

# **City of Santa Paula Annexation of Fire Services Frequently Asked Questions**

## **Why is the city trying to transfer fire services to Ventura County Fire Protection District?**

Our city is at a crossroads, with a critical unmet need to provide modern, effective emergency response. Transferring Santa Paula's fire protection to Ventura County offers residents substantially better emergency response for our people at a lower long-term cost to our taxpayers.

## **Why is it important for our city to have modern, effective emergency response?**

Whether it's fire, emergency medical response, hazmat or any other disaster, response time is critical – it can literally be the difference between life and death. When our depleted department is stretched thin, it takes that much longer to get there, and longer still if the right equipment has to come from across the county. Public safety depends on rapid response ... the kind of response Santa Paula can't provide.

## **What are some of the unmet needs that the city can't handle with its own fire department?**

Basically, our citizens require much more than Santa Paula on its own can build. Our two stations need immediate upgrades approaching \$200,000. The eventual rebuilding of Stations 81 and 82 would put taxpayers on the hook for another \$16 million over ten years. Santa Paula's responsibility through mutual aid agreements requires aerial support, a major additional out-of-pocket expense. And our people need and deserve access to effective basic services like EMS response, HazMat response, dedicated fire investigative staff and aerial firefighting.

## **How much would it cost for us to do all this in the city?**

Conservatively, Santa Paula would need to spend up to \$20 million over the ten years to build out these basic capabilities essential to keep our people safe. Pursuing even some of these improvements would almost certainly impact the whole range of other services, including law enforcement.

## **How does this affect law enforcement?**

Public safety is the first priority of any city. Santa Paula citizens deserve to have effective protection from both fire and law enforcement, and shouldn't have to sacrifice one for the other. Consolidating with VCFD ensures that our residents have both: quality law enforcement and quality fire and EMS response.

## **What does VCFD offer that the city can't?**

All of the emergency response capabilities of a modern, effective fire service would be ours with consolidation: HazMat response, EMS and paramedic response, aerial firefighting with no extra cost and dedicated fire investigators. When a major wildfire or other disaster strikes close to home, as it has this year, VCFD brings a fully-certified

Incident Management Team. All without any additional or special taxes on the citizens of our community.

**What specifically would public safety in Santa Paula get out of the deal?**

- Two fully staffed fire stations serving the community of Santa Paula and its environs;
- Specialized fire resources such as Type I, II, & III qualified Incident management team members;
- Effective and fully-functioning fire facilities, with County Fire guaranteeing that the facilities are brought up to industry standards;
- Opportunities for our current fire employees to continue serving our citizens as they have;
- **No additional or special taxes from Santa Paula property owners and community residents.**

**How will the new service to the City of Santa Paula be funded?**

Fire services by the District VCFPD will be funded through the transfer of an agreed upon percentage of property tax. Based on the 2017-2018 county assessment rolls, the tax-sharing would amount to an estimated \$2.9 million. That \$2.9 million compares with \$3 million taxpayers currently pay for its limited and increasingly outdated fire protection. **For slightly less money, Santa Paula residents get a dramatic improvement in their emergency response protection – with no new taxes.**

**Why not keep our own fire department?**

Santa Paula simply can't afford the cost of providing life-saving emergency response our residents deserve and require. Our dilapidated equipment and fiscal limitations makes it impossible to recruit and keep firefighters on staff. The economies of scale for pay and retirement are simply beyond our city's ability to handle. And we can't expand in the ways our citizens demand – aerial firefighting and paramedic response, hazmat, and our commitment to safety requires. VCFD offers an answer to all these challenges with **no additional or special taxes.**

**Will I get better service?**

Yes. More stations are available to provide faster response times to all emergencies, but especially larger emergencies where more personnel and resources are immediately dispatched. Currently, County Fire operates and services 32 fire stations serving the unincorporated area and six incorporated cities: Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Camarillo, Port Hueneme, and Ojai.

**What is the expected timeline?**

The City and the County are negotiating an MOU that will clearly spell out the requirements of the County and the cost to the City. The negotiations are expected to be completed in the next month or two and then the MOU will be taken to the City Council and the Board of Supervisors for discussion and approval.