



To: Residents and Businesses of Cave Creek  
From: Carrie Dyrek, Town Manager  
Jim Ford, Deputy Fire Chief  
Date: Sept 8, 2021.  
Re: Fire and Emergency Protection for the Community

In response to a subscriber letter and recently released articles by the Rural Metro Fire Department, the Town would like to address some of the comments and highlight the actions we have taken towards providing an improved emergency fire and medical service for this community. First, to be accurate, the Town did not request that Rural Metro vacate the current station. While it is true that the Town has taken the actions needed to first lease and then purchase this facility, the Town also offered to the local Rural Metro leadership the opportunity to stay in the existing station, rent and cost free until December 1, 2021. The actions taken by the Town are a direct result of the two major wildfire incidents that impacted the community in May of 2020. This correspondence should address the misinformation that has been distributed by Rural Metro. As a little bit of a history lesson, below is a timeline of actual events that have taken place, especially as it relates to the Town's efforts to address and update the emergency fire and medical services for this community.

May 2020: The Town experienced two major wildland incidents, the East Desert and Ocotillo Fires. These large incidents far exceeded the available Rural Metro resources and required the extensive use of emergency resources from the surrounding Regional Automatic Aid communities and their fire departments, along with additional support from the Az Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM). This resulted in a major impact to the levels of emergency resources that were still available to protect the communities that these resources came from.

July – October 2020: The Town of Cave Creek was officially contacted by the regional communities that supported Cave Creek and Rural Metro during the devastating May fires and expressed concerns that their jurisdictions were tremendously impacted by a community that does not support the overall actions and emergency response goals of the surrounding areas. In August, the Town initially commissioned a report from PSRM that took an initial look at the current system and potential changes that could be made. In October, the Town received an official letter from the surrounding communities that clearly stated, these regional communities would not be in a position to provide the same levels of emergency resources support like they did in the past, unless the Town made significant changes to become a regional player.

December 2020: The Town of Cave Creek and the City of Scottsdale entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), where the Scottsdale Fire Department provided Deputy Fire Chief Jim Ford, who is very familiar with Cave Creek. The task was to work with the local Elected Officials and Town staff to identify the requirements, process, needed resources, and costs associated with developing an emergency fire and medical system that will allow the Town to becoming a member of the Regional Automatic Aid System, that is governed by the Central Arizona Life Safety Committee (CALSC).

February – March 2021: Several presentations were made at public Town Council meetings and open community outreach events, giving regular updates on the actions and resources needed to achieve the goal of becoming a Regional Partner. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the Town Council approved Resolution #R2021-06 indicating their desire to pursue becoming a Regional Automatic Aid Partner as managed by the CALSC. It clearly stated that the Town should work with an Automatic Aid Partner. The Council also approved Resolution #R2021-07 to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management for assistance on major wildland incidents. At the same time, the Town of Cave Creek applied for and received their first official recognition as a community fire service with the approval of a Fire Department ID #08543. It must be understood that at this time, the Town of Cave Creek did not own any equipment or facilities and that all of the resources needed to provide a fire service were controlled by the for profit Rural Metro Fire Department. Even though Rural Metro has served this community for decades, still only approximately 40% of the residents subscribed for fire service with them.

Rural Metro applied for and was denied entry into the Regional Automatic Aid System.

April 2021: The Town conducted a public budget study session and the follow-up required Council public hearings for Fiscal Year 2021/2022 budget, where the topic of a local Town supported fire/emergency service was thoroughly discussed. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, the Town approved a final budget of approximately \$5.6 million for the acquisition of needed capital or one-time purchases such as fire station, fire apparatus, crew safety equipment, medical supplies, etc. The Town also approved approximately \$2.6 million in annual operating costs for staffing, maintenance, supplies, etc. To properly staff and manage a fully operating, 24/7/365 emergency fire/medical unit, it requires 15 full-time positions. Daily, this is four personnel that includes a Captain, Engineer, Two Firefighters. All crew members have a minimum Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification and 2 of the 4 are Advanced Life Support (ALS) Medics. All of the Town Council, Town Budget and Community Outreach meetings are available for viewing on the Town's website at <https://www.cavecreekaz.gov/646/Fire-and-Emergency-Medical-Services>.

May 2021: The Town identified properties that would be appropriate for use as a local fire station. Appraisals were conducted on these properties, including the property that was currently leased by Rural Metro. Working with the owner of the building and Rural Metro, an initial inspection and appraisal of the current fire station property was conducted.

August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021: The Town Council Agenda was posted identifying an upcoming discussion and the possible actions needed for the Town to obtain a permanent fire station.

August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021: At the scheduled Town Council meeting to evaluate the options, numerous citizens showed up and expressed their support for the Town taking the action to obtain the facility and establish emergency fire and medical protection for the Town. The Town Council approved the initial lease and purchase of the current fire station facility located at 37402 N. Cave Creek Rd.

August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021: The current owner delivered a 60 day notice that the property will be changing hands and that Cave Creek representatives are to be allowed on-site for additional site inspections.

August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021: A Zoom meeting with Rural Metro representatives was conducted to identify initial concerns, and also to set an in person meeting with Town Officials. This in person meeting was held on Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting it was again identified that the Town's goal was to begin covering the community with a new contract and service on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.

Rural Metro was advised that the Town wants to make this a smooth transition. The Town also expects Rural Metro to honor their current contracts and continue to provide service for their customers and the community until that time. As the new landlord of the existing fire station, an offer was specifically made to Rural Metro, that the Town was willing to allow them to continue to use the building until December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, for no charge. The Town would cover any rent or expenses. Additionally, it was agreed that together we would work on the development of a notice for the Town residents that identified the upcoming changes. That did not happen, and Rural Metro instead sent out the incomplete information that was in the press release and notice to the subscribers. This has served to needlessly alarm several of our residents and attempted to refocus and shift any responsibilities for their current and past actions.

The Town staff is available to discuss and answer any questions related to the topic of current and future emergency services protection with any residents. Please contact the Town directly at 480-480-6600 to ask for Jim Ford, or you can go directly to the Town's website at <https://www.cavecreekaz.gov/ContactTownAdmin>.