

Fire Services - Foothills County Div. 4 Councillor Suzanne Oel

Fire Protection Service in Foothills County: Foothills Fire Department and our partner Fire Departments serve an area of over 3,600 sq. kms with a rural population approaching 25,000 citizens. Each partner has been assigned a primary response area. Currently there are 9 Fire Districts with Fire Stations located in Longview, Diamond Valley (2 stations, formerly Turner Valley & Black Diamond), High River, Cayley, Priddis, Blackie, Okotoks (2 stations), Heritage Pointe and Spruce Meadows. All of our fire service resources are dispatched by Foothills Regional 911. Please visit the County's website to view the fire service area MAP: <https://www.foothillscountyab.ca/emergency-services/foothills-fire>

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards: Foothills Fire Department adheres to NFPA 1720, which is the "Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments". The County has placed 1 full-time station and 5 volunteer stations in proximity to populations and where an adequate pool of volunteers is able to respond to meet the 10-minute response time for Suburban Area Demand Zones, 14-minute response time required for Rural Area Demand Zones, and Remote Area Demand Zones respectively, in accordance with NFPA 1720.

Fire Services in west Foothills County: Given the expansive geography of the County, fire station locations and mutual aid arrangements have been established to ensure that adequate service levels are provided to residents and businesses as cited in the standards. The station(s) within or assigned to the 9 Fire Districts closest to a given event are dispatched first, for most emergencies. The agreements with the Fire Departments allow assistance or mutual aid as required for larger calls. In addition, the Foothills Fire Service has mutual aid agreements with the surrounding municipal districts and counties to provide more equipment and manpower when required. Specific to the area along Highway 762, the most likely fire stations to respond are Priddis and Diamond Valley, although other stations may attend depending on the situation. Mutual aid agreements are in place with near-by Redwood Meadows, Alberta Forestry, and other municipalities in case of need. Alberta Forestry is responsible for wildland fire response in neighbouring Kananaskis and coordinates response along the boundary with Foothills and its partners.

Water Supply for Firefighting near Highway 762: The water bulk-fill station located at the West Foothills Water Treatment Plant is a valuable resource for water supply during emergency operations. The Foothills Fire Department has utilized this resource numerous times over the years and recently during significant fire events that occurred in 2021, 2022, and 2025. Tenders (water trucks) were able to swiftly access, connect, refill and deploy back to the scene in a very efficient time-frame. In rural firefighting, water supply is the biggest challenge faced, and therefore having this infrastructure readily available is vital to the success of operations. To date, the Foothills Fire Department has never experienced any challenges accessing the bulk-fill station, and in reference to the recent events, were able to draw tens of thousands of gallons of water, without any restrictions. All fire apparatus (Engine/Tenders and Bush trucks) can connect directly to the fill station using a large diameter hose connection. This option is more favourable, due to the fill station having a pressurized water supply, versus the dry hydrant also located at the site. Within the County's recent Wildfire Mitigation Strategy funded by a FireSmart grant, additional firefighting water sources have been identified, including rivers, streams and ponds in and around the 762 area.

Old Burby Fire Hall: The use of the old structure as a fire hall, located along 1368 Drive West (Rusticana Road), was discontinued around 1999-2000. Historically there were issues with recruiting adequate volunteers to meet the required NFPA service objectives in the area. In addition, the old building is not able to facilitate a fire service and is currently leased to the Venturers Society.

For Awareness: Costs for a full-time fire hall similar to Heritage Pointe are in the \$6-8M cost range, with apparatus and equipment costing another approximate \$2M, and then on top of that, an annual operating budget near \$2M. This would not be a feasible tax cost for a service provided to an area of fairly low population and business density. As noted, mutual aid agreements are in place for this whole area.

Other Considerations: To ensure the best emergency service response to your property, please keep driveways clear in all seasons, visibly post your 911 Address sign, register your gate code with Foothills Regional 911 and beware of accidentally starting a wildfire. Also, consider "FireSmarting" your home and property. Visit the County or FireSmart websites for more details: <https://firesmartcanada.ca/>

Disclaimer: While I have done my best to prepare this summary accurately, I may have forgotten something or made errors. S.O. 2025