



# SAN DIEGO RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

## IMPORTANT LETTER FROM THE FIRE BOARD

To the citizens and customers served by the San Diego Rural Fire Protection District:

The County of San Diego ("County") is asking the San Diego Rural Fire Protection District (the "District") to decide if it will continue to operate as an independent fire district or dissolve and become part of the new County Fire Authority agency ("CFA"). This is the third and final phase of the County's plan to consolidate the fire protection services in the rural areas of San Diego County that began after the fires of 2003 and 2007.

In connection with this consolidation plan, the County currently provides the District with \$3.1 Million in annual funding for the cost of the District's contract with Cal Fire. The Cal Fire contract allows the District to provide 24/7 career firefighting staffing at the following stations: Jamul, Otay Mesa, Descanso, and Lake Morena. This contract also provides stipends for volunteer firefighters at the Deerhorn, Harbison Canyon, Dehesa, Dulzura, Potrero and Jacumba stations. These funds are discretionary with the County Board of Supervisors, meaning that since the County Charter does not require it to provide fire protection services, those funds can be withdrawn at any time.

Because the District was formed after the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the District receives approximately \$.019 (1.9 cents) of every property tax dollar ("ad valorem" taxes) paid by its residents to the County of San Diego. This results in approximately \$650,000 in yearly gross ad valorem revenue to the District. ***By comparison, the Lakeside Fire Protection District receives \$.19 (19 cents) of each property tax dollar for firefighting and emergency medical services.*** In addition to the ad valorem taxes, some areas within the District have created either Community Service Zones ("CSZ") and/or Community Facilities Districts ("CFD"), which assess additional funds to be used within the individual CSZs or CFDs.

Without the funds from the County, the District receives a total of \$1,670,638.00 in yearly continuing revenue. This is not sufficient to provide full time career firefighter protection to all the residents in the District.

The District's contract with Cal Fire is set to expire on **June 30, 2013**. The County has advised the District that it will not renew the Cal Fire contract and the County will discontinue providing career firefighter staffing unless the District makes a commitment to dissolve and become part of the CFA. The County advised the District of its position approximately 45 days ago.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU?

While the County has not fully disclosed its plans to the District, we believe the following to be true if the District joins the CFA:

- The decision-making function for fire protection within the District will be transferred to the County.
- While the CSZ and CFD special assessments must remain in and be used in the local areas only, the ad valorem taxes will become part of the County's general fund. Regardless of whether the funds are CSZ, CFD or ad valorem taxes, control of these funds will be transferred to the County.

- Without the continued County funding, the District will be able to provide only the following reduced levels of staffing:

<u>Station</u>	<u>Staffing Levels</u>
District Administration/Fire Command	Part-time Fire Chief/Fire Marshal
Jamul & Otay Mesa	Career/Paid 24/7 Staffing
Deerhorn Valley, Dehesa, Descanso, Dulzura, Harbison Canyon, Jacumba, Lawson Valley, Lyons Valley, Lake Morena, Potrero & Tecate	Unpaid Volunteer Staffing

### WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

- Keep the status quo, meaning the district maintains its independence, and the County contracts directly with Cal Fire for the Districts' fire services at the same or better level than currently exists. *This option has not been offered by the County.*
- Decline to dissolve the District and revert to pre-2006 staffing levels, in which the majority of the District's stations were manned primarily by volunteer firefighters.
- Dissolve the District and merge with the CFA.
- Dissolve the District and operate as a "dependent" fire district under County authority whereby the County identifies and dedicates a continuing revenue stream through ad valorem property taxes to fund the firefighting operations at the same or better level than currently exists. *This option has not been offered by the County.*

### WHAT THE DISTRICT IS DOING?

The District is currently in discussions with the County to extend the time and terms of its current Cal Fire contract so that the District can solicit community input on the future direction of the district before deciding whether or not to dissolve.

In the meantime, the District Board of Directors plan on holding several community forums throughout the District in which we invite you to express your opinion as to the continued direction of the firefighting services in the District. We will be asking representatives of the CFA, along with your County Supervisor, Dianne Jacob, to attend these community forums. Please look for information regarding these community forums via mail, the Jamul Shopper and our website at [www.sdruralfire.org](http://www.sdruralfire.org). Look for a dedicated email link on our website ([consolidation@sdrfire.org](mailto:consolidation@sdrfire.org)) where you can submit your comments. Also, please feel free to contact Chief David Nissen directly at 619-669-1188 or any District board member. In addition, you can contact Dianne Jacob at 619-531-5522 or [Dianne.jacob@sdcountry.ca.gov](mailto:Dianne.jacob@sdcountry.ca.gov) or Herman Reddick, of the CFA, at 858-974-5813 or [Herman.Reddick@sdcountry.ca.gov](mailto:Herman.Reddick@sdcountry.ca.gov), and Ken Miller, of the CFA, at 858-974-5920 or [Kenneth.Miller@sdcountry.ca.gov](mailto:Kenneth.Miller@sdcountry.ca.gov).

We thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors  
San Diego Rural Fire Protection District