



## Kuna Rural Fire District

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 16, 2022  
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#### **The Kuna Rural Fire District staffing levels unable to keep pace with rising call volumes** *November ballot proposals would address challenges facing emergency services*

Kuna, Idaho — The Kuna Rural Fire District is struggling to keep up with growing demands for service with its current staffing levels of just 15 firefighters and one fire station.

The fire district's population has grown and is projected to increase by 74 percent in the next 10 years. This growth has resulted in more calls for services while staffing levels have remained largely unchanged. At times there are no Kuna firefighters to send on calls.

Emergency call volumes have increased 72.4 percent in the last 10 years (17.3 percent in the last year alone). Overlapping calls – emergency calls that come in at the same time – happen almost 25 percent of the time and that number continues to rise.

#### **District faces staffing challenges amid increasing call volumes and overlapping calls**

The fire district has just five firefighters per shift to respond to more than 2,000 calls a year. Each shift consists of a three-person engine company (the national standard is four) and a two-person smaller “squad” vehicle, primarily used for medical emergencies. The district's limited staffing is further strained when any employee is out on sick leave, vacation, or out due to injury.

In 2021 the fire district stopped transporting patients to area hospitals because it took emergency personnel out of the service area for too long, increasing response times. Ada County Paramedics now provide transport services out of the Kuna Fire Station, but even with this help, there are times when overlapping calls occur and there are no firefighters to respond.

#### **How does the district plan to address these challenges?**

The district is funded through a property tax levy that pays for daily operations. The district's current levy rate is the lowest among neighboring fire districts with the same level of service and is not enough to fund additional firefighters. The fire district is asking voters for a small operating levy increase to hire six additional emergency personnel. The additional firefighters will reduce response times, guarantee unit reliability, and improve community safety.

The fire district also needs a second fire station south of the train tracks to add capacity and improve service reliability across the entire district. Ideally, a community should have one fire station per 10,000 people. The fire district has just one station that serves almost 34,000 people. Capital projects, like a fire station, are funded through voter-approved bonds. The district is asking voters for a bond to build the second fire station.

**What is the cost?**

The cost for both proposals is \$6.79 per month (\$81.45 per year) for the owner of a \$346,000 home with the primary residence exemption, which is considered the average for the area. This funding plan is lower than what was previously presented to voters and reduces the annual cost for property owners by paying for the fire station through a bond.

Both will be on the November 8, 2022, general election ballot.

“Our firefighters are dedicated to protecting and serving our community and they require additional support to effectively and safely manage the growing demands for service,” Fire Chief T.J. Lawrence said.

More information on the levy and bond proposals can be found at [www.kunafire.com](http://www.kunafire.com). Chief Lawrence is also available to answer questions personally at [chief@kunafire.com](mailto:chief@kunafire.com) or 208-922-1144 ext. 2.

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*The Kuna Rural Fire District (KRFD) provides fire suppression, life safety, and emergency medical services to 33,390 people across 110 square miles. Fifteen full-time firefighters responded to more than 2,007 calls in 2021 – a 72.42% increase compared to 10 years ago. EMS accounts for 63% of all calls, and overlapping calls occur 25% of the time. The agency operates under a balanced budget, is debt free, and has passed all its independent audits per state law.*