

Joining the Fire District



PROS AND CONS

Pros of Joining the District:

1. The city receives additional coverage - one additional person at Station 117, and two additional at Station 118, with consideration given for more personnel once the new station is complete.
2. Immediate plans for construction of a third fire station built within the city.
3. Necessary capital improvements can be made to an aging Station 117, which the city does not have funds for at present, nor would the city need to worry about future capital improvements to Station 118.
4. Joining the District fits with the city's historical "pay as you go" philosophy. The District covers all the costs of major infrastructure expenditures. For example, the city would not need to bond for a \$3 million dollar fire station.
5. Some previous revenues used to fund fire services are freed up for the city to use in other vital areas.

Cons of Joining the District:

1. The city gives up taxing authority over the fire department (but does have an elected official vote at both the District Board and UFA Board levels).
2. It is a long-term commitment. Removing the city from the District would require a referendum majority vote of the people.

What is the Fire District and how does this affect my property taxes?

Currently the City of Taylorsville is a member of Unified Fire Authority (UFA) through a contract for our fire, emergency medical services and other related emergency responses, and pays approximately \$3.9 million annually for these services.

The city has the highest population density of any city in Utah, and because of that warrants a higher need for public safety response. Elected officials take this matter seriously, and have stated that the safety of residents is their number one priority.

At present, Taylorsville is a net importer of fire services, representing just over 15 percent of the overall UFA responses but contributing only 8.2 percent to the overall budget. Additionally, one national standard suggests a staffing level of one firefighter per thousand residents, but current levels within the city are just over .6 per thousand. As you can imagine, asking for charity from our neighbors can only work for so long, as other agencies on a regular basis enter into the city to augment emergency needs of our citizens.

Because of these issues, the city council approved a move to Salt Lake Valley Fire Service Area District, which is also a member of UFA.

The Salt Lake Valley Fire Service Area District does not provide the actual fire services, but is a special service district that funds fire needs. The District has the ability to levy property taxes which are then forwarded to UFA for our fire services. Currently Herriman, unincorporated Salt Lake County, Riverton, and Midvale are part of the District.

Joining the Fire District means residents would see a separate line item next year on their property tax notice for fire services in November 2013. The City Council will lower the city tax. The law requires at least a 20 percent decrease, but during last year's budget, the council mentioned possibly lowering it 50 percent or more.

The decision on how much to lower the city portion of property taxes will be made next June when the next fiscal year budget is discussed.

