



Santa Cruz County Fire County Service Area 48

Fact Sheet

Working to Maintain Lifesaving Fire Protection and Emergency Services.

INTRODUCTION: The Santa Cruz County Fire Department serves specific areas of unincorporated Santa Cruz County known as “County Service Area 48” (CSA 48). CSA 48 includes the communities of Bonny Doon, Davenport, Loma Prieta, Corralitos, Las Cumbres and the wider South Skyline area.

The County Fire Department operates in CSA 48 with five year-round volunteer fire stations in cooperation with five corresponding state fire stations.

The County also contracts with CAL FIRE to keep the State fire stations in CSA 48 open during the non-fire season to ensure year-round fire protection and emergency response services.

The Challenge:

The devastating fires in Butte County and LA County provide a stark reminder that our Santa Cruz County community is **AT RISK** when a fire, natural disaster, or other emergency strikes.

Consider These Facts:

- **FACT:** We have 25% fewer firefighters on staff today than we did 10 years ago -- meanwhile our number of emergency calls has grown steadily – approximately 22% since 2010.
- **FACT:** For the safety of the public and first-responders, the State recommends at least three firefighters per engine. **Currently, Santa Cruz County Fire can only afford two paid firefighters per engine.**
- **FACT:** To enter a burning structure or rescue a trapped victim, the law **REQUIRES** four firefighters: two firefighters to enter the structure and two outside for backup. **Funding for a 3rd paid firefighter means that we would have the 4 firefighters required to quickly enter and perform a rescue or put out a fire.**
- **FACT:** Local fire stations are so short-staffed that when multiple emergency calls come in, we don't have the staff to respond. **More than 56 times in 2018, ALL County Fire firefighters were out on emergency incidents, leaving no one available to respond to the next emergency call.**
- **FACT:** The American Heart Association states that **brain deterioration begins between four and six minutes after a person stops breathing.** The average 9-1-1 response time for **Santa Cruz County Fire - CSA 48** area is approximately 10 minutes. A third firefighter and reliable equipment allows your fire department to provide faster patient care and reduce response times.
- **FACT: Without additional funds the County will be forced to close a fire station, resulting in slower 9-1-1 response times in many areas of rural Santa Cruz County.**

The Bottom Line:

Santa Cruz County Fire cannot maintain the current level of service in CSA 48 to protect you, your family and your property without additional funding to restore paid firefighter staffing levels to meet State recommended standards and to replace aging fire and lifesaving emergency and rescue equipment.

Identified Solution:

To maintain the quality of local fire protection services, ensure quick response times to 9-1-1 emergencies, repair, upgrade, or replace aging fire engines and life-saving emergency and rescue equipment, and restore the number of local firefighters needed to keep our community safe, Santa Cruz County has been diligently working towards a solution that would provide a sustainable and reliable fire and emergency service delivery model.

Santa Cruz County Fire protection funding comes from local property taxes, including the CSA 48 fee shown on your local property tax bill. These critical funds pay for all of our fire engines, rescue vehicles, and firefighter protective gear, as well as training and administrative support provided by CAL FIRE. These funds also ensure continuous staffing at CAL FIRE stations in each of our five areas during the winter (non-fire) season.

Due to the increased level of fire and emergency calls, the critical need is to meet industry safety standards by restoring the number of firefighters to three per engine to be better prepared for large-scale wildfires and emergencies. Additional funding is required in order to meet this need.

Currently, Santa Cruz County Fire is considering seeking community approval for funding through a Proposition 218 ballot proceeding, where property owners are the “voters” who decide on the measure. A Proposition 218 ballot measure requires a mail-in ballot for any proposed new or increased assessment. This would give all property owners within CSA 48 boundaries the opportunity to vote on the proposal.

Passage of a measure would raise the public funding necessary to:

- **Maintain** the quality of local fire protection services
- **Ensure** quick response times to 9-1-1 emergencies
- **Repair, upgrade or replace** outdated fire engines and life-saving emergency and rescue equipment
- **Restore** the number of local firefighters and fire stations needed to keep our community safe

Without the passage of a Proposition 218 ballot measure, the Department would face further damaging cuts to services, forcing Santa Cruz County Fire to continue to rely on outdated fire engines and life-saving emergency rescue technologies, increasing 9-1-1 response times, and would likely cause Santa Cruz County Fire to have to close one or more fire stations.

Community input is welcome!

As we evaluate Santa Cruz County Fire and emergency service needs, we are actively engaging our local communities to participate and provide feedback. It is our responsibility to keep you informed and to do everything possible to ensure adequate fire protection and quick access to life-saving 9-1-1 emergency response. Please share your opinions by emailing Chief Larkin at: csa48feedback@gmail.com.

For more information, visit our website at: www.santacruzcountyfire.com.