



## Kuna Rural Fire District

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **KRFD Board of Fire Commissioners Passes Levy and Bond Resolutions**

*Funding request comes in lower than originally projected*

Kuna, Idaho — The Board of Fire Commissioners for the Kuna Rural Fire District unanimously approved placing a small operating levy increase for additional firefighters and a bond for a fire station on the November 8, 2022, General Election ballot. The funding plan will cost taxpayers less than what was previously presented to voters.

The fire district is asking for a small operating levy increase to fund more emergency personnel and a bond to add a new fire station. The cost for both proposals is \$6.79 per month (\$81.45 per year) for the owner of a \$346,000 home with the primary residence exemption, which is considered the average for this area.

The fire district had tried to fund these needs by increasing its operating levy, but voters turned down the proposal due to the cost. The new funding plan is lower because it splits off the fire station and pays for it through a bond that will be paid back over time, which reduces the annual cost for property owners.

“Our community is growing, and we’re at the point where we can’t effectively serve residents with one fire station and current staffing levels,” Fire Chief T.J. Lawrence said. “We listened to what the voters said last time, and we revised our plan to fund our needs at less cost to taxpayers.”

#### **More personnel needed to manage increasing call volumes and overlapping calls**

Emergency call volumes have increased 72.4 percent in the last 10 years (17.3 percent last year alone). The population within the fire district is projected to increase by 74 percent in the next 10 years. Overlapping calls – emergency calls that come in at the same time – happen almost 25 percent of the time and that number is expected to rise.

The operating levy increase will fund additional emergency personnel. The fire district has just five firefighters per shift to respond to more than 2,000 calls per year. Each shift consists of a three-person engine company (the national standard is four) and a two-person smaller “squad” vehicle primarily used for medical emergencies. The district’s limited staffing means only one unit is in service when any employee is out on sick leave, vacation, or out due to injury.

In 2021 the fire district stopped transporting patients to area hospitals because it took emergency personnel out of the service area for extended periods of time, which increased response times. Ada County Paramedics are now providing transport services out of the Kuna Fire Station. Even with this help, there are times when overlapping calls occur and there are no firefighters to send.

**Adequate facilities also are important to saving lives and property**

The bond would fund a second fire station for the community. The fire district has a Capital Improvement Plan to identify stations and apparatus needed to serve the community as it grows. The district can charge impact fees for new development, which can only be used for capital projects like a fire station. That revenue, though, is not enough to build a second station that is required for the community. Ideally, a community should have one fire station per 10,000 people. The fire district has just one station that serves almost 34,000 people.

“The bottom line is that population growth and call volume increases are straining our resources,” Chief Lawrence said. “We went back and developed a solution to improve safety for community members at a lower out-of-pocket cost for taxpayers. I look forward to speaking with community members about this important issue.”

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*The Kuna Rural Fire District (KRFD) provides fire suppression, life safety, and emergency medical services to 33,390 people across 110 square miles. Fifteen full-time firefighters responded to more than 2,007 calls in 2021 – a 72.42% increase compared to 10 years ago. EMS accounts for 63% of all calls, and overlapping calls occur 25% of the time. The agency operates under a balanced budget, is debt free, and has passed all its independent audits per state law.*