

City of Gonzales Fire Department Frequently Asked Questions

What is the role of the Gonzales Fire Department in the community?

The Gonzales Fire Department (GFD) serves the City of Gonzales and the surrounding area within the Gonzales Rural Fire Protection District – approximately 11,000 people. GFD is the first responder for 911 emergency response, including emergency medical calls and fires. GFD answers over 800 calls for service annually – averaging 2-3 calls every day.

How critical is emergency response time in Gonzales?

In the event of a medical emergency like a heart attack, stroke or car accident, minutes and seconds really matter. We are fortunate to have professional firefighter/EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) protecting our community and responding to local 911 calls – especially considering our closest hospital emergency room is 20 minutes away, in Salinas. Having trained first responders on site can make the difference between life and death.

Does GFD currently have any specific needs?

Our local fire department faces growing challenges that threaten GFD's ability to reliably serve our community. Ensuring safe, modern equipment is critical for effective 911 response. GFD has worn and outdated medical gear, breathing apparatus, protective clothing and tools used by firefighter/EMTs.

What challenges does City of Gonzales Fire Department face?

Unfortunately, right now our local fire station and fire engines rely on bare minimum staffing. GFD can only afford a single engine staffed with 2 firefighters/EMTs on call around the clock.

This creates real concerns if two significant emergencies happen at the same time in our small community. These concerns are made even worse by the growing threats of wildfires, floods and other disasters in our region that could further pull resources away from local 911 calls.

Why is a reliable source of local funding necessary for emergency response?

In order to continue providing and improving emergency response, our community needs to establish a reliable source of local funding to maintain the availability of rapid 911 response when an emergency strikes and seconds really matter.

Do neighboring communities have successful solutions for funding emergency response?

GFD could be forced to drastically reduce service or shut down entirely – putting public safety at risk and potentially increasing homeowner insurance costs.

What happens if GFD does not receive additional funding?

Without additional funding, Gonzales Fire Department won't be able to improve service—and may struggle to maintain its current level of response as costs continue to rise.

Is Gonzales considering a similar solution to Greenfield's measure?

The Gonzales community is studying the Greenfield local funding measure to decide whether a similar model could be a solution to protect emergency response and keep homeowners' rates low here in Gonzales.

The potential measure would impose a parcel tax similar to what Greenfield voters approved: levying \$349 annually for single-family residential parcels; \$262 per apartment unit; and additional rates for commercial, industrial and agricultural parcels, adjusted for inflation.

What projects could a potential measure fund?

All funds raised by the local parcel tax could only be used for Gonzales firefighter/EMT staffing, vehicles and equipment, including:

- Help ensure round-the-clock staffing for rapid emergency medical and fire 911 response
- Improve response times to medical emergencies, car accidents, wildfires, floods and other natural disasters
- Ensure our local fire department has up-to-date working equipment and resources to assist in emergency medical situations and fight wildfires
- Replace old or outdated medical equipment, breathing apparatuses, protective clothing and other equipment used by firefighters/EMTs
- Ensure our local fire engine has important medical incident response equipment and supplies

How can we be sure all funds will be spent responsibly?

- All funds would be spent on our local fire department to provide fire protection and emergency medical response
- Independent audits and oversight would ensure funds are spent as noted
- No funds can be taken by the State or used for any other purpose

Didn't we just pass a measure to increasing funding for our City?

In 2020, local voters approved Measure X to provide additional funding to maintain City services. However, a potential new measure would provide a dedicated source of funding specifically for our fire department. To maintain the level of service GFD provides in the event of an emergency, additional funding is required.

How can I learn more or share my thoughts?

Your opinion matters, please visit gonzalesca.gov/localfunding to learn more and take our survey. You can also email jmuscio@ci.gonzales.ca.us with specific comments or questions.