



Notes from Let's Talk – Session 1: Current Fire Services presented by the San Tan Valley Advisory Council

Rural Metro Fire Information Meeting- January 26, 2023 Central Airizona College San Tan Valley Campus

Special Guest Speakers:

Tim Soule --Rural Metro Fire Chief
Shawn Gilleland, Rural Metro --Public Information Officer

Rural Metro Fire Department is no different than a Municipal Fire Department other than where the funding comes from. A Municipal Fire Department gets their money from property taxes. San Tan Valley residents do not pay for fire services through their taxes.

Rural Fire Department was founded in Scottsdale in 1948 by Lou Witzeman. Later renamed Rural Metro Fire Department, has been helping communities around the US develop their own fire departments while servicing their communities.

There are 3 locations (fire houses) to serve the 120,000 STV residents. The chief stated that they don't have a staff to provide the service that he feels we deserve because only 35-40% of STV residents subscribe to Rural Metro. If more people subscribed, it would give them more opportunities to expand. Meaning more firehouse and more employees. They would focus on building more firehouses in the dense population of STV. The chief would like to see at least 6 firehouses to serve STV.

Fire Chief Soule stated that firefighters, EMT's and paramedics don't know whether or not a homeowner has coverage when they go out on a call but if you don't have a subscription to Rural Fire, you do get a bill for services.

Rural Metro has great relationships with the Florence Fire and Queen Creek Fire departments. They used mutual aid 10-15 times last year with no issues.

Rural metro would like to add a station at San Tan Heights but they need more financing as they are a non-profit and are public servants.

Average response times are 6 minutes.

In 2022 they responded to over 2,200 calls, emergency responses are predominantly medical related. 90% of their calls are medical and AMR will transport patients.

Fire crews live 24-7 at the station. They responded to 20-23 fires in STV in the last year. Most of those were garage fires.

The average cost is \$400-600, it is based on the square footage of your home that is based on the information they receive from the County Assessor.

Non-subscribed residents could possibly see a higher homeowners insurance rate while subscribers may get a discount from their insurance company.

The chief went over the benefits of being a subscriber such as the types of calls they take care of, structure fires, vehicle accidents, appliance and vehicle fires, small and large animal rescues, reptile removal, trail/water rescues, and air med flights.

It took Queen Creek 20 years to start it's own fire department after becoming a town. It takes \$40,000,000.00 to start just one fire house and it's 27% of the general fund.

Rural Metro is working with HOA's to have a master contract where the fees would be paid by the HOA's as part of their HOA dues for their communities. They had done a lot of these contracts prior to 2008 when the housing market crashed. They would like to see more of those come back.