



Daisy Mountain Fire and Medical - Administration  
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July 9, 2024

Dear Residents of the Daisy Mountain Fire District.

The Daisy Mountain Fire and Medical District (DMFD) provides an all hazards fire protection, emergency medical services, rescue, hazardous materials, swift water and wildland urban interface emergency response to five communities located in an area nearly 250 square miles adjacent to the northern limits of Phoenix, AZ. DMFD is staffed with 118 personnel in six strategically located stations. The department is part of the Phoenix Automatic Aid System and is one of the twenty-eight partnership agencies.

Since its organization in 1989, DMFD has become an efficient and robust emergency service organization with response times meeting or exceeding national standards and excellent emergency medical care. They have highly trained hazardous materials personnel to meet the unique hazards of the service area and we are proud to announce that DMFD was recently awarded a state homeland security grant to develop our special operations unit to include additional training in technical rescue operations. That combined unit went into service on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Our service area has a large wildland-urban interface, waterways and approximately thirty-five miles of the major I-17 transportation corridor. These primary hazards and risks require a large allocation of mitigation resources and efforts.

DMFD has developed emergency management programs and a robust Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in response to significant wildland fires and other emergency management concerns. The population demographics in the five diverse communities served by DMFD contain at-risk populations based on age, economic status and housing.

In the wide area covered by the Daisy Mountain Fire District, the East Desert Hills community has been growing and requires more emergency services to adequately meet the community's needs. Recognizing this gap in service, the department, in our Strategic Plan, continues to evaluate and improve service delivery and public needs while recognizing and improving our response to our ever expanding community prioritized the establishment of a new additional fire station, in this expanding but underserved neighborhood.

In order to construct a typical four bay fire station most experts agree that a site plan of about 2.5 acres is necessary. As early as August of 2013, the district identified a 4.53 acre partial of State Trust Land on the northeast corner of 2000 E Cloud. Although the lot size was larger than the size needed to build a fire station it was felt that the additional acreage could be utilized for other purposes to support the station and the Fire District. That year, the district met with the State Land

Department and requested an appraisal of the site. The State Land Dept appraised the land at \$35,000 per acre, or approximately \$160K for the entire parcel. Unfortunately, the global financial collapse effects caused a significant reduction in property values and the contraction of the fire district finances and prohibited the District from moving forward on the purchase of the property.

Once again in 2020 after significant wildfires (Aguila Fire, Central Fire, etc.) had threatened Desert Hills and many other areas in the Fire District and surrounding communities the District met with the Arizona State Land Department to move forward on the potential purchase of the property. Unfortunately, The Director, Lisa Atkins, advised the District that state law would require a new land appraisal which her staff believed would appraise for a much higher per acre amount which she estimated to be upwards of \$95K per acre or almost \$430-455k for the entire site.

That same summer (May/June 2020) three fires threatened the incorporated Town of Cave Creek. One fire, the East Desert Fire threatened town residents twice, first in the afternoon of May 17th near the area of Cahava Springs and then again overnight the morning of May 18<sup>th</sup> in the Spur Cross area of the Town. Then on May 30<sup>th</sup>, the Ocotillo Fire devastated Cave Creek residents just south of the Rancho Mirana Resort. All three of these Cave Creek wildfires committed significant resources ([link](#)) from the Daisy Mountain Fire District and our other partners in the Phoenix Regional Automatic Aid System ([link](#)).

In September 2020, as a result of the unprecedented out of District responses, the Town of Cave Creek reimbursed the Daisy Mountain Fire District \$100,000 for the East Desert/Ocotillo Fire responses.

In November 2020, the State Land Department identified another potential trust land parcel at approximately NE 2200 E. Cloud. Again, this 4.54 acre parcel was larger than the District would need but due to some topography/geological issues and a large high voltage electrical power line that dissected the parcel the District felt that the acreage could be a possible suitable location for the East Desert Hills fire station. However, despite challenges on the site, Director Atkins and her state Land Dept. staff internally appraised the value of the parcel at \$85K per acre value or a total cost of \$385K. This cost was just not a reasonable value to the District considering the size and usability of the acreage. The District did not move forward to request a land auction from the state.

In December 2021, after extensive DMFD staff real estate research, the District's Governing Board approved a private property purchase of 2.4 acres of land owned by the Fong Family Trust at the NE corner of Cloud Rd and 24<sup>th</sup> Street. This acreage was a good usable lot with great access to arterial streets and good utility access including Cave Creek water. The District and the Trust agreed to a \$94k per acre appraisal or \$225k and the property was purchased. The Fire District Governing Board noted that the \$100k payment from Cave Creek was well spent on this purchase to offset the District's investment in the land and hoped that a new partnership with the Town would further develop that would help both East Desert Hills and West Cave Creek communities.

Later that month the District and the Town of Cave Creek would finalize an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that would create a 25 year partnership between the two communities to provide fire and emergency medical services to the Town. On January 3rd, 2022, the Town opened their first fire station at 37042 N. Cave Creek Rd and the fully trained, staffed and equipped Daisy

Mountain Fire Engine #147 began providing service to the Town residents. Thirty days later, the Town, with Daisy Mountain FD as their provider, joined the Regional Automatic Aid System which provides boundaryless fire and EMS service to all participants in the system (Phoenix, Scottsdale, Glendale, Peoria, Daisy Mountain, etc.), automatically without delay. The historic IGA also required the advancement of adequate fire and emergency medical services to the West Cave Creek community via the cooperative agreement by starting the process to design and build Daisy Mountain Fire Station #144 in Fiscal Year 23/24 at the Cloud Rd/24<sup>th</sup> St location. Once built, the Town and the District will share operational and maintenance costs associated with the station in a shared 50/50 agreement. The new Station #144 is another example of the efficiency of the automatic aid system by allowing system participants to plan fire stations in the best possible configuration to provide the best possible service to all of our communities.

In July 2023, the Daisy Mountain Governing Board Meeting approved the public Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a Construction Manager at Risk (CM@R). The Board was briefed on estimated construction costs, financing options and operational and maintenance budget capacity. The selection committee made from the statutorily required members, including a community member, an architect and a general contractor selected the Willmeng Construction Company to be the construction manager ([link](#)). Fire Station 144 will reduce response times and improve fire and EMS service to East Desert Hills and West Cave Creek([link](#)) .

In addition to funding the construction and operations of Fire Station 144, the District is committed to complete other components of our Five Year Strategic Plan ([link](#)) including providing elected officials and the public with the appropriate information on funding necessary to match the fire and emergency services community needs to their expectations. Your elected legislative representatives have cut commercial tax revenue to the District in exchange for increased taxes on residential and other properties. These commercial cuts have and continue to be a drag on the District's ability to keep up with inflation and other costs ([link](#)). The District, like most residents have felt the pressure of inflationary prices on our operations which have outpaced our budget. The American Fire and Emergency Services have been disproportionately affected by the increased costs for our entire operation including apparatus, equipment, fuel, labor costs, insurance, etc. ([link](#)).

To make difficult matters worse, the District was recently informed by the Maricopa County Treasurer that due to a recent tax court case ([link](#)) the District owes \$2.3 million dollars due to an assessment class action lawsuit that we had no control over. The District will be required to pay the assessment out of our reserve funds which will prevent the ongoing replacement of apparatus, equipment, and tools. Replacing these reserve funds is necessary for the continued safe operations of the fire district.

Our Strategic Plan also requires that the District establish a robust succession plan at all levels of management, operations, and other key positions; securing the required resources to recruit, train and retain a qualified and diverse workforce; and to evaluate, identify and mitigate on-going and potentially new types of risk, consequences and resiliency.

We thank our communities for attending our public budget workshops. We believe the Board's approved "FY 2024-25 Tentative Budget" ([link](#)) reflects our best strategy for completing our goals in order to adequately continue to serve the residents of the Daisy Mountain Fire District.

Thank you for your continued support of the Daisy Mountain Fire Department.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Brian P. Tobin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Tobin" clearly distinguishable.

Brian P. Tobin  
Fire Chief