

The Colorado Fire Service: Career, Combination and Volunteer

*Protecting the Citizens, the Economy and
the Environment of Colorado*



When you don't know who else to call, call the fire department!

**We will come and stand between you and danger...
no matter what the threat.**



Protecting the Fiscal Stability and Operational Capabilities of Colorado's Fire Service

"It really is all about the revenue..."

Bottom Line Up Front

Stabilize the revenue sources for all of Colorado's fire departments, and especially for fire protection districts which are singularly dependent on property taxes.

The Challenge: Continual Property Tax Reductions

For more than two decades, property taxes, the primary source of annual re-occurring revenue for most of Colorado's fire departments, especially fire protection districts, have been continually reduced to the point where many FDs are unable to maintain staffing, unable to purchase new apparatus, unable to keep personal protective equipment up-to-date and unable to handle the continued increase in emergency calls.

The Value of Colorado's Fire Service

Our missions have evolved over the last five decades and our missions will continue to evolve in the future. We remain committed to developing the personnel, infrastructure, assets, and technology necessary to excel in tomorrow's world.

Colorado's locally funded fire fighters:

- Protect the economy of every community in Colorado
- Protect more than 2.9 million jobs in Colorado
- Respond to **every** human-caused and natural disaster...from day-to-day emergencies to the increasing numbers of catastrophic incidents
- Protect Colorado's natural resources, our forests, and the quality of our air and water
- Protect our state's critical infrastructure
- Protect the national critical infrastructure located in Colorado
- Protect the lives, property, and well-being of our state's 5.9 million citizens
- Protect more than 84 million annual visitors who come to Colorado each year
- Serve as the "calvary" as local fire apparatus and firefighters respond at the request of the State of Colorado whenever and wherever major fires and incidents occur across Colorado

Colorado fire departments have about

14,000 firefighters...

in career, combination, and volunteer fire departments.

Of the approximately 375 fire departments in Colorado, more than 250 are governed and operate as Title 32

Fire Protection Districts... which means **67% of all fire departments in Colorado are organized as fire protection districts.**

Current Primary Funding Sources for Colorado's Fire Departments:

- **Fire protection districts** = overwhelmingly dependent on property taxes with no significant additional sources of revenue
- **Municipal fire departments** = primarily sales and use taxes via municipal budgets
- **Volunteer fire departments** = ranges from property taxes (smaller FPDs) along with donations, bake sales, breakfasts, dinners, etc.

Summary

Colorado's firefighters continue to protect our communities from a growing list of threats and disasters, and our firefighters face tremendous personal health risks (cancer, mental health, heart) while their fire departments are threatened by continual increasing fiscal pressures and recruitment/retention challenges.

Representing Colorado's career-combination-volunteer fire departments and protecting urban-suburban-rural jurisdictions, the Colorado Professional Fire Fighters and the Colorado State Fire Chiefs will continue to utilize strong labor management relations and will work together using the structures and benefits of collective bargaining to assist all firefighters and fire departments to continually improve efficiencies of administration and operations, protect our firefighters, and enhance service delivery to the citizens and visitors of Colorado.

As Colorado's firefighters continue to fulfill their role to locally execute Colorado's response to emergencies and disasters, it is critical that funding be stabilized through the leadership of the Governor along with legislative actions taken by the General Assembly.

The Most Common Types of Fire Apparatus and Their Costs

Fire engines are classified by type and function. Every fire truck 'type' is designed with specific components for specific purposes and must carry specific equipment.

Standardized vehicle typing (naming) ensures that regional terminology does not compromise prompt rescue support and resources. What may be called a “brush truck” in one community is a “wildland truck” in another. Standard terminology means that a fire department can request support for a specific engine type, knowing that it carries the required equipment for the emergency. As a result, fire departments can appropriately manage mutual aid and know exactly what kind of support they are getting for every emergency call.

While there are different “types” of fire engines, here are photos, brief descriptions and **estimated apparatus purchase and required equipment costs** for the most common types of fire apparatus used in Colorado.

(The costs are based on a January 2023 survey of multiple urban, suburban and rural Colorado fire departments)

Type 1 Fire Engine \$945,000

A Type 1 fire engine is what most people refer to as a “Fire Engine”. It is the most common type of fire truck in use today. A typical Type 1 fire engine carries around 400 to 500 gallons of water along with various sizes of water supply hose and attack fire hoses. Type 1 engines are designed to safely carry up to 4 firefighters and support urban, suburban and rural fire departments. These versatile vehicles are often the first on scene because they support both structural firefighting and initial Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response.



Type 3 Fire Engine

\$550,000

Type 3 engines have 4-wheel drive to make driving over rough terrains easier and the ability to carry and pump at least 500 US gallons of water. They must be able to transport at least 3 crew members. Wildland fire trucks commonly sit on a commercial 4x4 chassis and are designed to have the ability to manage off-road and variable terrain. They are usually equipped with a power-take-off (PTO) pump so the vehicle can remain in motion while simultaneously fighting fire. This pump-and-roll technique means that a truck operator can drive the truck while crew members operate the pump and hoses walking beside the moving vehicle. This is critically important to allow firefighters to follow along as forest fires and brush fires move with the weather, and to create fire lines, wetting down areas ahead of an advancing wildfire.



Type 6 Fire Engine

\$325,000

These versatile vehicles are a key component of responses to wildland and wildland urban interface fires. They are typically pick-up truck-based with 4-wheel drive and carry up to 400 gallons of water. Types 6 engines are used heavily for initial fire suppression response and are designed to hold a minimum of 2 people. They are used in various ways depending on a fire department's needs. For example, some trucks are used as a fire response unit and include a small EMS response kit, while other vehicles are equipped with a water tank and water pump and can provide water suppression resources before larger rigs arrive on the scene.



Water Tender

\$450,000

Mobile water supply apparatus are better known as “tenders.” These trucks are designed for transporting and delivering water to fire emergency scenes to be used by other fire engines in fighting fires, hence the name “tender.” They are absolutely essential fire vehicles for fighting fires in rural areas and in the wildland and in the wildland urban interface (WUI) or whenever fire hydrants or other water sources are not available.



Aerial Apparatus / Ladder Truck

\$1,600,000

Aerial fire apparatus (aka Ladder Trucks) are usually equipped with either a 100 ft aerial ladder or a 100 ft elevating platform. They are designed and equipped to support firefighting and rescue operations by positioning personnel, handling materials, providing continuous egress, or discharging water at positions elevated from the ground. Many ladder trucks combine the operational capabilities of a ladder truck and the water-pumping ability of a fire engine and provide five main firefighting functions: pump, water tank, fire hose, aerial device and multiple ground ladders.



Medic Unit/Ambulance

\$315,000

An **ambulance** is a vehicle equipped to provide pre-hospital emergency care to sick or injured people. It will get them to the hospital using either basic life support (BLS) or advanced life support (ALS/paramedic) trained personnel. Ambulances carry the equipment needed to stabilize someone who is ill or injured including stretchers, cardiac defibrillators, spine boards, oxygen and oxygen masks, cervical (neck) collars, splints, bandages and a range of drugs and intravenous fluids. **Medic units** are transport-capable units usually staffed with two Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technicians and/or Firefighter/Paramedics.



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HOW MUCH DOES FIREFIGHTER GEAR COST?

Helmet: \$350

Hood: \$120

Bunker Coat: \$1,902

Flashlight: \$220

Halligan & Axe: \$640

Bailout Kit: \$600

ADDITIONAL GEAR

Wildland Gear: \$2,710
Tech Rescue Gear: \$1,400
Bullet Proof Vest: \$700
2nd Set of Gear: \$3,579

Radio: \$7,500

Self-Contained
Breathing
Apparatus: \$11,900

Gloves: \$170

Bunker Pant: \$1,387

Boots: \$598

TOTAL: \$33,776.00

*total is using January 2023 figures. Photo by Tim Tonge