

Annual Report

UPPER PINE FPD

BAYFIELD CO

2024





Mission

The Mission of the Upper Pine FPD is to provide exceptional service through response and mitigation of all risk/hazards in the Upper Pine FPD Valley and Region.

Vision

Building resilience in our communities

Engaging our neighbors in collaborative ideas

Innovative financial strategies

Delivering outcome based medical, rescue, and fire services

Empower employees to engage in District processes

Approach problems as opportunities through "Just Culture"

Supporting staff in their professional development

Values

Accountable

Committed

Competent

Dedicated

Duty

Family

Integrity

Professional

Respectful

Teamwork

"We will be leaders in rural EMS and fire protection serving the four corners region."

District Profile

The Upper Pine Fire Protection District provides all-risk/hazard fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to 284 square miles of eastern La Plata County and a small portion of the western part of Archuleta County in southwest Colorado, located near the Four Corners of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. We proudly serve a permanent population of approximately 14,000 residents. The popular vacation area of Lake Vallecito increases our summer population with seasonal residents largely from Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

Our District includes the Town of Bayfield, Gem Village, and the communities of Forest Lakes, Vallecito Lake, and Lemon Reservoir along with 24 other smaller subdivisions. We also cover the County Road 240 corridor from County Road 246 to above Lemon Dam to the Forest Service Boundaries. The topography includes several urban interfaces and intermixed neighborhoods with austere public lands. We work closely through mutual aid with the US Forest Service and surrounding fire Districts to protect the community.

In 2024, we responded to 952 calls for help. We employ 33 full-time employees with a daily staffing of 8 fire and EMS personnel per shift. The District operates on 3, 48 HR shifts with personnel working a 48/96 schedule. Part-time members and 6 support staff also trained as EMTs or paramedics support these operations. During Spring and Summer, mitigation services are performed utilizing a 4-8 person wildland crew and part-time members in conjunction with private contractors. These services are primarily for grant-funded projects on private property and watershed areas. When feasible, assistance to ranchers and farmers with agriculture and ditch burns is provided in the Spring.

We maintain eight fire stations, three of which are staffed 24 hours a day in Bayfield, Forest Lakes, and Lake Vallecito. The administrative office building is located in the Town of Bayfield at 515 Sower Drive. Resident firefighters are housed in stations on CR 240, CR 502, and at Vallecito Dam. Resident firefighters respond to calls and maintain stations.

The Upper Pine FPD is an autonomous Title 32 Colorado Special District. As a non-profit, the major revenue sources are taxes from a mill levy, wildland fire deployments, and ambulance fees. Additional sources of revenue are from grant awards and Federally funded wildland firefighting activities. We are governed by a five-member Board of Directors elected at large by their constituents, each serving a staggered four-year term. The Fire Chief oversees the general operations in accordance with the policy direction prescribed by the Board of Directors.

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DEFENSIBLE SPACE



Upper Pine FF1/ELF Academy Graduates and Medic Lauer



9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

Fire Chief



As a Fire District, we are pleased to present the 2024 annual report to the citizenry. The annual report is designed to keep the residents, seasonal homeowners, and visitors to the Pine River Valley up to date on the District's financial performance, operational effectiveness, and accomplishments. This year highlights the district's 50th anniversary as we have come a long way, and we won't forget where we came from. A district built on a core of volunteers and hard work.

The district took a few more steps towards venturing into Community Paramedicine and mobile integrated health care. A Department of Local Affairs grant for architectural fees to relocate Fire Station 1 and Clinic was awarded to Upper Pine to take the project to shovel-ready status. We sent an ambulance crew to assist with Hurricane Helene in North Carolina under contract to the American Medical Response National Ambulance Strike team program. The experience of working with the disaster system is invaluable for our crews; this was the first time one of our ambulances was assigned to a Disaster Medical Assistance Team, Virginia DMAT 1.

This year, we continued our ongoing program with the University Of Bordeaux, France and two of the local high school annual interns. At Durango High School graduation this year, five seniors had taken the EMT class at Upper Pine FPD. This year's report highlights the details of our EMS training activities. The Committee on Accreditation of Ambulance Services reaccredited Upper Pine for a third time, and our EMS operations received a perfect score. Our people continue to catch the tiniest of details on medical emergencies.

Many changes to the taxing structure by the Colorado Legislature and regulation on oil and gas by LaPlata County have substantially impacted the district's revenue, forcing the district to adopt impact fees and adjustments. Payment in lieu of taxes when businesses and properties move into the tribal trust and the movement of over 6000 acres into conservation easements also have taken money away from the fire district. While we have successfully secured grants for many aspects of Upper Pine's operations, grant funding is not a long-term strategy for stability and attracting the best firefighters and paramedics.

This year, there was a lot of work, ranging from meeting with our Federal Representatives to advance Medicare adjustment for community paramedic activities to taking advantage of Federal, State, and Private gifts and grants that afford many of the luxuries a rural fire district has.

I frequently hear from the public and our EMT students about the great staff we have at the Upper Pine FPD, who make up some very high-performance teams that serve the district. The accomplishments in this report couldn't be possible without the support from the public and the kindness shown to the fire district's staff and crews, which makes Upper Pine a great place to work. It is our mission to solve problems and make a difference.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Evans".

Bruce Evans, MPA, NRP, CFO, SPO
Fire Chief
Upper Pine FPD

Board President

As we wrap up 2024, I want to take a moment to reflect on the dedication, hard work, and accomplishments of the incredible men and women of the Upper Pine FPD. Our firefighters, medics, and staff put in tireless effort every day to keep our community safe, responding to emergencies with skill, professionalism, and compassion. Their unwavering commitment to serving Bayfield and the surrounding areas is the backbone of our department, and I extend my deepest gratitude to each of them.

This year, we have continued to lead the way with cutting-edge resources and on-the-ground efforts that ensure the highest level of emergency response and care. Through collaboration with community resources, we've strengthened our ability to provide critical services while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Growth remains a challenge, and as our community expands, so must our ability to provide the services residents rely on. Strategic financial planning will be key to sustaining and enhancing our emergency response capabilities.

Looking ahead, the future of Upper Pine is bright. With the upcoming station build, we are taking a major step forward in providing round-the-clock emergency care. The addition of a 24-hour clinic and the community paramedic program on the horizon will significantly elevate the level of service we can offer. These advancements will allow us to provide more immediate care, reduce hospital visits, and improve health outcomes for residents.

It is essential that we continue working alongside our neighboring entities and special districts, ensuring that we are all aligned in building a safer and stronger future for the Pine River Valley community. Through teamwork and forward-thinking leadership, we will maintain our commitment to delivering the highest quality care and services to the community we are honored to protect.

On behalf of the Upper Pine Board, thank you for your continued trust and support. We look forward to another year of progress and service.

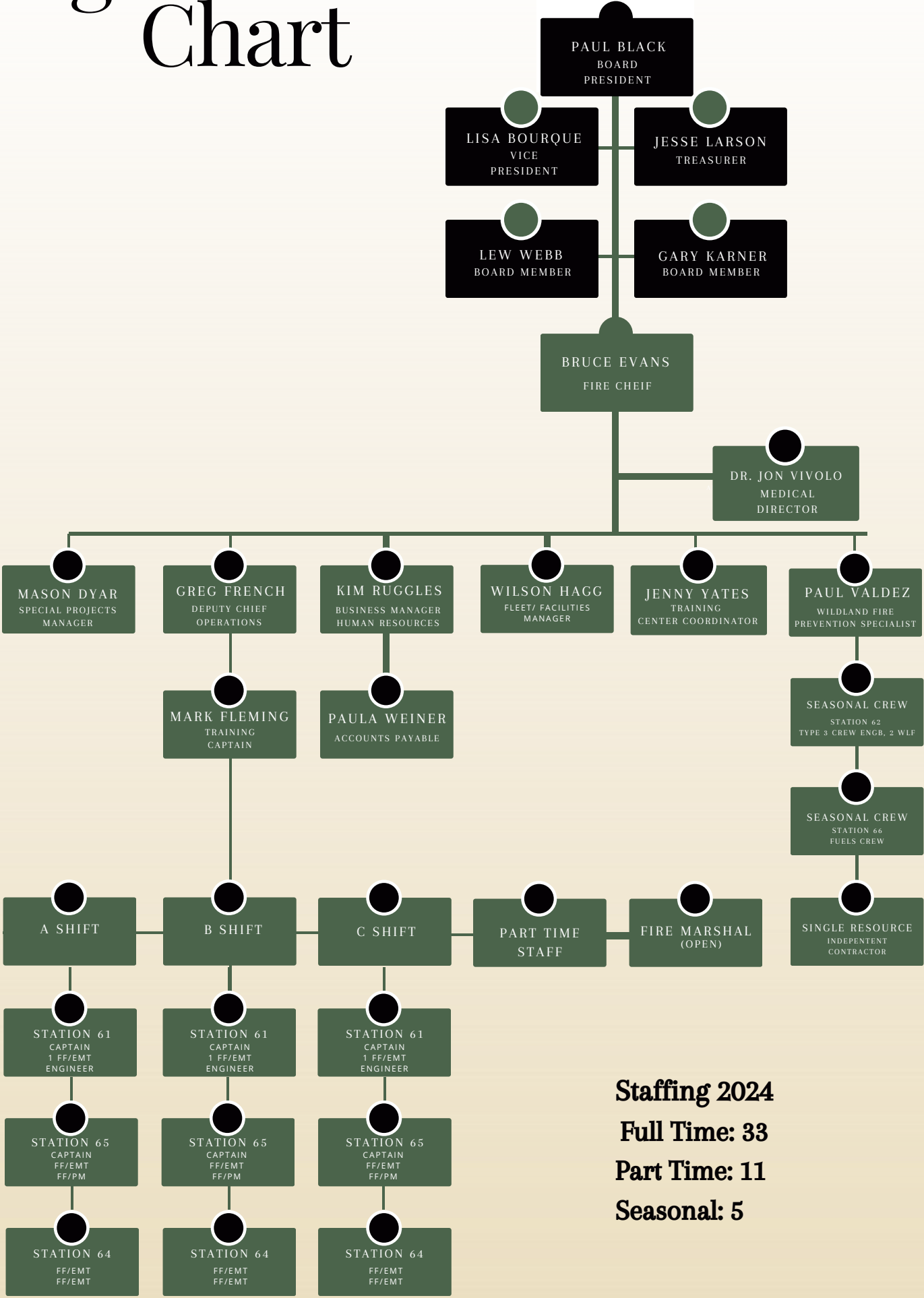
Thank you,

Paul Black

Paul Black
Board President

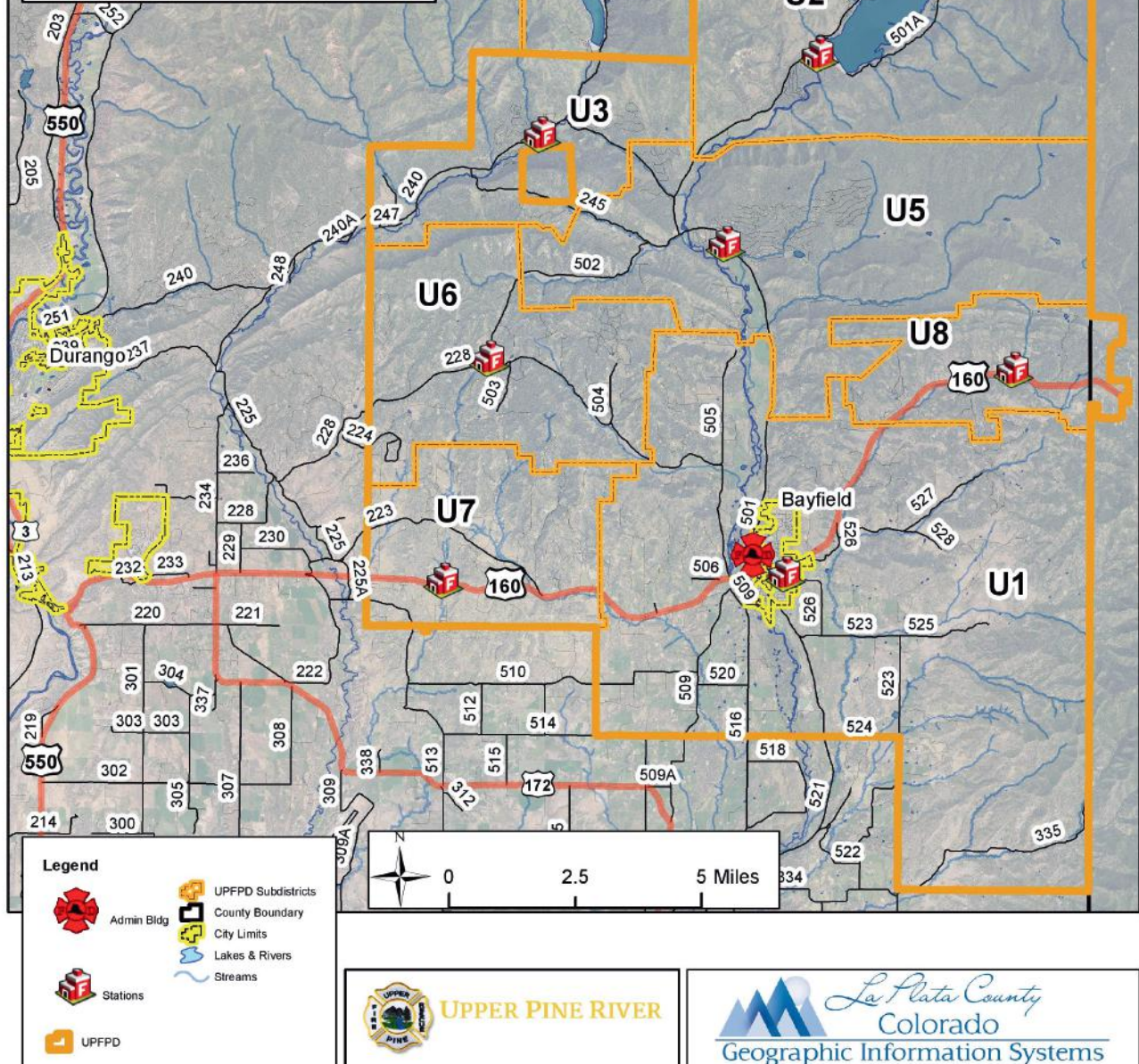
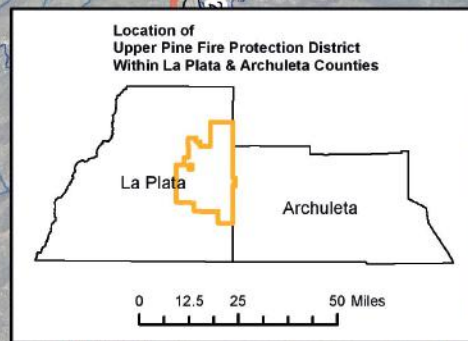


Organizational Chart



Staffing 2024
Full Time: 33
Part Time: 11
Seasonal: 5

UPFPD Subdistricts and Station Locations



ADMIN: 515 Sower Dr
STATION 1: 75 S. Clover Dr
STATION 2: 13100 CR 501
STATION 3: 13407 Cr 240
STATION 4: 80 W. Vallecito Creek

STATION 5: 6891 CR 501
STATION 6: 8476 CR 502
STATION 7: 35191 W Hwy 160
STATION 8: 49342 E Hwy 160

Financial Snapshot



In 2024, finances at the Upper Pine FPD proved challenging. A significant oil and gas producer struck a deal with the La Plata County Treasurer to delay paying their full tax assessment. In July 2024 most tax burdens levied by the fire district are collected. The oil and gas producer was allowed to stretch out their remaining tax liabilities until the end of the year, creating a situation that required significant discipline to manage the district's finances. The fire district received its final tax payment in early 2025.

In addition to delays in collecting taxes from a major producer, the La Plata County Commission voted in February of 2024 to increase the setbacks by 50% for oil and gas. These regulations were actually more stringent than the State of Colorado. This resulted in a loss of taxable oil and gas revenue. Upper Pine FPD had \$13.2 million in oil and gas revenue available to be taxed in 2024. The assessed evaluation for oil and gas in the fire district estimated in 2025 is \$300,000 resulting in \$680,000 to \$700,000 in lost revenue. The County Commissioners made this decision without assessing the fiscal impact on the local special districts. The fire district responded by employing three strategies to compensate for this:

- 1) Implementing impact fees.
- 2) Aggressively pursuing grants.
- 3) Adjusting the mill levy to 2018 income levels.

IMPACT FEES

In 2024, Upper Pine FPD implemented impact fees on new construction. A change in the Colorado Revised statutes through Senate Bill 24-194 allowed fire districts to collect impact fees under the direction of their governance. After conducting the required study and entertaining a public comment period, Upper Pine FPD imposed impact fees on new construction in the fire district. After an in-depth analysis, the district established impact fees in September 2024 of:

Per Residential Unit	\$1191.00
Per 1000 Feet Commercial Unit	\$1187.00

To date, the fire district has assessed \$5955 in impact fees from new construction. This money will be used to purchase new equipment and replace worn equipment from firefighting operations.

GRANTS

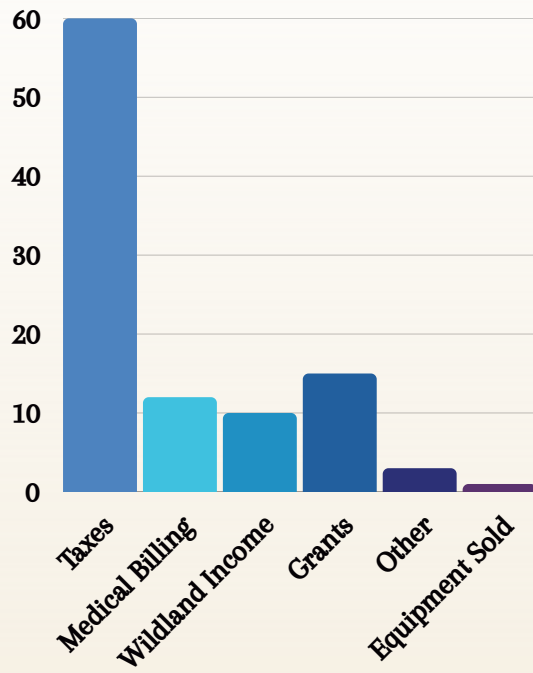
The district was very successful in securing grants to offset operations. Grant money has allowed Upper Pine FPD to offer free EMT training for the next two years and increased the district's ability to secure new equipment and training. Two dollars from every vehicle registration in Colorado goes towards emergency medical services improvements. The EMS system improvement grant has funded 50% of the cost of a new ambulance.

Colorado EMS System Improvement Grant (New Ambulance)	\$142,500
Dept of Transportation Pipeline Grant (Training and Equipment)	\$247,000
CDHPE Workforce Development Grant (EMT Training)	\$200,000
Siren/SAMSHA EMS Grant (Training and Equipment)	\$200,000
Southwest Opioid Response District (Training and OUD Response)	\$77,000

ADJUSTMENTS

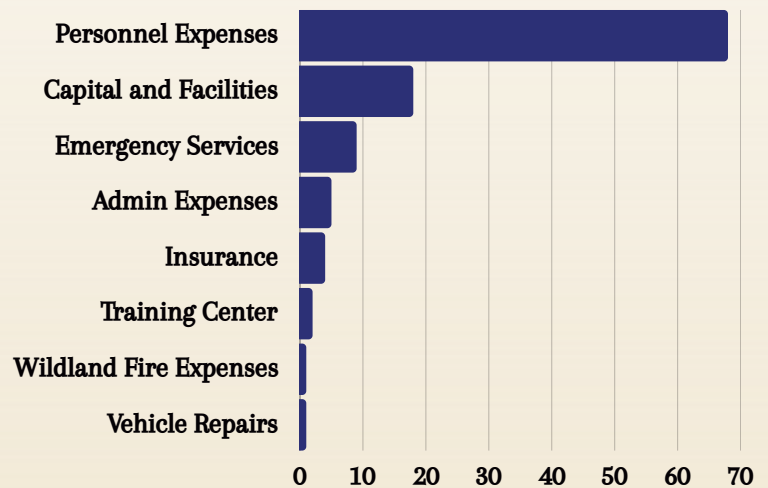
Upper Pine FPD is a de-bruced organization which allows us to adjust our mill levy to the 2018 income levels. Due to the loss of revenue, the Upper Pine FPD Board adjusted the mill levy for 2025. In 2024, Upper Pine FPD paid off a bond that was approved by the public in 2004 for fire trucks and fire stations. In 2023, the public voted overwhelmingly to convert a mill levy supporting the bond payment to a capital improvements mill levy that will be applied to the relocation of Fire Station 61/Clinic. The district remains very efficient with the use of taxpayer money.

Income

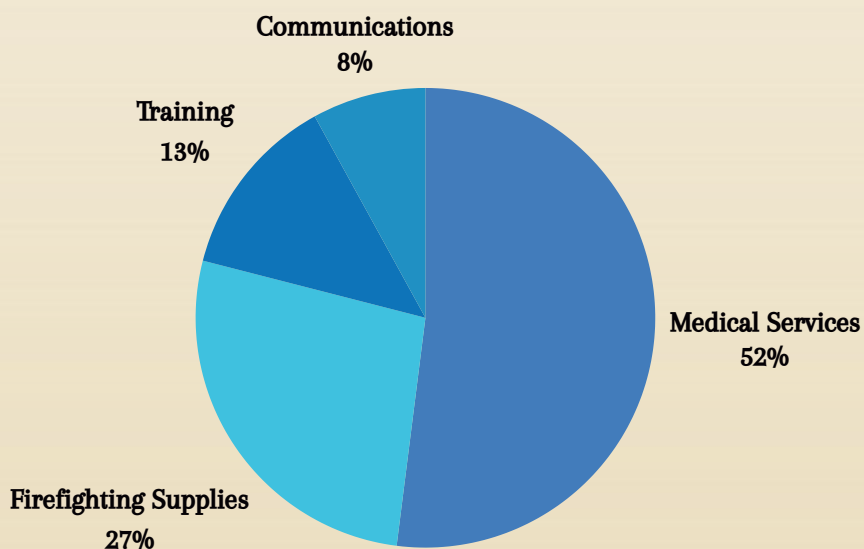


Expenditure Trends

Expenses



Emergency Operations



Upper Pine Finances Page

EMS Division

Upper Pine FPD continues to strive to be leaders in EMS in the Four Corners. Last year Paramedic Aaron Cogburn took on the role as the clinical coordinator for the San Juan College EMS Program in Farmington. As a "side gig," he'll be monitoring and arranging clinical experiences and field internships for paramedics, and Advanced EMTs. We also continued our participation in the National Ambulance Strike Team program, sending an ambulance staffed by Paramedic Jon Haner and EMT Jake Rhodes to North Carolina to assist with the damage caused by Hurricane Helene.

Deputy Chief French and Engineer Chris Panawa continue to devote additional time to La Plata County Search and Rescue, working on several backcountry incidents in remote areas, such as Forest Lakes and on the trails near Lemon Reservoir. On such a call this Fall, our newly deployed UTV allowed crews to search for a patient who was experiencing hypothermia. A squall came in on a group of hunters, dropping 6 inches of snow and rain in a short amount of time. This put an elderly hunter at risk of hypothermia. Crews spent significant time with UTV attempting to access the patient. Ultimately, deep snow made access to the individual impossible, and Careflight from Cortez was able to airlift the patient to transport them to Mercy Medical Center.



Medic Heck Assists Specialist Chandice Jeep with an Otologic Emergency



Crews Work to Locate a Missing Hunter

Workforce Development Grant and EMT Courses

Under our workforce development grant, Upper Pine FPD continues to offer free EMT training to the public. This year, we sent an instructor to Crested Butte Fire to teach a class of 24 students. In addition, the district secured a grant to cover half the cost of a replacement ambulance, slated for delivery between April and June of 2025.

Paramedic Lauer

Lastly, we're proud to welcome Camille Lauer as our newest Firefighter/Paramedic. She completed her paramedic training at San Juan College, finished her field internship with San Juan Regional EMS, and concluded her EMS mentorship with a senior paramedic at Upper Pine FPD.



Paramedic Haner and EMT Rhodes Deploy to Hurricane Helene



Paramedic Lauer Receiving Her Paramedic Certificate

Hurricane Helene Deployment

As Hurricane Helene was moving up the Gulf of Mexico to make landfall on the west coast of Florida, Upper Pine responded to a task order to deploy a medical unit to assist with what was to be a Category 4 storm. The ambulance crew consisted of Paramedic Firefighter Jon Haner and Firefighter EMT Jake Rhodes. Leaving on the 24th of September, they were tasked to report to the Greensboro, South Carolina, airfield to await specific tasking orders. Haner is a veteran of many disasters, including hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, Covid response and freeze events that overwhelm local resources. Rhodes has responded to multiple wildfires throughout his career, but this would be his first hurricane and flood event.



Given this level of experience, Haner was assigned to lead a Strike Team of 5 ambulances and was dispatched to a DMAT (Disaster Medical Assistance Team) unit near Mill Springs, North Carolina in the Lake Lure and Chimney Rock areas, which were virtually devastated by dam failures and uncontrolled floodwaters. This facility is a fully appointed mobile hospital with advanced capabilities including an Emergency Room, multiple patient beds, imaging, labs, and surgical capabilities. There, Haner and Rhodes, along with their Strike Team, helped to stabilize incoming patients and transport them to the appropriate facility for definitive care either by direct ground ambulance or by assisting flight crews with air transport.



Following this assignment, the Strike Team was sent to Asheville, North Carolina, to assist local resources with 911 response. As the incident began to stabilize and the demobilization phase began, Haner and Rhodes were assigned as a single resource to a Critical Access Hospital in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. There they worked with hospital staff receiving local patients for stabilization and then transporting to the Regional Level 2 Trauma Center in Asheville. In the end, Haner and Rhodes were on assignment for an entire month, returning to Bayfield on the 24th of October.

CAAS REACCREDITATION



This year, Upper Pine FPD's EMS Operations were up for renewal with the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS). The accreditation process required an intensive self-study of our EMS procedures, documentation of day-to-day operations, and a thorough on-site review. After submitting extensive materials, two CAAS site visitors came to verify our records, observe our crews, and conduct interviews.

Accreditation Team and Process

Spencer Sorenson and Jenny Yates led the accreditation effort, which was supported by many other Upper Pine team members.

"I enjoyed working with the CAAS organization and learning what goes into the certification process. I also enjoyed learning about the other organizations that have been CAAS certified and seeing the benefits of having a national standard."- Spencer Sorenson (EMT-Advanced/Firefighter)

A Perfect Score—Again

This marks the third time Upper Pine has successfully achieved a perfect score. Historically, site visitors have recognized our personnel's quality and commitment to serving the Pine River Valley. This year's on-site review was no exception: the visiting team again highlighted our highly skilled and dedicated members.

Joining Upper Pine in achieving this top-level accreditation is Red, White & Blue from Breckenridge. We're proud to welcome them into the Colorado CAAS Accreditation family.

Colorado's Accredited Ambulance Services

- American Medical Response of Colorado-Front Range (Colorado Springs)
- Eagle County Paramedic Services (Edwards)
- Falck Rocky Mountain, Inc. (Aurora)
- Red, White & Blue (Breckenridge)
- University of Colorado Health EMS - UC Health EMS (Fort Collins)
- Upper Pine FPD (Bayfield)

Emergency Medical Technician Training 2024



In 2024, Upper Pine FPD Training Center's EMT program was bustling with people wanting to be EMTs. Over the course of the year, with the help of several Lead Instructors, we were able to hold five separate cohorts of EMT classes.

Bryce Jenkin started the 2024 year off by hosting two concurrent classes of students. One group was taught in Bayfield, while the other was taught in Hesperus for Fort Lewis Mesa Fire volunteers. Between the two cohorts, 23 students passed the classroom portion of obtaining their EMT Certification. Of those students, 14 of them passed their National Registry Exam on their first attempt.



EMT Class Fall 2024

In May of 2024, Bryce left Upper Pine FPD for a new career opportunity. At that time, Paramedic Jenny Yates took over the position of EMS Education Coordinator. Jenny has an extensive background in Emergency Medicine, having started her career in the Front Range over 18 years ago. She spent time working as an EMT in the Emergency Department at University Hospital for several years before transitioning to being a firefighter for Aurora Fire Rescue. During her time in the Front Range, she obtained a bachelor's degree in Biology and later earned her master's degree in Anatomy. In 2019, Jenny finished her Paramedic Certification and moved her life to the Durango area. After a few years with Durango, she happily accepted the EMS Educator position with us and is now the Lead Instructor for our EMT program.



EMT Class Spring 2024

Jenny ran two cohorts of EMT classes, one in May of 2024 and the second in August of 2024. The May cohort had 8 students pass the class and 6 of those students passed their National Registry Exam on the first Attempt. Upper Pine FPD was fortunate to enlist two of those students into full-time positions with the department and another one as a part-time reservist. The August cohort graduated 14 students from the program, all of whom are preparing to take their National Registry Exam in the new year.



EMT Students in a High Fidelity Simulation

We were also approached by Crested Butte Fire, asking us to host an EMT class there to help grow their ranks. A former Upper Pine employee, Brian Tilton, was able to spend his summer in Crested Butte and teach this cohort. He graduated 20 students from his class and has had 15 pass their National Registry on their first attempt!

Overall, in 2024, our EMT program has successfully trained 65 students as EMTs and has seen 36 students obtain their National Registry Certification, allowing them to obtain their State Certification and work as EMTs. Many of the students from our program are working locally as volunteer firefighters for Fort Lewis Mesa, ski patrollers for Purgatory Ski Resort, and reserve and full-time firefighters for Upper Pine FPD, Durango Fire, and Los Pinos Fire.

We are proud and excited to have received more grant funding to keep our program free to students through 2026. In January 2025, we will start the year's first cohort of 20 students. There's also a waitlist for that class of 6 students. Many people have also expressed interest in the Accelerated Summer Course and are interested in the August cohort as well. 2024 will be a hard year to top but we strive to continue this legacy of excellence in the many years to come.

Top 24 Calls for 2024

Comparison for Years 2023/2024

1. EMS call excluding vehicle accident with injury: **635/528**
2. Dispatched and canceled en route: **62/63**
3. Motor vehicle accident with no injuries: **45/59**
4. Motor vehicle accident with injuries: **30/46**
5. Gas leak (natural gas or LPG): **22/17**
6. Smoke scare, odor of smoke: **13/15**
7. Public Service: **5/13**
8. No incident found on arrival at dispatched address: **12/13**
9. Smoke detector activation, no fire - unintentional: **7/10**
10. Outside rubbish, trash or waste fire: **5/8**
11. Building fire: **10/8**
12. Forest, woods, grass, or wildland fire: **10/8**
13. Carbon monoxide incident: **4/8**
14. Powerline down: **8/8**
15. Authorized burning: **12/8**
16. Unauthorized burning: **10/8**
17. Public service: **5/7**
18. Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire: **11/6**
19. False alarm calls: **9/6**
20. Chimney or flue fire, confined to chimney or flue: **3/5**
21. Grass Fire: **2/7**
22. Alarm system sounded due to malfunction: **1/5**
23. Passenger vehicle fire: **1/4**
24. Rescue, EMS incident, other: **1/3**



Motor Vehicle Accident on US Highway 160



Crews Work to Remove Downed Tree from Camper



Semi-truck Rollover on US Highway 160



Chip Seal Tank Malfunction Causes a Hazmat Incident

Outstanding Customer Service

Upper Pine River Fire Protection District
January 01, 2024 to December 31, 2024

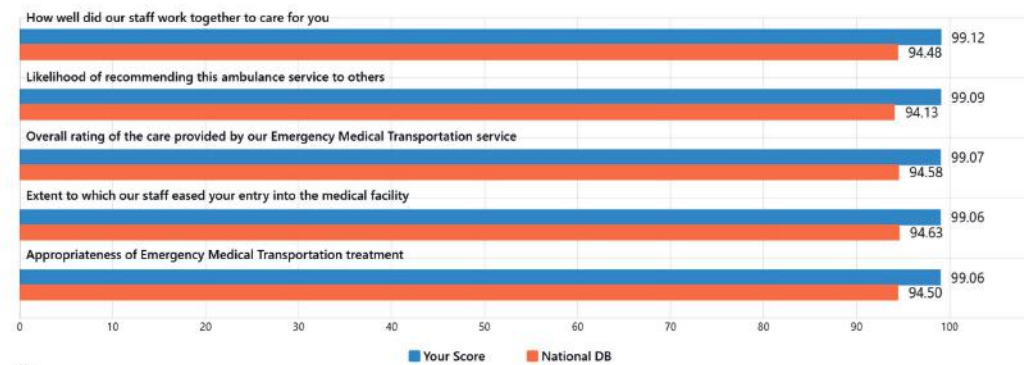


Greatest Increase and Decrease in Scores by Question

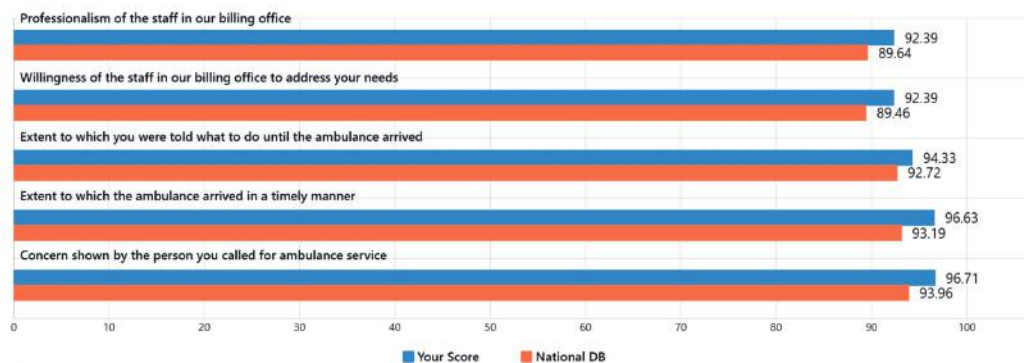
Increases	Current	Previous	(+/-)	National DB
Comfort of the ride	97.92	94.26	+3.66	88.32
Extent to which the services received were worth the fees charged	97.46	94.00	+3.46	89.65
Appropriateness of Emergency Medical Transportation treatment	99.06	96.28	+2.78	94.48
Degree to which the medics relieved your pain or discomfort	97.50	94.79	+2.71	91.81
Cleanliness of the ambulance	98.82	96.75	+2.07	95.35
Skill of the person driving the ambulance	98.48	96.58	+1.90	94.70
Overall rating of the care provided by our Emergency Medical Transportation service	99.07	97.56	+1.51	94.58
Likelihood of recommending this ambulance service to others	99.09	97.59	+1.50	94.15
Extent to which our staff eased your entry into the medical facility	99.06	97.60	+1.46	94.63
How well did our staff work together to care for you	99.12	98.17	+0.95	94.49

Decreases	Current	Previous	(+/-)	National DB
Professionalism of the staff in our billing office	92.39	95.69	-3.30	89.67
Willingness of the staff in our billing office to address your needs	92.39	95.00	-2.61	89.46
Extent to which the medics kept you informed about your treatment	97.50	97.94	-0.44	93.72
Care shown by the medics who arrived with the ambulance	98.35	98.61	-0.26	95.43
Extent to which you were told what to do until the ambulance arrived	94.33	94.44	-0.11	92.72

5 Highest Scores



5 Lowest Scores



Operations Division

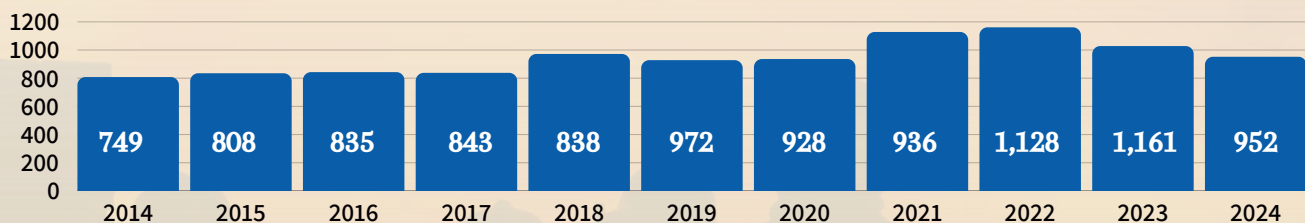


Crews Talk Strategy and Tactics

In 2024, Upper Pine FPD responded to 952 calls for service, down slightly from 1,028 in 2023. Emergency medical services remained our most common response, making up 70% of total calls. The call breakdown for 2024 was: Fire (8%), Hazardous condition (4%), Service calls (5%), Good intent (12%), False alarms (3%), and Severe weather (1%).

Our firefighters continue to provide excellent customer service through training, equipment readiness, and professional development. This year, one firefighter completed her paramedic training, and several members achieved new certifications, including Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Fire Instructor I, Driver Operator, and Fire Officer. We also benefited from the Division of Fire Prevention and Control's support, which included a fire engineer instructor and a pump prop that created realistic water flow problems. We will keep encouraging our staff to pursue additional training through the National Fire Academy, FDIC, FEMA ICS 300/400 classes, and state or regional programs.

Call Volumes



Recruitment and retention remain challenging for emergency services nationwide. Still, we brought on new recruits at both the Exterior Level Firefighter (ELF) and IFSAC Firefighter I levels. Our daily minimum staffing includes three firefighters at Station #1 in downtown Bayfield, three at Station #5 in Forest Lakes, and two at Station #4 near Vallecito Lake. With two new paramedics and one advanced EMT promoted, Station #1 typically has at least one advanced life support firefighter each shift. We also rely on eight reserve firefighters to help maintain appropriate staffing and meet the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) recommended response times for rural, suburban, and remote areas.

- **Suburban Zones with 500-1000 people/sq. mi. call for 10 staff to assemble a fire attack in 8 minutes, 80% of the time. (DistrictS 1, 4, 5)**
- **Rural Zones with <500 people/sq. mi. call for 6 staff to assemble a fire attack in 11 minutes, 80% of the time. (DistrictS 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9)**

Our response time goals are designed to meet the District's Standards of Cover, the National Fire Protection Association's 1710/1720 Standard and the American Heart Association's response guidelines for Stroke, Cardiac Arrest and Acute Myocardial Infarctions (Heart Attacks).

FEMA Large-Scale Wildland Exercise

In early May, we took part in a FEMA-coordinated wildland exercise simulating a small fire that started near Highway 160 and spread rapidly northeast, threatening homes and another highway. Multiple agencies worked out of a unified command center, using large-screen projections of the simulated fire and coordinating resources by radio and phone. FEMA evaluators scored the exercise and shared feedback, helping each agency identify strengths and areas for improvement.



Careflight Cortez Transferring a Patient to Upper Pine Crews



Crews Training for Hazmat Preparedness

New Fire Station #1 continues to be a high priority ongoing project. During 2023, the District was able to purchase a parcel of land on Sower Drive, just south of our fire administration building. Our architectural firm has been working towards a fire station design that incorporates modern firefighter health and safety within an efficient building where firefighters can live, train, stay fit, and maintain their equipment. The new station will also incorporate a community room and a 24/7 urgent care for the people of the Pine River Valley. The urgent care will also house our Community Paramedic who will be able to assist in the clinic or respond to non-emergent calls within the District.



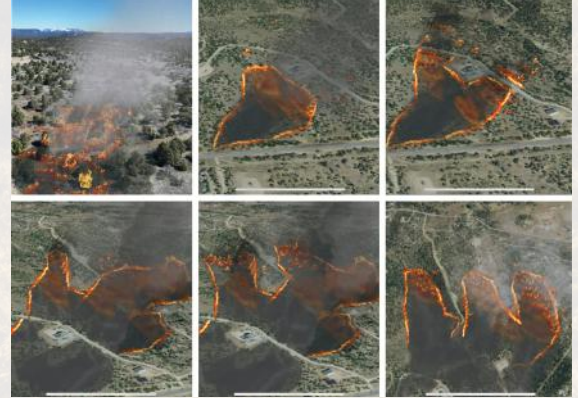
FEMA Exercise for Wildland Fire Preparedness



Crews Contain a Chimney Fire

Dream Catcher Exercise

On May 7, 2024, the Upper Pine FPD conducted a FEMA-examined, full-scale exercise designed to test the district's response to a fast-evolving wildland fire and the coordination of multi-agency and state-level support. This exercise, known as the Dream Catcher Fire, was the culmination of a collaborative effort spearheaded by Lori Zazzaro, one of Upper Pine FPD's Reserve Firefighters, in partnership with Captain Mark Fleming and Wildland Coordinator Paul Valdez. Zazzaro, in her full-time role with the Office of Emergency Preparedness Field Manager for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, identified this exercise as a capstone project to evaluate and enhance Upper Pine's emergency response capabilities.



The scenario simulated a fire ignited by a truck dragging a chain along Highway 160, quickly escalating into a major incident requiring structure assessments, evacuation planning, and, ultimately, the transfer of command to state authorities. Upper Pine was granted FEMA support to develop and execute this exercise, allowing the district to be evaluated under real-world conditions while ensuring alignment with national emergency management standards. Upper Pine used fire progression simulation software to create a realistic and dynamic scenario that accurately modeled the fire's behavior.



Lori Zazzaro Receiving her Master Exercise Planner Certificate

Key Objectives:

- Incident Command: Establish an incident command system within 15 minutes.
- Emergency Operations: Activate La Plata County Emergency Management within one hour of request.
- Resource Management: Request, integrate, and stage local, state, and federal resources effectively.
- Public Alerts: Use IPAWS to issue critical information within 30 minutes of escalation.
- Evacuation Planning: Coordinate transportation and shelter operations, including large animals.
-

Key Outcomes:

The exercise validated Upper Pine FPD's ability to manage a rapidly evolving wildland fire and highlighted areas for improvement. Best practices included effective resource scaling and timely public alerts through IPAWS, while gaps in resource awareness were identified for future enhancement. This exercise reinforced Upper Pine FPD's dedication to preparedness and multi-agency coordination.

District Training

The Upper Pine FPD has maintained a strong commitment to training in 2024, ensuring that responders are fully prepared to meet the diverse challenges posed by the region's unique hazards. Monthly training sessions have been thoughtfully structured to cover all necessary disciplines, ensuring that frontline personnel maintain a well-rounded skill set. This balance between live drills and online learning has allowed Upper Pine FPD members to stay sharp, adaptable, and responsive.



Fireground Training with Captain Fleming

Key training highlights in 2024 have included:

- Firefighting and Fireground Drills: Training included crew performance evaluations, live fire scenarios, rapid intervention team/firefighter survival training, deploying attack lines, establishing water supply, complex pump operations and much more.
- Officer and Professional Development: Command and control simulation labs for officers helped hone leadership and decision-making skills under pressure.
- EMS Training: The district engaged in comprehensive medical training, including case reviews with the medical director, Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC), cardiology, burn injuries, and pediatric respiratory emergencies and more.
- Local special operations such as swift water rescues, ice rescues, elevator rescues, and high-angle rescues, and hazardous materials response, ensuring their readiness for a wide range of emergency situations.

With consistent training in these diverse areas, Upper Pine FPD has made significant strides in improving its capabilities. Members continue to dedicate themselves to skill-building, which in turn strengthens their ability to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently. Overall, 2024 has been a year of tremendous growth and preparation, ensuring that Upper Pine FPD remains at the forefront of fire and emergency response.



Confined Space Training



Fire 6,051



Wildland 2,220



EMS 2,918



Leadership 1,306



Hazmat 263



Online 245

TOTAL TRAINING HOURS

13,003



FF Diebolt During Tower Evolutions

Wildland Report

Paul Valdez

Wildland Fire Prevention

The 2024 wildfire season was a welcome wet one, with persistent spring and summer precipitation keeping wildfires in our district to a minimum. During this relatively mild season, our Wildland Division crews assisted with fuels reduction and mitigation projects when not deployed to support firefighting efforts in other regions.

Upper Pine FPD also continued its work under the BLM grant to fund fuel reduction projects adjacent to the East Pinetop evacuation route and on private properties to the east and northeast of Forest Lakes. These efforts will extend into 2025, increasing our community's resilience to future wildfire threats.



FF Paul Valdez Assists with a Large Pile Burn for the Public



Briefing Crews on CR 509 Wildfire



Upper Pine Crews on Deployment

Looking Forward to Fire Mitigation:

Despite the lighter local fire activity, the Wildland Division stayed busy with both mitigation projects and emergency response. Some of our key achievements include:

- **1,040** total hours dedicated to chipping, pile burning, agricultural burns, and mitigation efforts.
- **2,159** cubic yards of wood slash or chipped product burned.
- **25** acres of agricultural land or ditch burn mitigation.
- **16** wildfire risk assessments completed for property owners.
- **1,200** cubic yards of slash burned at the Vallecito Slash Collection Depot.
- 1 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) completed and under review for the Town of Bayfield.
- Participated in FEMA's DreamCatcher exercise on wildfire preparedness.
- Participated in the Office of Emergency Management drill for the Deer Valley subdivision.
- Supported Aspen Trails with wildfire preparedness activities.
- Completed the Los Ranchitos Subdivision CWPP update.

Wildfire Assignments included:

Arizona Support
CA Support (1st Southern CA)
CA Support (2nd Southern CA), Hurricane and Nixon
Bucktail
SJF Support 2024
Spruce Creek
Wiley Flat
Williams Mine



Paramedic Cogburn and FF Panawa on Medical Assignment

Public Education:

One of our most rewarding efforts this year was continuing our work with local schools. We partnered again with Bayfield High School teacher Abrah Masterson for “Wildland Fire Week,” part of her Exploration & Survival Skills class. Students learned about the critical factors that influence wildland fire behavior, then visited Sauls Creek and Station 61 to see hands-on demonstrations by Captain Jeremy Kelly and his crew.

Many students rated Wildland Fire Week as their favorite learning module of the year, and our team was grateful for the opportunity to spark interest in fire safety and prevention among our community’s youth.

Our May 3rd Wildfire Preparedness Day was considered a great success, giving residents vital information on home hardening and defensible space. Building on that momentum, another preparedness event will be held on May 4th, featuring presentations from Upper Pine FPD, the U.S. Forest Service, insurance representatives, mitigation contractors, and more. Together, we share a commitment to fortifying our neighborhoods against wildfire.

Attendees will have the chance to participate in home defensible space workshops, chainsaw safety demonstrations, and other sessions aimed at increasing community resiliency. We’ve all witnessed the worst-case scenarios in places like California—underscoring the importance of taking action now. All are welcome to join us on May 3rd from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., near the entrance to Forest Lakes, for this hands-on, family-friendly event.



Crews Working on a Public Service Ag Burn



Crews Work to Extinguish a Lightning Strike

Wildland Medical Call

As part of Upper Pine FPD's wildland fire program, ambulances staffed with paramedics are deployed to wildfires to provide medical coverage for wildland firefighters. On August 7, Medic 62 received a radio call for assistance while serving on the Bucktail Fire in Norwood, Colorado. A crew member of the Los Padres Hotshots was swamping for his sawyer when he reached into a brush pile and inadvertently placed his wrist directly onto the bar of a chainsaw. The incident occurred at 0942, with the timestamp recorded at the time of the callout by the Los Padres Hotshot Supervisor. Division Zulu relayed the message to operations, and Medic 62 copied the transmission directly.

Medic 62 awaited the patient's arrival, who was transported via UTV by the hotshot crew. From the time of the callout to the patient's arrival at the ambulance, approximately seven minutes elapsed, reflecting the efficiency and competence of the Los Padres Hotshots. Montrose Helitack was contacted to assist with patient transport, as the drive by ambulance to Montrose Hospital would have taken approximately 3.5 hours. The helicopter departed the helibase at 10:15 a.m.



Upon Montrose Helitack's arrival at the scene, it was noted that the flight crew did not include any ALS (Advanced Life Support) providers. A decision was made for Upper Pine paramedic Kaleb Heck to accompany the patient in the helicopter. The patient was flown with the flight crew and Upper Pine staff to Montrose Helitack Base, where they were met by Montrose Ambulance Service for transfer. The transfer occurred at 10:28 a.m., and the total time from the incident to transfer of care in Montrose was approximately one hour. Care was officially transferred to Montrose Ambulance Service at 10:49 a.m.

The patient sustained a 4-inch laceration to the right hand and wrist, approximately 1/4 inch deep. Bleeding was controlled on the scene with pressure bandaging, resulting in an estimated blood loss of 20cc. A 5x9 dressing pad was soaked through with blood before being replaced and secured. An 18-gauge IV was established in the patient's right antecubital area without infiltration before helicopter arrival. The patient declined pain management, reporting pain at a level of 4 out of 10. The wound was bandaged appropriately, and the patient was packaged for transport by air.



In the emergency room, the patient received 10 stitches and reported during follow-up that the radial artery had been missed by less than 1/8 inch. The patient attributed the incident to complacency and becoming overly comfortable with his sawyer. He later expressed that wearing leather gloves likely saved his hand.

The successful outcome of this incident was due to the efficient teamwork between the patient's crew, supervisor communication, and the collaborative efforts of Upper Pine FPD, Los Padres Hotshots, and Montrose Helitack in facilitating appropriate patient care. The dedication and professionalism displayed by all involved ensured a positive resolution to a potentially severe injury.

Retrospective 2024

April

- Paramedic/FF Aaron Cogburn awarded Masonic Lodge Firefighter of the Year award.
- Upper Pine FPD Training Captain Mark Fleming celebrates 10 years with the department.



May

- May 11th UTV goes into service.
- May 23rd Upper Pine FPD deploys to a wild fire in Dolores.
- May 30th Bryce Jenkin is promoted from Upper Pine FPD to Regional Risk Manager for the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control.
- Upper Pine FPD Type 3 Wildland Engine deployed to Arizona.
- Upper Pine FPD EMT Class 24-01 graduates 16 new EMTs.



July

- July 1st Upper Pine FPD responds to record number of calls including a fire at the Marina at Vallecito and a tree falling on campers at Blue Spruce RV Park.
- July 8th Lifesaving procedures performed on ATV crash off of CR 509.
- July 18th chimney fire contained on Ellington Way before advancing into attic from a flu pipe disconnecting.
- July 30th wildfire contained in Aspen Trail subdivision no structures lost.
- July 16th Upper Pine FPD responds to fatal crash on CR 501 at Vallecito.
- July 16th Upper Pine FPD responds to fire in Sauls Creek contained to less than an acre.
- July 26th Upper Pine FPD responds to 2800-gallon leak of chip seal oil on US 160.

August

- Wildland Fire Crew on assignment in Willits, California.
- Medic 60 deployed to Norwood Colorado to the V44 fire, treats chainsaw injury on the line that was airlifted to Montrose.
- Upper Pine FPD institutes impact fees.

September

- House fire triggered by Lithium Batteries in Forest Lakes contained to room and content.
- Upper Pine FPD sends Medic 60 FF/PM Jon Haner and FF/EMT Jake Rhoades to Hurricane Helene relief in North and South Carolina.
- Camille Lauer graduated from San Juan College's Paramedic Program.
- Upper Pine FPD celebrates 50th Anniversary at LaPlatts Pond.

October

- Chimney Fire on Ho Hum Drive suppressed before spreading into living areas.

November

- Site Visitors at Upper Pine FPD from the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services.
- Upper Pine and Bayfield Schools hold a Pancake Fundraiser for the Muir Family.
- Chief Evans placed in the Iowa EMS Hall of Fame.

December

- Upper Pine FPD awarded three consecutive Ambulance Accreditation by the Commission on Ambulance Accreditation Services
- Upper Pine FPD Graduates its 3rd Cohort of EMT Students for the year.

Honoring Members Contributing 10 Years of Service



Steve Bradford

Steven Bradford has been a dedicated member of Upper Pine FPD for 10+ years. Setting the standard of excellence in rural ALS and pediatric response. Steven has mentored, taught and developed many EMTs aspiring to become paramedics. Always willing to take time to discuss, train and impart knowledge to those who ask. In his time here he has become one of the most versatile assets to the district. Holding a degree in Paramedicine, being a Fire Officer, HazMat technician, Pediatric care coordinator, EMS instructor, Behavioral health/Crisis intervention specialist etc., has allowed him to fill nearly any role in the district. Of his many mottos our favorite "I quit school because of recess, I don't play" this personifies exactly how he treats every 911 response. All business, all professional, all in. Between his list of aforementioned responsibilities, he appreciates quality time with his wife, two kids and a dog. Steven is always willing to take on another challenge, another certification, another project to further his abilities to provide excellence to any call.

Thank you for your decade of service.



Mark Fleming

My career with the Upper Pine FPD began in 2013 as a reserve firefighter, transitioning to full-time in April 2014. I was promoted to Captain in 2020 and assumed the role of Training Captain in July 2022.

As a second-generation firefighter, serving in a rural area like the Pine Valley region differs significantly from my suburban firefighting roots. Over the past decade, I've experienced the unique challenges and profound rewards of serving a rural community. From emergency medical services and wildland firefighting to technical rescue and community support, our department's responsibilities are as diverse as the terrain we protect.

I reflect on my decade with Upper Pine FPD, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to our community and to grow professionally in this dynamic field. The experiences gained and the connections forged over the past ten years have reinforced my passion for this career, and I look forward to many more years of service in this rewarding role.



John Learned

When I first started as a paramedic, I was eager to make a difference, and Upper Pine FPD gave me the perfect opportunity to do so. Practicing rural medicine, especially in challenging and dire conditions, has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It's taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of teamwork.

Beyond the excitement and variety that comes with this line of work, what has truly made this journey memorable are the exceptional coworkers and friends I've gained along the way. The camaraderie and shared dedication to our mission make every day fulfilling.

Awards

Recognizing our own



Fire Captain of the Year

Mike Muir

I have been a proud member of Upper Pine FPD for approximately nine years. I am awarded the unique opportunity to live and work alongside a fantastic group of individuals who share my devotion and sense of community. I come from a family with a history steeped in fire service, and I have had a passion for serving for as long as I can remember. In a twist of fate, I moved to the area when I was 17 years old and found myself working at Purgatory Ski Resort. I worked my way up through the ranks and discovered fulfillment in education. After conveying the position to my successors, I launched a business as a general contractor, where I built everything from birdhouses to barns. When the fire department presented itself as a career option, I leaped at the chance and never looked back. I am a very proud father to my daughter Lily and my son Malcolm. I am very grateful to my wife, Christy, for her patience and encouragement with my career. You will see me driving around with my dog Otis and his head out of the window, enjoying a little "two-wheeled therapy" aboard my dirt bike, or possibly sliding down the slopes in a somewhat guided fall. I enjoy serving my community and look forward to a long career in the fire service.

Firefighter of the Year and Medical Director Award Recipient

Firefighter/EMT Logan Mosher

I joined the Upper Pine FPD in May 2022, where I've had the privilege of serving in multiple roles—pediatric emergency care coordinator, drone pilot, EMT, and firefighter. I'm incredibly proud to have earned two consecutive Firefighter of the Year awards and feel fortunate to work alongside such a talented and dedicated team here at Upper Pine FPD. As I continue to grow in my career, I'm excited to pursue my goal of becoming a paramedic in the near future.

Before joining Upper Pine FPD, I started my career as an EMT in Denver while pursuing my firefighting certifications at Red Rocks Community College through the West Metro Training Center. After earning my certifications, I volunteered with Fairmont Fire and Rescue and was hired by Children's Hospital Colorado, where I worked with the Children's One Flight Team and earned the EMT of the Year award for my work.

Living in such an amazing place offers great opportunities, and I believe it's better to be busy than bored. When I'm not working, I take full advantage of the outdoor lifestyle, diving into everything from hiking to skiing, though fishing is my true passion.

On a personal note, my fiancé and I are excited to be expecting a baby boy in January 2025. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've had so far and am eagerly looking forward to what the future holds.



Awards

Recognizing our own



EMT of the Year Captain Corey Adamy

I am a Fire Captain for Upper Pine FPD and have been with the department for 10 years. This EMS award was received on behalf of an ongoing effort that this organization has been pursuing to train our members in Active Shooter and Hostile Event responses. My time in the Marine Corps involved with Combat Life Support has profoundly impacted my passion for the topic and I'm grateful to be the lead instructor for these courses. The award is in part a reflection of the robust training department that Upper Pine FPD has created and in a more real way, a reflection of the level of capabilities of its responding members. As new challenges and threats emerge in the Fire Service, we find ourselves evolving and training to meet our community's safety needs. I am grateful to have been chosen for this award and optimistic for many years of continued service.



ALS Provider of the Year & Masonic Lodge Honorary Recipient Firefighter/Paramedic Aaron Cogburn

I am honored to have received the ALS Provider of the Year Award. I appreciate the opportunity to serve our local community through Upper Pine FPD. I have been with the Upper Pine FPD for almost 5 years. During this time, I have developed a true passion for EMS and teaching the next generations of EMTs and Paramedics. I recently started working as the clinical coordinator for the EMS program at San Juan College. I am so grateful for both my fire family and my family at home. I look forward to many more years in public service. Most of all I am thankful to my God, and I seek to serve Him each day. Thank you for choosing me as ALS Provider of the year.

Awards

Recognizing our own

Iowa Emergency Services Association Hall of Fame Chief Bruce Evans



Chief Bruce Evans' career has spanned multiple decades, states, and countless achievements, making him a true pioneer in EMS. His journey from Iowa State to becoming a nationally recognized EMS leader is marked by relentless commitment and exceptional advocacy. From his early days as a paramedic with LifeFlight to his transformative work as the Fire Chief of Upper Pine FPD, Bruce has consistently raised the standards of care, education, and operational excellence. His leadership in rural EMS advocacy and his role in developing protocols and programs that address both urban and rural needs have left an indelible mark on the EMS profession, making him a fitting addition to the Hall of Fame.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE ZONES

Defensible space is the area around a home or other structure that has been modified to reduce fire hazard. In this area, natural and man-made fuels are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire. Creating defensible space also works in the reverse, and reduces the chance of a structure fire spreading to neighboring homes or the surrounding forest. Creating an effective defensible space involves a series of management zones in which different treatment techniques are used.

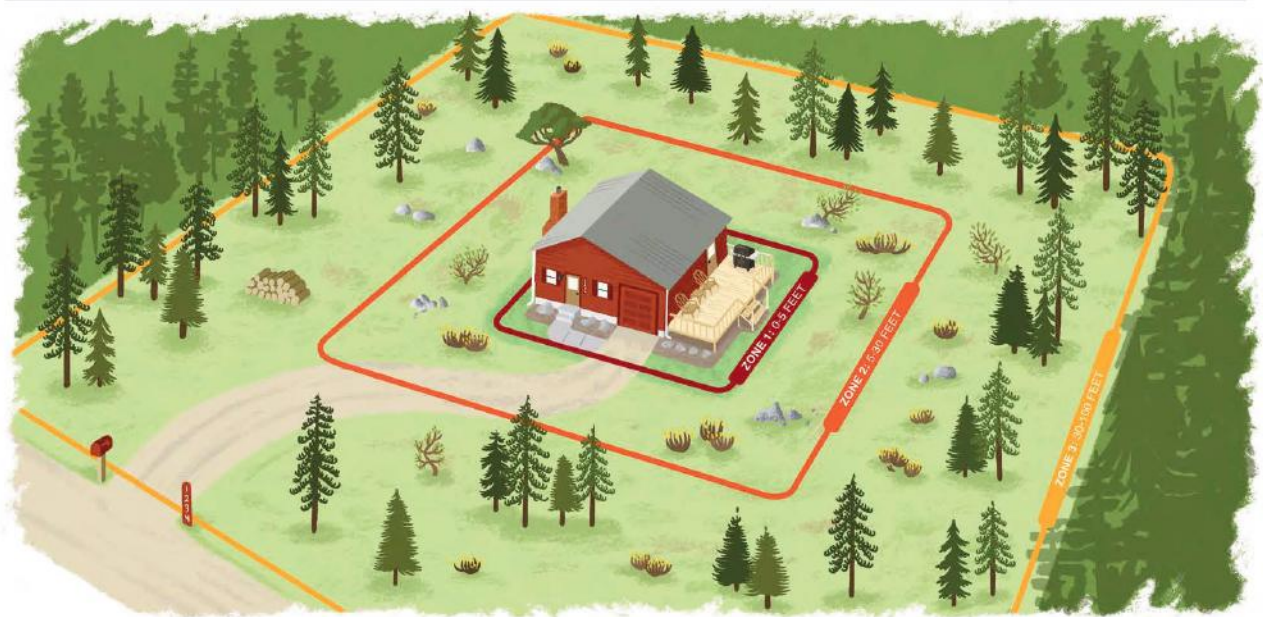


Illustration © Colorado State Forest Service

ZONE 1

0-5 FEET FROM THE HOME

The area nearest the home. This zone requires the most vigilant work in order to reduce or eliminate ember ignition and direct flame contact with your home.

ZONE 2

5-30 FEET FROM THE HOME

The area transitioning away from the home where fuels should be reduced. This zone is designed to minimize a fire's intensity and its ability to spread while significantly reducing the likelihood a structure ignites because of radiant heat.

ZONE 3

30-100 FEET FROM THE HOME

The area farthest from the home. It extends 100 feet from the home on relatively flat ground. Efforts in this zone are focused on ways to keep fire on the ground and to get fire that may be active in tree crowns (crown fire) to move to the ground (surface fire), where it will be less intense.

CREATING DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Each home and property is located in a dynamic environment that is continually changing. Trees, grasses and shrubs grow, die or are damaged, and drop their leaves and needles each season. Just like your home, the defensible space around it requires regular, ongoing maintenance to be effective. Here are some basic checklists to help you protect your home and property, as well as neighbors in your community.

The following checklists can help you establish and maintain your defensible space (*lists are not all-inclusive*).

Home Ignition Zone - Initial Projects

- ☐ Properly thin and prune trees and shrubs within the defensible space.
- ☐ Dispose of slash from tree/shrub thinning.
- ☐ Stack firewood uphill from or on the same elevation as any structures, and at least 30 feet away from structures.
- ☐ Screen attic, roof, eaves and foundation vents, and periodically check them to ensure that they are in good condition.
- ☐ Screen or wall-in stilt foundations and decks; screens should be 1/8-inch or smaller metal mesh (1/16-inch mesh is best).
- ☐ Post signs at the end of the driveway with your last name and house number that are noncombustible, reflective and easily visible to emergency responders.
- ☐ Make sure that the driveway is wide enough for fire trucks to enter and exit, and that trees and branches are adequately cleared for access by fire and emergency equipment. Contact your local fire department or check the Colorado State Forest Service website at csfs.colostate.edu for information specific to access.

Home Ignition Zone - Annual Requirements

- ☐ Clear roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.
- ☐ Regularly mow grass and weeds to a height of 4 inches or less.
- ☐ Rake pine needles and other flammable debris away from the foundation of your home and deck.
- ☐ Remove trash and debris accumulations from the defensible space.
- ☐ Replace or repair loose or missing roof shingles/tiles to reduce ember intrusions.
- ☐ Remove branches that overhang the roof and chimney.
- ☐ Dispose of slash from tree/shrub thinning.

Source: Colorado State Forest Service



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