard services provided countywide. Boundaries of the service area could be established to meet particular needs. For example, all of Woodfords and all of Markleeville could be designated a Fire Service Area. The County retains responsibility for the delivery of services to the service area. The Board of Supervisors would be the governing board. In this case, they would appoint a Fire Chief and be responsible for adopting policies and regulations regarding operation of the fire and emergency services program.

In most respects, this type of operation is identical to the operation of a county department, except that the cost of service is collected from fees charged to the property owners within the service area. Voter approval is needed for such fees. As with other alternatives reviewed above, time is required to initiate the formation procedure and to submit a proposal to the property owners for funding. The momentum started by the Ad Hoc Committee in the preparation of this Fire Services Plan should not be delayed with administrative procedures. The first priority for Alpine County is to get a ramped up fire and emergency services program underway without delay. Later, a county service area could be organized and funded, if desired, by the property owners involved.

This alternative is not recommended at this time.

5.) Private Company Contract for Service. In recent years, several public agencies have contracted with private companies for fire and/or emergency medical services. For example, the City of Jackson contracts with the American Legion. Foresthill Fire District has a working agreement with a non-profit ambulance company. Fire prevention and suppression services are provided in Scottsdale, Arizona through a private contractor. There are other areas that use this type of service, but typically are urban areas with higher population densities. The major issue with a contract is securing funds to pay for the service. Organizationally, the County would need to appoint a staff position to monitor and administer the contract. This would be a new work burden currently not present with any existing county staff person. Further, there are uncertainties surrounding this type of private sector contract, and the relative scarcity of finding service providers who might respond to a request for proposals.

This alternative is not recommended.

6.) Form Joint Powers Agency. State law permits a County to enter into an agreement with one or more other public agencies to provide a service to residents. In this case, the Alpine County Board of Supervisors could enter a joint powers agreement (JPA) with the Lake Valley Fire District (in El Dorado County) to deliver fire suppression, fire prevention, emergency medical services to Eastern Alpine County. Under this arrangement, the two public agencies would agree on the number of representatives from each board to sit on the newly organized joint powers authority. For example, two county supervisors and two directors from Lake Valley could be designated as the Board for the joint powers fire authority. These directors would appoint a Fire Chief and establish policies and procedures for operating the fire program.

The JPA would not have any revenue sources of its own. Any funds needed to operate the services provided would need to be contributed by each of the entities forming the JPA, in accordance with a mutually agreed upon formula. Thus, Alpine County could contribute the funds currently budgeted for the fire departments in Woodfords and Markleeville, and also allocate any new revenues authorized by voters. Contributions from Lake Valley Fire District would need to be negotiated with that board of directors, but more than likely, in-kind services rather than direct compensation would be used. This proposal has not been formally discussed with the Fire Chief at Lake Valley. Not only would such formal discussion be required, but also it would be necessary to explore this concept with the board of directors of the fire district. This option for organizing a fire and emergency services program would appear to warrant serious consideration, pending discussion with the two public agencies. The contract authorizing this Fire Services Plan did not call for this type of inter-agency discussion, and therefore, this option remains as a potential choice for future consideration.

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors and the Alpine Fire Safe Council continue to evaluate this possible option.

7.) Contract with California Department of Forestry (CDF). Under this arrangement, the Alpine County Board of Supervisors would contract with CDF to operate and manage the fire and emergency services program in Eastern Alpine County. This would require CDF to work with and utilize the present volunteer force. Funding would need to be provided by Alpine County to meet the requirements set forth by CDF to implement the contract. It is unknown to what dimension these cost requirements could be, as CDF has not been formally requested to provide this information. The Ad Hoc Committee did not favor this alternative during the preliminary discussion of the Fire Services Plan. The USFS has a working agreement with CDF that provides for one agency to be responsible for the wildland fire protection, which is USFS. Therefore, it is probable that any request for a CDF contractual agreement would be referred to USFS and engage both of the agencies in further discussion and review.

This alternative is not recommended.

8.) Public Safety Program through Sheriff. A few public agencies in California have combined fire and law enforcement services creating a “Public Safety Officer” program. The Alpine County Sheriff currently offers such a combined program in Bear Valley. This type of organization requires deputy sheriff positions to be cross-trained in fire prevention/suppression activity and to work effectively with the volunteers. The Sheriff has indicated he would be willing to consider this type of program for Eastern Alpine County provided that a) there was approval by the voters to undertake this added responsibility, and b) the Board of Supervisors would support the allocation of resources to implement it. Further details regarding costs to implement this option are provided below. Importantly, while this organizational approach seemingly has merit and is a practice followed in Bear Valley, considerable time would be required to seek voter approval and to find a revenue source to implement the option. Due to the urgency to improve fire and emergency service delivery in the shortest possible time, this option is not viewed as the preferred choice.

This alternative is recommended for consideration as a secondary choice, if other alternatives cannot be implemented within twelve months following adoption of this Fire Services Plan.

9.) Consolidate into One County Department. This option is a consolidation of the two existing fire departments at Woodfords and Markleeville under the direction of the County Board of Supervisors. While serving as a separate department, the Fire Chief could be placed in the Office of Emergency Services that the Sheriff directs. This would assist in managing the fire service by offering phone, records, budget management, and communication with other public service programs inside and outside county government. The department need not compromise names of the existing fire station locations. In Nevada, it is customary to refer to the local fire station by a name separate from the overall agency name. In this case, there would be an Eastern Alpine County Fire department and within it, the Markleeville Division and the Woodfords Division. This protects the history of both stations and their personnel.

The position of Fire Chief is not to be substituted for the Fire Marshall position, which is fulfilled by the Chief Building Inspector. The duties of the two positions are separate and complement each other. The Fire Chief job description is not expected to include Fire Marshall duties. Developing the fire service and later merging the EMS program would require all the energy and talent of the Fire Chief.

The newly formed department requires a full-time Fire Chief. Together with staff, the Fire Chief could develop a working agreement with Lake Valley Fire District to provide technical support and assistance, as required. The Lake Valley Fire Chief has informally indicated that back-up, technical support could be provided to Alpine County as a reciprocal measure to the annexation of property to the El Dorado County district that took place a few years ago. While the Fire Chief supports this concept in principle, he has not reviewed this with the board of directors and is, therefore, unable to declare whether such a cooperative agreement could be approved.

This alternative is strongly recommended for approval.

10.) Status Quo with Modification. During the course of the study leading to the Fire Services Plan, the Ad Hoc Committee considered a possible “status quo” option. That is, there would be no change to the existing procedure of continuing two separate fire departments. Following discussion of all the alternative organizational options with the volunteers at Markleeville and Woodfords, the Ad Hoc Committee asked that consideration be given to a revised form of the status quo. This revision would be to retain the separate operation of two fire departments — one in Woodfords and one in Markleeville — but with a part-time Fire Chief position assigned to each department. This option is presented here for discussion and an estimated cost is provided later.

As the consultant retained to advise the Ad Hoc Committee on future organization, financing and management of fire and emergency services in the revised status quo option, is not recommended. Continuing the separate operation in the two communities does not offer opportunity for efficient use of resources and is difficult to justify in the small community being served. Many costs would be duplicated such as budget preparation and management; record keeping; training; grant application and processing; volunteer recruitment and retention programs; equipment maintenance, and so forth. Financing for the dual departments may require two benefit assessment districts, rather than one. This could increase initial costs of forming the districts. The time available for this report did not allow for research regarding benefit assessments for separate areas of cost.

A.) Cost Estimates for Three of the Alternatives

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
(A-1) – Single Department (Option 9)	\$172,155	\$202,175	\$256,205
(A-2) – Public Safety Program (Option 8)	\$200,155	\$231,375	\$298,641
(A-3) – Revised Status Quo (Option 10)	\$192,175	\$204,385	\$196,080

Note: Estimated costs include a loan repayment to the county general fund or the STPUD reserve for start of the assessment proceedings proposed in the financing program.

B.) Discussion of Cost Estimates

Under a single department (A-1 above), nine months salary is budgeted for the first year cost of the Fire Chief and technical support. Time needed for recruitment, selection and office preparation would consume part of the year without budgeted salary. A contract position from Public Service Skills is budgeted at six months for years 1 and 2, to assist with the assessment proceedings. Public Service Skills is a service provided by the California State Association of Counties to provide trained, technical staff assistance to public agencies on a temporary basis. A volunteer coordinator is budgeted for a half-time position in years 2 and

3. An Assistant Chief is shown for year 3, to be responsible for the EMS program. The EMS costs are not shown here.

The volunteer coordinator is a new position not now in place. This position would be responsible for assistance to all volunteers, assistance with recruitment of volunteers, organizing fund raising events, records maintenance, and management of compensation. This type of staff position is highly recommended by the California Chiefs Association, the National Fire Protection Association, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (see page 30 further details).

Under a public safety program (A-2 above), estimated costs for deputies assigned to fire suppression is estimated to cost \$40,000 for year one, with an increased cost of 3% for years 2 and 3. Costs for a Fire Chief and technical support would be the same as option A-1. The costs for Public Service Skills and a Volunteer Coordinator would also be the same as option A-1. Costs for the EMS program would be folded into the Public Safety managed fire program after year 3, when the Assistant Chief is appointed.

Under the modified status quo program (A-3 above), costs are estimated to provide for two Fire Chief positions at half time. Funds are not provided for technical support or volunteer coordinator positions because of organizational uncertainties. The need for staffing support for the two Chief positions would need to be reviewed and considered when the two Chief positions are filled.

III Fire Service Goals and Performance Assessment

Establishing a Fire Services Plan is an initial step in delivering the quality of fire services expected by the community. Declaring a set of goals and measuring the performance of services toward goal achievement is another step. To the extent possible, community involvement in the goal setting and measurement process must be provided. The Alpine Fire Safe Council is an excellent mechanism to achieve this participation. This part of the Fire Services Plan will discuss targets for measuring the delivery of fire and EMS services.

Extensive record keeping and reporting is essential in measuring goal achievement. These records would also assist the service in meeting future tests from the Insurance Service Office to set fire risk ratings.

There is much debate regarding the best approach in defining a level of service for fire operations. There is a wide range of thinking as to what constitutes a “standard” of performance, particularly for volunteer departments due to the wide variation in training, staffing, equipment capability, road system utility, and weather factors. Therefore, what follows is not intended to define a basic standard that must be applied in all circumstances. It is intended to offer a starting point to assist the volunteers and the Alpine Fire Safe Council in completing an analysis that would lead to the adoption of a basic standard of performance.

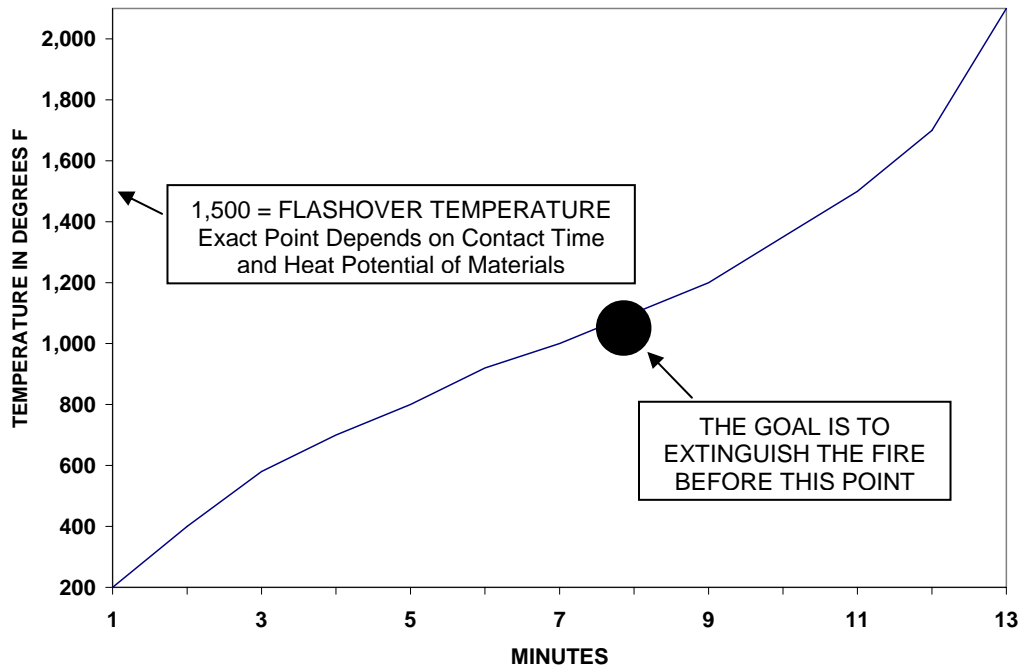
Approaches for Evaluating Fire and EMS Service Delivery

The primary targets for measuring effectiveness of fire rescue and EMS are based on two critical issues:

- What is the critical point in a fire’s “life” to gain control of the blaze?
- What is the impact of passing time on survivability for victims of cardiac arrest?

Presented below is a graph reflecting the typical flashover curve for interior structural fires. The point of flashover is critical because it defines when all of the contents of a room become involved in the fire. This is also the point at which a fire changes from “room and contents” to a structure fire that involves a wider area of the building.

Generalized Flashover Curve



Source: NFPA, 2001 Manual

(Note: This graphic depicts a fire from the moment of inception, not from the moment a fire is detected or reported.)

This demonstrates the criticality of early detection, fast reporting, and dispatch of responding units. This also shows the critical need for rapid and sufficiently staffed initial response; by quickly initiating the fire attack, flashover can be averted.

The points below describe the major changes that occur in a fire when flashover takes place:

- Time for effective search and rescue in a room involved in the fire ends. It means the likely death of any person trapped in the room, either civilian or firefighter.
- After flashover has been reached, portable extinguishers can no longer have a successful impact to control the blaze. Only hand-lines have enough water supply after this point.
- The fire has reached the end of the “growth” phase and has entered the fully developed phase. During this phase, every combustible object is subject to the full impact of the fire.
- This signals the changeover from “contents” to “structure” fire. Also, this is also the beginning of collapse danger for the structure. Structural collapse becomes a major risk at this point. It reaches the highest point during the decay stage of the fire (after the fire has been extinguished).

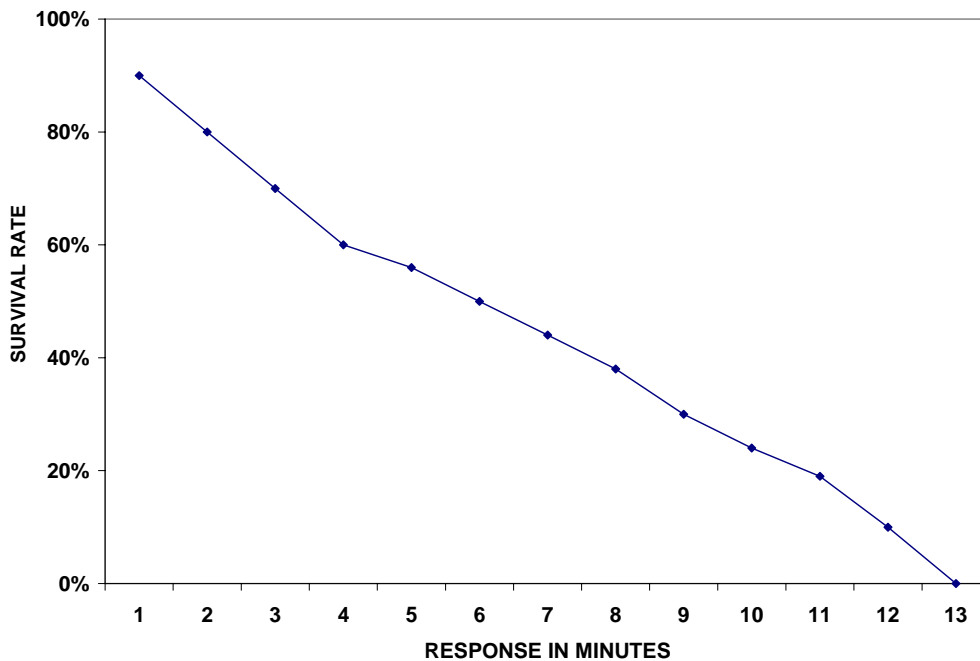
A quickly responding fire crew could do things to prevent or delay the occurrence of flashover. These options include:

- Apply portable extinguisher or other fast attack methodology.
- Vent the room to allow hot gases to escape before igniting other materials in the room.
- Not venting—under some circumstances, this would stifle a fire and prevent flashover.

Not every fire reaches flashover and not every fire “waits” for the eight-minute mark to reach flashover.

The second issue to consider is the delivery of cardiac and other emergency medical first response. The graph below demonstrates survivability of cardiac patients, as a timeline.

Survival Rate Percentage



Source: NFPA, 2001 Manual

This graph shows results of extensive studies of patient survivability suffering from cardiac arrest. While not a perfect measure, this is the most often studied issue due to the ease of evaluating the outcome (a patient either survives or not) from cardiac arrest. This research results in the recommended target of providing basic life support (BLS) within four minutes of notification, and the provision of advanced life support (ALS) within eight minutes of

notification. The graph targets reflect an actual BLS time of eight minutes from the onset of the incident (including detection, dispatch and travel time), and ALS within twelve minutes.

A summary of the best practical research into these issues is summarized below.

There is voluminous research, analysis, and findings related to impacts of service delivery factors in fire operations. Many of these findings have been accepted by numerous public agencies as guidelines. None of the research shown has been definitively and conclusively supported by detailed analysis. Particularly important is the fact that the data has been compiled largely by full-time, paid staff and not from volunteer services, although some volunteer data has been included. Despite these “shortcomings”, the following tables could serve as a guide to measure staffing, deployment and effectiveness of effort.

Response Factor	Description	Research Results
Response Time to Fires*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Elapsed time between receipt of call at the dispatch center and arrival of units at the scene. ➤ Relationship between response time and the likelihood that units can control the spread of a fire. ➤ Response time controllable through station location, availability of staff, training and characteristics of jurisdiction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Flashover” (the point at which temperatures in a structure reach a point at which materials simultaneously ignite) normally occurs between eight and ten minutes from ignition. Structural damage progresses geometrically from ignition. <p>As noted above, there exists no empirical data supporting the findings of flashover occurring between eight and ten minutes. The UL and NIST laboratories were the first to perform a clinical study of the issue. They tried to emulate a class A and B environment and showed auto ignition – flashover – (800 to 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit) within eight to ten minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An example that refutes the above findings, the City of Auburn, Alabama reviewed structure fire incidents over a period of time and found that out of 800 events with a response time between eight and ten minutes, only thirteen had reached flashover, or 1.625%. ➤ Often quoted in various publications and public agency research is that station networks in urbanized settings are usually designated to deliver initial response to fires in four minutes to 80%-90% of calls. This accounts for one minute of turnout time and three minutes of travel time (wheels rolling). Although the four-minute response time is usually intended, it is rarely achieved on an aggregate basis by any agency.

* This data is compiled from departments with full-time, paid staff and are not going to necessarily reflect volunteer departments.

Response Factor	Description	Research Results
Response Time to Medical Calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Elapsed time definition is the same as for fires. ➤ Relationship between response time and the likelihood that units can increase the survivability potential in certain situations (e.g., cardiac arrests). ➤ Many medical response systems designed to be “two-tier” – initial basic life support (BLS) response by fire personnel within four to five minutes utilizing techniques ranging from first aid and CPR to cardiac defibrillation; advanced life support (ALS) response by paramedics within eight to ten minutes utilizing a wide variety of techniques (e.g., drugs, telemetry to hospital, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ King County EMS (Seattle, WA) has conducted research on the survival rates associated with response times for ALS/BLS units. These studies show an average survival rate of 43% for cardiac arrest calls in which BLS response is within four minutes and ALS response is within eight minutes. If each response time is doubled (to eight and sixteen minutes, respectively), survivability falls to 6%. Use of defibrillation devices increases survivability rates for cardiac situations for all response systems. ➤ However, the Ontario Pre-Hospital Advanced Life Support (OPALS) study refutes the above. This study evaluated the results of 9,273 patients treated from January 1, 1991 to December 31, 1997. Only 392 patients survived (4.2%) and of those, about 40% were treated at the ALS level within two minutes and about 55% were treated within four minutes. Following the fourth minute, survivability dropped significantly with each minute. This study concludes that building a response system around the eight-minute ALS response standard is not support by the data. Basically, following the second and fourth minutes, there is significantly decreasing value added in building an ALS response system.

Response Factor	Description	Research Results
Company Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of personnel assigned to a unit – especially for fire calls. ➤ As with response time, engine company size is a significant factor in enabling personnel to control the spread of a fire. ➤ Much debate in fire professional circles about optimum company size – larger units can perform more tasks at a fire scene and more quickly. ➤ Actual amount of staff required at specific fires dependent upon size of structure, combustibility, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extensive research by the Dallas Fire Department has indicated that the decline in relative effectiveness of three, four and five person companies is least pronounced in the private, single-family residence fire, and widens as the size of the structure involved increases. ➤ Fire departments serving large, metropolitan areas often staff engine and truck companies with four to six firefighters or engine/truck companies serving high hazard areas (e.g., high levels of water flow required, high-rise structures, industrial occupancies, etc.). ➤ In “ordinary” hazardous areas (single-family residential, small commercial, etc.), three person engine companies normally encountered and viewed to be effective mix of performance versus costs. ➤ Note that according to ICMA’s “Managing Fire Services”, fewer than 5% of all fires required more than one pumper to effectively extinguish the fire. ➤ There is no research regarding the appropriate company size for vegetation fires.

The term “minimum standard” is not appropriate, because the “standards” detailed in the pages above are simply “common approaches” employed by many fire agencies. Transferring these common approaches to an all volunteer force may not be appropriate—the community must make that determination, but one must begin someplace for a guideline.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), a professional association in the fire service, has endeavored to address the debate regarding the appropriate service level targets. They have drafted a document called NFPA 1710 for the delivery of fire services in career, paid departments, and NFPA 1720 for volunteer fire agencies. The publication is: “Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Fire Departments”, (2001 edition).

NFPA is a recommended target of service for fire, EMS and other fire service activities. Also it is a tool for policy makers when evaluating the service delivery system in place locally.

NFPA is not a regulation or requirement for local agencies to follow. It is not a service that has to be installed immediately; it is a guide for the future.

NFPA 1710 recommends that dispatch time equals one minute or less, and that enroute time (reaction time) equals one minute or less. Travel time for the initial responding unit should be four minutes or less. Travel time for a full structure fire response or an ALS response should be eight minutes or less.

Delivery of four firefighters on the scene should occur within four minutes or less.

An ALS response requires a minimum of four people, with at least two classified as paramedics and two trained at the EMT-basic level.

A full structure fire response should consist of the incident commander, a supply line, two attack lines of two people plus a support person, and a ventilation team of at least two people.

Once a policy has been adopted regarding staffing level and response times, the goal should be to achieve this 90% minimum on all calls for service.

NFPA 1720 establishes organization and deployment targets for volunteer agencies. NFPA offers very little in terms of specific guidelines for volunteers, when compared to the more detailed guidelines for career departments. However, the career guidelines are offered to permit the community to judge them against the level of desired service for the volunteer staff.

The NFPA 1720 states that the fire service shall identify minimum staffing levels to assure that a sufficient number of people are available to operate units safely and effectively. Further, they suggest the number and type of units assigned to respond to an incident shall be determined either by an evaluation of fire risk and/or pre-fire planning. Both NFPA and OSHA have been credited with formulating a standard for an initial fire attack of four people. This is popularly known as “two in and two out”. This would allow fire suppression to commence with two people inside the hazard area and two people outside for command and control of water and rescue, if needed. This so-called fire attack standard is not defined to explain the details on the suggested four-person crew—level of training, officer level and so forth.

Consistently, NFPA declares that the local governing body (Board of Supervisors, for example) must clearly define the operating policy for fire suppression. It is understood that a large number of factors, including funding availability, would control the policies for fire response and timing. Therefore, the NFPA declined to step forward and issue a solid base of service.

The suggestion of this consultant is that the Board of Supervisors appoint a Fire Suppression Advisory Board to design a fire suppression policy, which could be achieved within the limits of financing and volunteer recruitment capability. Later as the staffing numbers

improve, the Advisory Board could revisit the response times and staffing level for incidents. Ideally, the Advisory Board and the Board of Supervisors would have a funding source that would grow incrementally over time, to support improved fire suppression standards of performance. Following is an initial effort to establish a financing policy for Alpine County.

During meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee, it was recognized that limited funds prevented the development of a fire service staffed with full-time firefighters. However, committee members strongly endorsed a long-term goal of such a future program. The presence of an Advisory Board would be one way to work toward this future goal.

It is recommended where the population is less than 100 persons per square mile, that 30% of first response times for fire crews be within five minutes and response times for BLS be eight minutes. As population density advances to a range of 101 to 1,000 persons per square mile, this policy could be changed to 60% of all fire responses to be within five minutes and ALS responses and transport within eight minutes. The recommendations for financing, equipment, and staffing contained in this report are predicated on this proposed policy level.

IV Financing Plan

Preferred Plan

Paying for the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Plan set forth here would require four sources of financing:

- No change in funds budgeted for Fire Services or EMS;
- A dedicated revenue source allocated to Fire and Emergency Medical Services for Plan implementation;
- Impact Fees on new development; and
- State/Federal Grant Assistance that becomes available.

A.) Currently Budgeted Funds

The amounts shown for any of the three organizational options in this Plan exceeds the current budget. The estimates to implement any of the options are based on the assumption that new revenues made available are to supplement, not replace, currently budgeted amounts.

The cost of operating the Fire Service under the preferred alternative is estimated at \$172,155 in year one, \$202,175 in year two, and \$256,205 in year three. Cost estimates have not been projected beyond the third year, at which time the EMS program should merge with the Fire Service, without reduction in funds budgeted for EMS.

It is recommended that the County continue present appropriations at the current level.

B.) Dedicated Revenue Source

Actual cost per property for an annual assessment cannot be estimated with accuracy until an engineering analysis is completed. However, it can be roughly estimated to be between four and six cents per square foot with variation to each parcel, based upon location and access. The cost per parcel is required to be compiled by a registered professional engineer, and prepared in an assessment diagram showing each parcel and the benefit allocated to it. In addition to this diagram, the law requires a metes and bounds description for the entire area encompassed by the proposed benefit assessment. The cost for preparing this information, together with the processing of public hearings and notices to owners, is estimated at \$45,000. This cost is required to be paid in advance of seeking property owners' consents. If the assessment is approved, the cost advanced could be reimbursed. If not approved, the County would be out the expense. Approval is obtained through distribution of forms to all property owners explaining the purpose to be served, the amount to be charged, and the length of time for the assessment to be imposed. Owners are issued a postage-paid return mail form to express approval or disapproval. The results are tabulated at a public hearing.

The assessment is approved if owners representing 50% + \$1 of the total being assessed affirm the proposal. Under current law, there are no exemptions to the assessment of every parcel. This means that the schools, the State, the County, and the Forest Service could be subject to assessment for their ownerships.

Budgets for each of the organizational options include a three-year repayment of the funds advanced to initiate the proceedings. Additionally, it is recommended that an amount of 5% of the annual amount needed be included as a reserve against delinquencies. Any funds not spent from the reserves are used to reduce the assessment in the final year of approval. The assessment could be approved for any number of years with authorization to increase annual amounts by the cost of inflation.

It is recommended that a benefit assessment district be organized for the service area described as Eastern Alpine County, to raise a revenue source dedicated to the Fire and EMS programs.

C.) Impact Fees

Impact fees are a form of mitigating impacts on existing residents from new development. These revenues are intended to finance costs to serve newly developing property with infrastructure, such as fire stations and equipment. The current fee charged is \$.30 per square foot of new construction. This fee warrants an increase. In order to adopt a changed impact fee, it is necessary to complete a capital improvement plan for fire protection/suppression first. Then, the cost of that plan would need to be allocated to existing improved property and probable future property development, with a variance in the fee based upon land use (single family residential, multi-family residential, mobile homes, commercial, public uses). The fee is only applicable to new construction. It may not earn sufficient revenue to finance the entire capital improvement plan, either by causing a burden to the county general fund, or causing a special tax on current properties to achieve the difference.

Impact fees are collected at the time of issuing building permits for new construction. The revenue cannot be used for operation; only for capital outlay. There is no estimate as to what future income may become available from a revised impact fee schedule, because of the uncertainty of projecting future development volume and timing.

It is recommended that the County authorize a study to develop a revised impact fee schedule for fire facilities and equipment.

D.) Grant Assistance

An array of grant opportunities is available through the Homeland Security Administration; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Washoe Tribal Colony Rural Fire Administration; Community Development Block Grant, and other sources. This is a revenue potential requiring high priority and emphasis by the Fire Chief and technical support positions. The County shares a grant writer position with STPUD who may be able to assist in this effort. It is not possible to estimate this potential income, because grant application requirements

differ between programs; issuance of funds is competitive with other agencies; time lag for processing is unpredictable, and it is difficult to know which of the several grant programs would be best suited for Alpine County.

It is recommended that the County continue to pursue all available state and federal grant sources for fire prevention/suppression and EMS purposes.

Alternate Plan

Another alternative to develop a dedicated source of funds would be to form a Mello-Roos district. This is a financing vehicle that is governed by the Board of Supervisors. The district is designed to fit the needs that would be financed and in this case, Eastern Alpine County, excluding the Woodfords Indian Colony. The Mello-Roos District could levy a tax and be authorized to issue bonds, which are also redeemed by a property tax on owners within the district. A voter consent shown by a majority of 2/3 of those voting is required.

The aggregate assessed value of the taxable lands within Eastern Alpine County that could be included within a Mello-Roos district is \$66,012,885. The financing of the preferred option with a contingency reserve (\$269,000) would require a property tax rate of \$0.407 per \$100.00 of assessed valuation. Included within the \$269,000 budget is the amount of \$50,000 per year for capital outlay purposes. With voter approval, this sum could retire a debt of \$750,000 over 20 years. This would permit the Mello-Roos district to borrow funds to implement the entire capital improvement plan within the next few years, and amortize the cost over the long term. As property values grow within the boundary of the Mello-Roos district, the tax rate would decline.

Because obtaining a 2/3 approval for this method of financing is seemingly so difficult to obtain, it is not recommended but offered for discussion and evaluation of the primary recommendation.

Miscellaneous Revenue Sources

During the course of research to find funding sources to pay for this Plan, several potential revenues having a countywide affect were reviewed. While these sources are not specific to the planning area, they represent income that could benefit the entire County. Accordingly, the sources are well suited to the general fund and could assist with some element of relief to the current critical situation.

A.) Transient Occupancy Tax. Increases in this tax require voter approval. The income is collected countywide and is presently allocated between the Chamber of Commerce, the appropriate local district (Bear Valley and Kirkwood), and the general fund. The present rate of the lodging cost (10%), if raised to 12%, would earn approximately \$118,379 using a base of actual collections of the past two fiscal years.

B.) Property Transfer Tax. The Ad Hoc Committee suggested looking at this potential revenue source. The present tax rate is \$1.10 per \$1,000 value at the time of transfer. A voter approved increase to \$1.20 per \$1,000 value upon property transfer would yield approximately \$91,000. Again, this is a countywide income source and not directly applicable to any one service area. Consideration of this potential income source requires caution. Preliminary indications are that the state legislature has placed a cap on this revenue, thus preventing local agencies from adjusting it even with voter consent.

C.) Sales Tax. Any increase in the local sales tax rate would also require voter consent. Based upon the State Controller Report of County Reserves, the estimated yield from a one-half cent increase in the sales tax (if approved by voters) could range from \$12,000 to \$18,000. This is a conservative estimate depending upon several variables (tourist activity, economy, and seasonal impacts on business). A one-cent increase could create a range of \$24,000 to \$36,000. Sales tax income is disbursed to counties based upon statewide receipts allocated on a per capita basis. Determining the actual sales tax income resulting from a locally imposed increase would require additional research from the State Board of Equalization, to review the business records of the various business activities in Eastern Alpine County.

D.) Commercial Property Service Fee. Some fire districts have imposed a special service fee on commercial property. An ordinance would be required to implement this fee that is not now being charged within Alpine County. The purpose of the fee would be to collect costs associated with fire prevention and suppression services for commercial property that exceeds the usual and typical costs for residential property. Some analysis would be needed to establish a base fee for property served, and to determine the added cost for commercial property. Usually commercial properties require periodic inspections to assure compliance with fire prevention measures such as: exit lighting; smoke detectors; alarms; avoidance of barriers for exits; room capacity. The local ordinance must adopt standards to be met by commercial property, and set forth the costs for the fire department to enforce those standards. The resulting fee is collected annually by the County through property taxes. The fee could be reviewed and revised from time-to-time, as costs increase.

E.) Cost Recovery Program. State law permits fire departments to recover costs of service rendered under special circumstances. For example: search and rescue; traffic collisions involving driving while impaired through alcohol or drugs; hazardous material spills; subscriptions for ambulance services; surcharge on use of 9-1-1 phone calls. Notwithstanding the permissible use of these revenue sources, several cautions are noteworthy: a) administrative costs to track and measure actual costs could reduce the net income available; b) enforcement of collections could take more than one year and delay the net income during the fiscal period when the expense took place; c) volume of events subject to cost recovery is unpredictable resulting in the inability to prepare future revenue budgets with certainty; and d) not all reimbursable events would be in Eastern Alpine County, thus requiring distribution of earned revenue to the points of origin.¹

¹ The EMS program is presently pursuing cost recovery for incidents. This experience shows a limited income, not more than \$4,800.00 annually.

V Staffing, Facilities, Equipment

A.) Staffing

Currently, both stations are staffed only by volunteers. The three options presented for committee review do not represent the same level of service. Although every option would continue with service by volunteers, the organization to support those volunteers would be different. The option recommended for adoption calls for one full-time Fire Chief in year one, and an Assistant Chief in year three, to assist with the merger of EMS into the fire service. The Fire Chief cannot be expected to perform fire prevention/suppression duties, work effectively with the volunteers, and at the same time be responsible for a variety of administrative detail, report writing, grant search and so forth. Therefore, a full-time technical support position would also be proposed with the cost included in the budget.

Under the second option, organizing as a Public Safety program, there would still be one full-time Fire Chief and technical support. The Assistant Chief would be added in year three, as with a single department, in order to merge EMS.

The third option, a modified status quo with a dual department, provides for two part-time Chief positions. The time allocated to the two Chief positions is not expected to be 50-50. Based upon current call volume and service responses, the division of time for the two positions is more likely to be 75% to 80% at Woodfords and 20% to 25% at Markleeville.

Because of the urgent need to develop a larger core of volunteers, it is strongly recommended that a part-time volunteer coordinator position be established. This position would be responsible for organizing informal and formal meetings of the volunteers and their spouses; establishing an awards program; monitoring training schedules and attendance; assist with concerns and problems that may arise with the volunteers regarding county service; and developing a communication program for the department.

There are a number of techniques available to improve recruitment and to retain volunteers. This coordinator could be assigned to locate the most appropriate strategies and apply them to Alpine County. A manual on fire service volunteer programs was acquired for this study and will be deposited with the Ad Hoc Committee, as part of the Fire Services Plan process.

Research into compensation plans for volunteers revealed that many small, rural departments pay each volunteer \$10 per fire call and \$10 per each EMT call. Additionally, mileage is paid at the rate of 36 cents per mile for calls outside the usual service area. Most departments limit their compensation to not exceed \$600 per year. All of the departments contacted stressed the vital importance of a formally approved awards program. These programs vary from department to department, but could include: formal recognition at meetings of the Board of Supervisors; discounts or gratuitous restaurant meals; overnight lodging at a popular location; gift certificates. Funds are included in the budget for an awards program to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Many departments utilize a point system as the award program. Under this arrangement, points are assigned for attending training sessions, covering extra shifts, finding new volunteers, helping with social events that involve volunteers and their families, and high performance ratings. These award points could be redeemed for a variety of goods or services that vary from year to year.

These kinds of programs are essential to maintaining a high morale and attracting more volunteers to the department.

B.) Facilities

Two categories of facilities are in need of upgrade. They are the two fire stations and the water system. Financing improvements to the water system is not possible from the limited revenues available—or planned to become available—for the fire and emergency medical services programs. Therefore, a concentrated working effort would be needed by the County and fire staff with water purveyors and developers, to assure improvements are installed and maintained for fire suppression and best management practices. The County may want to explore the possibility of assisting water purveyors with the financing of improvements with user fees paying for county costs. The County may have access to loans and/or grants for which private companies are not eligible.

Exact cost estimates for fire station improvements were not available. By using data from similar rural departments, it can be estimated that \$300,000 would be required during the next five years to upgrade Markleeville (\$50,000) and Woodfords (\$250,000) to expand or build a new station.

C.) Equipment

The composite amount of equipment required—at a minimum—amounts to \$450,000 for a five-year period. A comprehensive capital improvement plan (CIP) would be needed to establish accurate cost estimates. A CIP would also be required to revise the impact fee schedule. Until this Fire Services Plan is available, the best possible approach would be to set the dollar amount for capital needs within the budgetary framework in the Fire Services Plan and review it over time.

The directions for this Fire Services Plan were to assemble a short, intermediate and long-range plan for implementation. Funding is not available to do any long-range planning for facilities and equipment at this time. The list of items presented here are for short-term and intermediate-term acquisition driven by the limitation of available funds. Unless grant assistance or impact fees could be found to augment the funds set forth in the financing plan, this would define the future capital outlay.

New development cannot be predicted, but does take place, and provided a revised impact fee is adopted, added revenues would become available for the fire and emergency medical services. At such time added revenues could be defined, this capital improvement plan should be revisited.

VI Implementation

This section of the Fire Services Plan is in two parts:

- A time table to proceed with the action steps required for either of the two recommended organizational options, and;
- Strategies available to the Committee to assist with Fire Services Plan implementation. These strategies are not intended to be all or nothing; rather, they are a suggested list from which the Ad Hoc Committee and the Alpine Fire Safe Council could select those most appropriate, affordable and achievable.

A.) Time Table

Each of the three organizational choices discussed here would require many action steps, but at different time sequences. If the Public Safety option would be selected, then voter approval would be required prior to starting the financial steps. Efforts to gain funds for this option must await results from the first election: Do the voters support a Public Safety program? If the preferred organization would be to consolidate existing departments, then the Board of Supervisors could proceed at once to undertake the required action steps. Similarly, if the revised status quo option would be chosen, action steps could begin at once and would not be as detailed as with the other options.

Two funding sources are recommended for the fire and emergency services program—assessments to benefiting property and three miscellaneous taxes applied countywide. This timetable is based on a major assumption—both revenue sources would be approved. Should one fail, then the Board of Supervisors would need to reassess the fire and emergency services program, and decide whether to proceed as outlined in the Fire Services Plan or to reduce the scope of services.

(1) Consolidated Department Operation

2005 Calendar Year

- File Fire Services Plan with Board of Supervisors and present recommendations
- Approval of environmental documentation may be required (3-6 months)
- Adopt ordinance establishing fire department and assign it to the Department of Emergency Services (2 months)
- Approve contract with Public Service Skills² to retain manager for financing plan implementation (1-2 months)
- Committee begin series of community meetings (2-4 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on participation (1-2 months)
- Select Volunteer Services Coordinator position (1-2 months)
- Authorize property owners' survey regarding assessment process (1-2 months)
- Conduct hearings on proposed tax measures for voter approval (2 months)
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help program with homeowners (ongoing)

2006 Calendar Year

- Retain engineer to begin assessment proceedings (2 months)
- Draft ballot measure for tax measures at June election (1 month)
- Adopt text of ballot measure and argument in support (1 month)
- Preliminary report from engineer on assessment process (2-4 months)
- Property owners meetings to explain assessment process (1-2 months)
- Meeting with Woodfords Tribal Council to follow-up on MOU (1-2 months)
- Review budget requirements for Fiscal 06-07 (1 month)
- Meet with volunteer firefighters to assist in budget preparation, training program, and familiarity with proposed financing program (2-4 months)
- Review with Board of Supervisors future plans for grant assistance and capital outlay procurement (1 month)
- Conduct election on proposed tax measures
- Complete benefit assessment spread, map of parcels to benefit, and documents to obtain property owners' consent to proceed (4-6 months)
- Recruit and appoint Fire Chief and technical services positions (2-3 months)
- File approved assessment documents with Assessor and Tax Collector to assure availability of funds during Fiscal 06-07
- First installment of assessments available and General Fund reimbursed for start-up costs

² Public Service Skills is a program available through the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to provide technically skilled staffing on a short-term, extra hire basis.

2007 Calendar Year

- Prepare work plan for approval by Board of Supervisors with revenue from assessment proceedings (1-2 months)
- Conclude contract with Public Service Skills
- Conduct community meetings to gain feedback on fire and emergency services program (2-3 months)
- Develop plan to consolidate EMS with fire services (1-3 months)
- Merge EMS and fire services by adoption of ordinance (1-2 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to monitor results of MOU and adopt revisions, if needed (1-2 months)
- Adopt budget for Fiscal 07-08
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help programs with homeowners and assist with volunteer sponsored fund raisers (ongoing)

(2) Public Safety Program Through Sheriff

2005 Calendar Year

- File Fire Services Plan with Board of Supervisors and present recommendations
- Approval of environmental documentation may be required (3-6 months)
- Meet with volunteers to review program, financing and timing (2-3 months)
- Begin meeting and conferring process with Deputy Sheriff's Association (2-4 months)
- Approve contract with Public Service Skills to retain manager for financing implementation (1-2 months)
- Committee begin series of community meetings (2-4 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on participation (1-2 months)
- Select Volunteer Services coordinator position (1-2 months)
- Conduct hearings on Public Safety program for voter approval (2-3 months)
- Prepare ballot measure text for 2006 primary election to authorize public safety organization for fire and emergency services (1-2 months)
- Authorize property owners' survey regarding assessment process (1-2 months)

2006 Calendar Year

- Adopt text for ballot measure (1-2 months)
- Approve text for argument in support of ballot measure (1-2 months)
- Retain engineer for start of assessment proceedings (2 months)
- Conduct election on proposed Public Safety program
- If approved, prepare and adopt budget for Fiscal 06-07 (1-2 months)
- Adopt ordinance establishing fire program in Sheriff's Office (1-2 months)
- Approve MOU with Deputy Sheriff's Association (1-2 months)
- Recruit for Fire Chief and technical services positions (2-3 months)
- Conduct hearings on proposed tax measures for voter approval (2-3 months)
- Prepare text of ballot for tax measures to be voted upon in November (1-2 months)
- Prepare argument in support of tax measures (1-2 months)
- Appoint Fire Chief and technical services positions (1-2 months)
- Commence fire services program
- Meet with volunteers to review program and identify concerns needed to be addressed for program effectiveness (ongoing)
- Cancel contract with Public Service Skills manager
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help program with homeowners and assist volunteers with fund raisers (ongoing)

2007 Calendar Year

- Preliminary report from engineer on assessment process (2-4 months)
- Property owners meetings to explain assessment process (2-3 months)
- Committee undertakes series of community meetings (2-6 months)
- Meeting with Woodfords Tribal Council to follow-up on MOU (1-2 months)
- Complete benefit assessment spread, map of parcels to benefit, and documents to obtain property owners' consent to proceed (2-3 months)
- Prepare and adopt budget for Fiscal 07-08 (1-2 months)
- File approved assessment documents with Assessor and Tax Collector to assure availability of funds during Fiscal 07-08
- First installment of assessments available and General Fund reimbursed for start-up costs

2008 Calendar Year

- Conduct community meetings to gain feedback on fire and emergency services program (ongoing)
- Develop plan to consolidate EMS and fire services (2-4 months)
- Merge EMS and fire services (1-2 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to monitor results of MOU and adopt revisions, if needed (2-3 months)
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help programs with homeowners and assist volunteers with fund raisers (ongoing)

(3) Dual Department Operation

2005 Calendar Year

- File Fire Services Plan with Board of Supervisors and present recommendations
- Approval of environmental documentation may be required (3-6 months)
- Adopt ordinance establishing dual departments (2 months)
- Recruit, select and appoint part-time Fire Chief for each station (2-3 months)
- Committee begins community meetings (2-4 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on participation in program (1-2 months)
- Appoint Public Service Skills position to assist with assessment proceedings (1-2 months)
- Appoint engineer to conduct proceedings (1-2 months)

2006 Calendar Year

- Preliminary report from engineer on assessment process (2-4 months)
- Property owners meetings to explain assessment process (1-2 months)
- Prepare budget for Fiscal 06-07 (1 month)
- Complete benefit assessment spread, parcel map, and documents to gain property owners' consent to proceed (4-6 months)
- File approved documents with Assessor and Tax Collector to assure availability of funds during Fiscal 06-07
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help programs with homeowners and assist volunteers with fund raisers (ongoing)

2007 Calendar Year

- Prepare work plan for approval by Board of Supervisors with revenue from assessment proceedings (1-2 months)
- Conclude Public Service Skills contract
- Conduct community meetings to gain feedback on fire and emergency services program (ongoing)
- Prepare for merger of EMS program with fire services (1-2 months)
- Meet with Woodfords Tribal Council to monitor results of MOU and adopt revisions, if needed (2-4 months)
- Prepare budget for Fiscal 07-08 (1-2 months)
- Alpine Fire Safe Council continues self-help programs with homeowners and assist volunteers with fund raisers (ongoing)

B.) Implementation Strategies

The most important recommendation for implementation of the Fire Services Plan would be that the strategies shown are not a onetime performance. These measures would need to be repeated over time as the Fire Services Plan proceeded from short-term to intermediate-term to long-term accomplishment. The most vital element would be community participation that is consistent, frequent, and responsive in terms of results after community input is received.

(1.) Voter Attitude Surveys. Analysis of voter opinions has become crucial in planning for any organizational change and for any form of new revenue source. Throughout California, as more and more elections are required to develop revenues to maintain or enhance public services, voter attitudes are becoming part of the landscape. These surveys would assist sponsors in designing a proposal, determining the best timing for presentation to voters, and finding added support to assist with campaign efforts. These surveys are not inexpensive; they range from \$7,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size of the sample. Given the small population of the service area for this Fire Services Plan, it is possible that a much lower cost could be achieved.

Surveys of this type are performed by an independent third party to assure objectivity. The surveys are completed by telephone, made during the evening when results are best, and usually last about five to seven minutes. The survey is based upon information furnished by the sponsoring organization. Phrasing of questions and sequence of questions are usually not negotiable, as the surveyor has standards to meet, which could be affected by seemingly minor changes.

(2.) Community Meetings. This is self-explanatory. The meetings should be held often and presented in a consistent manner, insofar as information distribution and answers to questions. Ideally, the two fire stations should be used for meeting sites enabling attendees to view the limitations present and the needed corrections. These meetings should be relatively brief to encourage attendance—30 to 45 minutes.

Coffee klatches in private homes are also very effective, and should be used as much as possible. Every meeting should be attended by members of the Ad Hoc Committee and members of the fire volunteers.

No meeting should be completed without a list of names of attendees. A request should be made for people to volunteer in assisting the campaign to obtain improved fire and emergency medical services.

(3.) Voter Awareness Materials. An example would be, simplified graphs depicting the cost per person for the proposed voted revenue sources. These graphs should be professionally produced, in color, not more than two pages, and available for distribution at the school, Chamber of Commerce, retail stores, and other similar locations.

Direct mail to the residents of Eastern Alpine County should be considered. The cost of preparation, copying and postage may be a barrier to fulfillment, but the Ad Hoc Committee should carefully consider this communication tool. There is no local newspaper; therefore, direct mail to residents may be of more value and effectiveness than in other communities. There are professional firms that provide direct mail service. In order to hold down costs, it would be recommended that a separate committee of volunteers be appointed to be responsible for the direct mail, if this step would be approved for implementation.

Another example would be summaries of fire insurance premiums for selected property values, and the lack of gaining fire insurance coverage from some carriers.

A graphic summary of fees and taxes paid in other similar, all volunteer fire departments showing the very low cost of Alpine County's operation should be prepared for general distribution.

A website should be established to provide basic information about the fire and emergency services program, offer opportunities for responses to questions received, and gain names of potential volunteers to work on the program with the fire service.

A one-page summary of the long-term goals and objectives of the fire and emergency medical services program, clearly identifying the priorities for achievement of each of the components, should be prepared for general distribution.

(4.) Support from Public Officials. Members of the Board of Supervisors should be personally invited to the various community meetings. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee should be encouraged to write letters to members of the Board of Supervisors urging support of the fire services program. Other local elected officials should be contacted to seek endorsement of the program. Those names supporting endorsement of the program should be shown on the printed materials distributed at community meetings.

During the weeks the election effort is undertaken, regular progress reports to the Board of Supervisors should be made summarizing activity, results of meetings, and informing them as to the entire program.

The Alpine County representative to the California Assembly and California Senate should be contacted and brought current on the proposed program. State legislators have discretionary funds available for selected projects and an earnest effort should be made to obtain such funding for this fire and emergency services plan implementation. If such funds are not in the offing, these officials could possibly identify other state assistance programs that otherwise may not have been known. Or by being alerted to the situation, they may be able to apply pressure on existing grant applications. One of the challenges present in Alpine County is the Woodfords Indian Colony's lands. These properties are not subject to taxes or assessments, and that information could be shown to the legislators as a reason warranting state assistance. The State could be asked to provide some assistance in order to meet minimum fire protection standards, in the absence of the ability to include all county residents in a balanced financing plan.

The Alpine County representative to Congress should also be contacted. He needs to be aware of the sub-standard fire protection level and the extremely limited capability to finance improvements. Possible appropriations to the Forest Service could be directed to assist Alpine County's fire system improvements. Another option, funding to the Lake Tahoe Basin could be tweaked to include Alpine County on the basis that fires could threaten the entire basin. Therefore, Alpine County needs to have assistance to achieve the level of service required. The inability to buy fire insurance could be used as an argument in favor of some federal assistance.

(5.) Review Working Agreement with CDF and USFS. During the course of research for the long-range elements of this Fire Services Plan, advice was given that the working agreement between the California Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forestry Service was not "set in stone" and should be reviewed for possible revision. This task would be very appropriate for the Alpine Fire Safe Council, with its strong base of community support. The Council should schedule meetings with the appropriate agency representatives and explore avenues open to improved cooperation, technical assistance, and importantly, the possible opening of a seasonal work camp in Alpine County to provide labor for fire prevention/suppression assistance. Informal discussions with CDF representatives indicated that it may be possible to establish a camp in the future.

(6.) MOU with Tribal Council. A critical element with the Fire Services Plan implementation would be to achieve full support of the Washoe Tribal Council. One step toward that goal would be to prepare a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tribal Council for the Board of Supervisors. This MOU should set forth specific actions, timing, and oversight of the responsibilities for both the County and the Tribal Council to carry out the Fire Services Plan.

(7.) Managing the Implementation Steps. It would be essential that a designated person be responsible for the oversight of the activities being undertaken to implement the Fire Services Plan. This person most likely would need help and should have a small committee for assistance. The implementation strategies would not succeed without a driver mobilizing people, money, efforts and creativity to make things work. The Ad Hoc Committee should not conduct their final meeting without choosing this leader to carry on and oversee the various action steps set forth.

(8.) Fund Raisers. The Ad Hoc Committee and Alpine Fire Safe Council should plan a continuing series of fund raising events. This should include T-shirt sales, spaghetti feeds, memento sales, etc.

(9.) Self-Help Programs. Home inspections, clear space review, and other self-help prevention efforts now practiced should be continued.

(10.) Timetable for Implementation Steps. Timing for the start of the steps selected by the Ad Hoc Committee would be immediate. Upon filing the recommended Fire Services Plan with the Board of Supervisors, the Ad Hoc Committee should identify the members who would begin organizing the initial action steps needed to get voter approval for the organization, financing proposals, and ensure continuity with other people, as needed.

VII Resources/References

This section is a guide for some of the many resources available to assist the Ad Hoc Committee and the Alpine Fire Safe Council with implementation of the Fire Services Plan.

One of the primary goals expressed by the Ad Hoc Committee was to design strategies necessary in establishing a satisfactory rating by the Insurance Rating Office (ISO). In order to meet this goal, it would be helpful to have information regarding the criteria used by the ISO when visiting and establishing a rating for the agency being inspected. This information is available from a book entitled, Fire Suppression Rating Schedule Handbook, by Harry Hickey.³ The following summaries were extracted from this publication.

A.) Criteria for Rating Services

(1.) Organization established by adopted local ordinance or applicable state law with copies of that information available for review.

(2.) One person is the responsible authority for managing and directing the fire organization established in number one.

(3.) The organization must serve a specific geographic area with well-defined boundaries.

B.) Staffing Requirements

(1.) Four (4) staff members must report to a fire incident. For volunteer departments, there must be ten (10) volunteers for each staff person on a paid, full-time department.

(2.) The Fire Chief may be one of the four staff members reporting to the fire.

(3.) Records within the department must verify that a minimum of four (4) staff members report to each fire call.

C.) Training

(1.) A minimum of two hours training every two months for each staff member.

(2.) Not every staff member has to attend every training session.

(3.) Detailed records must be maintained and kept on file for inspections reflecting the number of training sessions, topics covered, trainer leading the session(s), and the names of people attending.

³ Published by Professional Loss Control Educational Foundation in 1993. A recent search for this book found it to be out of print, and available only through a dealer in technical publications that are out of print.
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D.) Alarm for Incidents

One staff person must be responsible at all times for the receipt of notice of a fire or emergency incident, and the notification of people to respond. This staff person need not be a member of the fire organization, but must be assigned to a communications center that engages all active emergency responders in the geographic area.

E.) Apparatus

(1.) There must be one unit that meets NFPA standard 1901 available at all times to reach reported incidents. Additional units on reserve represent added credit for this criterion.

(2.) The apparatus available for incident response must be tested a minimum of once each year. Additional testing warrants added points.

(3.) Records must be maintained and available for inspection reporting the number of tests made, the results of those tests, and the person responsible for conducting those tests.

F.) Housing

The apparatus available for incident response must be housed in an all-weather facility, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This housing must be in compliance with OSHA requirements and other such public safety standards or regulations applicable to the geographic area.

G.) No Water Main Areas

(1.) Time required for first arrival to scene of incident.

(2.) Arrival time for each pumper reporting to scene.

(3.) Ready time for each pumper to commence service at scene.

(4.) Capacity of tanker unit brought to site. (Note: Rated capacity equals 90% of capacity size of tanker; 10% loss provides for spillage, inability to completely empty tanker, etc.)

(5.) Arrival time for each shuttle tanker, actual connection time, and time for actual operation onsite.

(6.) Ability to provide a minimum of 250 gallons per minute for five minutes before shuttle tanker replaces water supply.

(7.) Distance of fill site to the scene of incident; description of fill site; and actual time required to load and unload at fill site before transfer to incident site.

H.) Measuring Water Supply Delivery

(1.) Demonstrate water supply for a two-hour period of time during times set for apparatus testing.

(2.) Provide 250 gallons per minute from water supply apparatus for five minutes after arrival at scene of incident.

(3.) Measure water flow rate every fifteen minutes thereafter.

I.) No Water Main Agencies

(1.) Buildings built upon property beyond five miles from a fire station are deemed to be unprotected. (In computing the five-mile perimeter, use only major access streets and not residential streets.)

(2.) Within the five-mile perimeter built upon property, it is seen to be semi-protected. The minimum required water flow is 250 gallons per minute for a minimum period of two hours, which equals 30,000 gallons.

(3.) Monitor the number and size of tankers available for suppression at the incident site.

(4.) Measure the length of lines required from tanker to apparatus attending fire.

(5.) Ground level water storage sources are adequate as long as they can sustain a flow of 250 gallons per minute for two hours. The ground level source or sources should be identified geographically with maps for use by operators of fire apparatus on-call for incidents.

(6.) Tests of water quantity and access should be made at least twice per year with written records supporting the conduct of such tests.

(7.) If possible, a computer program should be available to calculate water flow without mains.

(8.) Sample the timeline required during testing period to determine the time lag from surface water source to fire site. (For example: 32 minutes from start of water source take out to fire site.)

J.) Grading Schedule

<u>Receiving and Handling Alarms</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
1. Phone service	2.00
2. Operators	3.00
3. Dispatch circuits	<u>5.00</u>
Sub-Total Credit	10.00

<u>Fire Department</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
1. Engine companies (number, type of hose, other equipment)	10.00
2. Reserve pumpers available	1.00
3. Pumper capacity	5.00
4. Ladder service	5.00
5. Reserve ladder service	1.00
6. Credit for distribution of percentage built out areas, having equipment stationed within 1.5 miles of a ladder company or a reserve unit within 2.5 mi.	4.00
7. Organizational style, number of staff on duty, and availability for reporting to the incident commander at any time	15.00
8. Training frequency, trainer qualifications, and attendance records	<u>9.00</u>
Sub-Total Credit	50.00

K.) Water Supply

1. Credit for installed system, available supply, capacity, pressure, and existing line sizes	35.00
2. Hydrants—method and type	2.00
3. Hydrant inspection and condition	<u>3.00</u>
Sub-Total Credit	40.00

L.) Summary of All Credits

Alarms =	10% Maximum Credit
Fire Department =	50% Maximum Credit
Water System =	<u>40%</u> Maximum Credit
Divergence (-)	
Total	100%

M.) Rating Schedule

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Percentage of Credits</u>
1	90 +
2	80 – 89.9
3	70 – 79.9
4	60 – 69.9
5	50 – 59.9
6	40 – 49.9
7	30 – 39.9
8	20 – 29.9
9	10 – 19.9
10	0 – 9.9

APPENDIX A

OTHER RESOURCES

Accreditation: Building Fire Departments Through Self-Assessment, Commission on Fire Accreditation International, 4025 Fair Ridge Drive, Fairfax, VA, 1998.

Benchmarking: Achieving Superior Performance in Fire and Emergency Services, Management Information Service, ICMA, 1993.

This is a technical publication with much of the data suited for urban and high-density fire protection areas. However, the concepts, reporting methodology, standards for compliance, and technique for comparison to other fire service providers are helpful.

Note: A copy of this document has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Conducting Successful Revenue and Ballot Measures. Conference Proceedings from League of California Cities meeting, 1998.

Note: A copy of this document has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Emergency Medical Services Recruitment and Retention Manual, Publication FA-157, 1995, U.S. Fire Administration.

Recruiting, Training and Maintaining Volunteer Firefighters, 2nd ed., Lake Oswego, OR; Management Development Institute, 1989.

Recruitment and Retention in the Volunteer Fire Service, Final Report of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and National Volunteer Fire Council, 1998.

Note: A copy of this document has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Alpine County Planning Department, “Multi-Jurisdictional Risk Assessment Draft”, October 2004.

Alpine Fire Safe Council, “Alpine County Community Fire Plan” Draft, December 2003.

Assistance with volunteer recruitment/training/comparison to other agencies, contact: 1) Bill Sager, Coordinator, Wildland Firefighter Training Program, California Fire Chiefs Association, 530/533-2880; 2) Garret Simmons, California Division of Forestry, 530/647-5234, e-mail: garrett.simons@fire.ca.gov; 3) Cris Anthony, 530/647-5290.

Assistance with design of specifications for equipment purchase and/or acquisition of used apparatus from CDF, contact: CDF Unit Chief Bill Holmes, 2840 Mt. Danaher Road, Camino, CA 95708; 530/644-2345.

Assistance with applications for state/federal grant programs, contact: Steve Dunlap, Deputy Chief, CDF, Cooperative Fire Section, 530/653-6521 (office); 916/956-1892 (cell); email:

steve.dunlap@fire.ca.gov. Assistance with design of specifications for equipment purchases, contact: Deana 530/757-2407.

Fire Fund Benefit Assessment Ordinance for County of Alameda, County of Merced, and City of Commerce.

Note: A copy of these documents has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Information on availability of seasonal workers for volunteer crews and possibly establishing a summer camp, contact: Deputy Chief Wintin, CDF, 530/647-5201 and Rich Armstrong, 530/757-2407.

Insurance Service Office (ISO) assistance with mitigation of fire risks and hazards to improve local ratings: Michael Ramirez, Senior Community Mitigation Analyst, 312/930-0070, ext 6260, Website: www.isomitigation.com

Insurance Service Office (ISO) fire suppression rating schedule, 1998.

Note: Two copies have been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Plymouth Fire Department Survivors Handbook, Plymouth Fire Department and Plymouth Firefighters Relief Association, 1996.

Note: A copy of this document has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Preliminary Study of Loomis Fire Protection District Special Benefit Assessment Report, 1996.

Note: A copy of this document has been filed with the Ad Hoc Committee for their use.

Worker/Volunteer Safety Requirements - California Office of Safety and Health Administration (Cal-OSHA), contact: Wayne Hom at 415/703-5257. An information source as to those rules applicable to volunteer fire agencies, and clarification of managing existing worker safety requirements.

APPENDIX B

BENEFIT ASSESSMENT DISTRICT PROCEEDINGS

California voters adopted a process to be used when asking consent of property owners to an assessment that pays for public services or improvements. This process is most often referred to as “Prop 218” after the name of the measure submitted to voters for consideration. This Appendix to the Eastern Alpine County Fire Services Plan is for the purpose of summarizing the Prop 218 process, in order to possibly use it in Eastern Alpine County. Copies of official documents used in other communities for fire suppression benefit assessment purposes have been collected and are on file with the Ad Hoc Committee, if needed for future reference.

A benefit assessment proceeding could be undertaken for fire protection/suppression purposes. These purposes could include operation, maintenance and/or acquisition of fire suppression apparatus, buildings and improvements needed to support fire suppression activity, firefighting personnel, and the support of such personnel. The fire suppression services actually do not need to be used by each parcel of property within the area subject to the assessment.

Utilizing this law requires the governing Board of Supervisors to conduct a noticed public hearing on the intention to form a benefit assessment district. A map is required for the hearing showing the perimeter of lands to be included within the district. If more than 50% of the property owners within that proposed district protest the formation of the district, the entire proceedings are terminated. If there is not a majority protest, the governing Board may retain the services of an engineer to proceed to the next step. Note: Prop 218 mandates that a registered professional engineer certify the allocation of benefits from the proposed assessment, and be responsible for preparation of the assessment diagram and district map. Completion of the necessary mapping could take several months, depending upon the size of the area proposed for the proceeding. In the case of Eastern Alpine County, a base of data is available through a geographic information system (GIS) that would assist in reducing the time required for this step.

After the boundary map and assessment diagram have been completed, the engineer must ascertain a method for distributing the benefit received to each of the parcels set forth in the diagram. In the case of fire service, there are several methods available to calculate the benefit. Some locations simply have used the number of square feet of improvements subject to fire risk. Other locations have used a more complex approach that distinguishes the fire risk for commercial, residential, public use, and other land use categories. In some cases, these formulae can include such things as building height, distance from the nearest fire station, water supply available, density of development, and so forth. In one case, the formula specified any improvement less than 350 square feet in size was exempt from an assessment. Another provision imposed a minimum assessment on vacant lands. It is important to note that these variations must be affirmed by the engineer certifying the results of the assessments, so that the benefits clearly relate to every parcel. The assessment cannot

exceed the cost of the benefit delivered to the parcel. Any benefit determined to be of general benefit, as opposed to special benefit, must be excluded from the assessments.

Please note that the voter-approved methodology does not allow for the exclusion of assessments on public agency owned property, on the basis that all properties benefit from the proposed assessment. This means that state owned property, federal owned property, school districts, and Alpine County property ownerships are subject to the proposed assessment.

After the benefit formula has been determined, the assigned amount per property is shown for each ownership. This information is prepared in a written format that includes the manner in which approval or denial of the proposed assessment can be declared by each owner. Another public hearing is held at this step. This hearing would determine a need to proceed with the assessment proceeding and to commence the formal notification period. Again, a majority protest by affected owners could terminate proceedings at that point. The engineer retained for this work would mail the required notice to each owner. A period of time would be provided for owners to respond to the Board of Supervisors. At the end of the response period, there would be another public hearing at which time the results of the property consent forms would be formally recorded. The action taken by owners, for or against the measure, is not a secret ballot and is deemed to be public information.

As each consent form is reviewed, a running total of the amount of assessment involved is maintained at the hearing. At such time that \$1.00 more than 50% of the total amount to be assessed has been recorded on a consent form, the hearing can be concluded and the assessment proceeding is authorized. If approved, the assessment roll is forwarded to the county official responsible for property tax collection and the amounts are added to the property tax bill. Funds collected from the assessments are set-aside in a separate account dedicated to the specific use set forth in the documentation authorizing the assessment proceeding. Expenditures from that separate account are approved by the Board of Supervisors in the same manner as with county general funds.

If property outside of the original boundary of the assessment wishes to be included, at a time after the completion of the original proceeding, the Board of Supervisors could impose a condition on future development requiring the property owners to petition for inclusion under the same terms and conditions as the original assessment.

The number of years the assessment remains in place could vary and would need to be determined by the Board of Supervisors, when the initial public hearing is concluded and an engineer approved to proceed with preparation of the assessment diagram, map and notices. The assessment could also be prepared to allow for an automatic escalator each year reflecting anticipated inflationary cost increases.