



White Mountain Fire Protection District

25470 Hwy 6, Benton California 93512

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Benton Fire Station Project

White Mountain Fire Protection District currently provides emergency services from a single facility in Benton, California, including fire protection, fire prevention, and emergency medical services (both basic life support and advanced life support with transport) to frontier communities and the Utu Utu Gwaitu Paiute Reservation in rural Mono County. The current buildings operated by the district include a metal storage shed for equipment and a dilapidated mobile home for classroom training, which lack any provisions for the safety of firefighters and emergency medical technicians related to cancer risks, vehicle exhaust removal, contamination isolation, PPE extraction, or facility security measures. While these facilities served a purpose in helping the district reach this level of service, they are insufficient for addressing the current and future needs of the district's mission. The Benton Fire Station Project aims to establish a modern, purpose-built facility that will ensure safe, secure, and adequate emergency services for the ongoing operations of the White Mountain Fire Protection District. The initiative focuses on volunteer safety and security while enhancing the insurability of district residents by improving the insurance services Public Protection Classification.

Additionally, this project expands critical infrastructure to help Mono County achieve its hazard mitigation resiliency goals for emergency service provision. We are a volunteer fire and EMS service relying on local residents to donate their time and skills to achieve this mission. We believe these volunteers deserve all possible protections concerning their health, wellness, and safety. This project establishes a crucial foundation for safeguarding individuals who selflessly dedicate themselves.

Given the rural nature of the district and its financial challenges relative to the larger county, we lack the resources to fund a project of this scale. The district's median income is \$62,760, which is 32% lower than California's median income and 28% lower than that of Mono County. The district would not be able to raise sufficient capital to finance such a project.

The funding that the district is seeking would be utilized to build a safe and secure facility where our volunteers can excel in delivering essential services. It would create a secure training environment and ensure adequate equipment storage, meeting the health and safety standards as required by NFPA 1500. Additionally, it would enable the district to significantly enhance its Public Protection Classification, thereby increasing the insurability of our residents. Design features, including 30,000 gallons of on-site water storage, would facilitate achieving a higher public protection classification. Moreover, this project aims to provide a safe facility for our emergency medical staff to improve the response levels of our EMS services. Without ambulance services in this area, the nearest ambulance, if available, is over one hour away. This can literally mean the difference between life and death. Furthermore, it would offer a location for law enforcement deputies to effectively carry out their duties and public service. Currently, they lack a facility from which to operate, leading to a one to two-hour response time for this community.



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Impact on California

White Mountain Fire Protection District is the first line of defense for property and life-saving services for the residents of this remote area. With the nearest help 45 to 60 minutes away, we must be prepared to respond quickly and efficiently. In addition to our responsibilities at home, we actively provide mutual aid to the State of California through agreements with Cal OES and USFS. Since 2017, we have responded to 35 large fires in California for mutual aid, including 6 of the largest, 2 of the deadliest, and 6 of the most destructive, such as the Palisades and Hurst fires, from which we just returned. We also routinely pre-position our resources for anticipated high-fire danger events in the state and local areas. As I write this, we have just been deployed to Southern California once again for the Border 2 Fire.

The district features 30 miles of US 6 running through its center. US 6 is part of the California Freeway and Expressway System, as well as the National Highway System, which includes highways deemed essential to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility by the Federal Highway Administration. This highway serves as a vital commercial link between Interstate 80 and Southern California. Traffic levels have steadily risen, and with this increase, the number of vehicle incidents has also risen (62% in the last 4 years). The high volume of commercial truck traffic further elevates the risks associated with hazardous materials transport. Our resources play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and accessibility of this route, as well as the protection of residents living along it.

Firefighters face numerous hazards inherent to their profession. These risks affect all firefighters equally, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteers. While the volunteers in this district may not handle the same volume of calls, they encounter the same hazards linked to these calls that any urban or metropolitan firefighter does. Firefighter safety begins at the station. By constructing and maintaining a safe, secure, and reliable facility, we can better support our volunteers. This, in turn, helps us recruit more volunteers, enabling us to fulfill the district's mission. These volunteers provide essential services not only to our district but also to all residents of California.