



Monte Rio Fire Protection District

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Fire Chief ~ Steve [Baxman](#) • www.monteriofire.org

Merging of Fire Services with Gold Ridge Fire

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the current state of fire services in Monte Rio Fire District?

Monte Rio Fire has enjoyed great community support over our 100+ years of service. For the past decade, we have struggled with the modern day realities that most fire departments face. Increased costs, decreased volunteerism, and increased demand (ie- more fire/calls for help) have made it challenging to provide the level of service that our community needs and deserves. Several years ago our department and Board of Directors began to explore partnerships that would help bridge our community into a higher level of service and provide a solid foundation for firefighting and medical response going forward. Our goal was to find a neighboring district to potentially consolidate or merge with, to achieve savings on administration costs as well as build a larger agency for staffing and coverage needs.

Has a partner been identified to partner with?

Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has successfully integrated numerous surrounding volunteer districts, and has worked to be inclusive of new territories by continuing to embrace volunteerism, and by also allowing residents in the newly annexed territories to run for and serve on its publicly elected Board of Directors. After many months/years of discussions, Monte Rio Fire is now advancing plans to be annexed by Gold Ridge Fire Protection District in order to provide our administrative, staffing and volunteer training and oversight needs.

What are the steps being taken toward consolidation?

Gold Ridge Fire Protection District and Monte Rio Fire Protection District have been collaboratively working together for many years. An internal evaluation of programs, finances, equipment, personnel, and other assets has been completed, and an application has been made to Sonoma County LAFCO to formally merge the two districts together. The resources of Gold Ridge will be a huge asset to Monte Rio, including an increase in the level of service being provided by the fire department, both in the present and into the future.

Where in the process are we?

Monte Rio Fire Protection District has requested a study of its sphere of influence with the intent of merging its borders with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. This process occurs at Sonoma County LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission).

Is Chief Baxman supportive of the consolidation?

Yes! Chief Baxman has been a part of the leadership in the process of consolidation, and is supportive of moving forward with Gold Ridge Fire Protection District.

Will there continue to be a fire station in Monte Rio, with satellite stations in Duncans Mills and Jenner?

Yes. When the annexation is completed, all the district assets of the Monte Rio Fire Protection District will be transferred over to Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. Gold Ridge has committed to fully staffing the Monte Rio station site, and will continue to use the satellite station sites in Duncans Mills and Jenner as they have been for years. Gold Ridge is seeking to not only maintain the status quo on fire and emergency services, but to add value to the existing services provided.

Will Chief Baxman continue to be the Fire Chief at the Monte Rio station?

Yes, Chief Baxman will become a local station Chief in the Gold Ridge Fire model, and will be among the volunteers responding to incidents. We are grateful for Chief Baxman's many years of service, and for his leadership in helping set up Monte Rio Fire for the future through annexation.

Will the volunteer program continue in Monte Rio? What will become of the current volunteers?

Yes, the volunteer program will continue to be an important part of our response to the community. We will have paid staff at the station to bring out an engine at a moment's notice, and our volunteers are absolutely still needed, especially for larger events like car accidents, fires, and for when we staff up during critical weather events.

What will Monte Rio gain from consolidating?

Monte Rio Fire will gain a number of things from the consolidation. Administrative efficiency is a huge savings for the district, in addition to gaining a depth of volunteers from the Gold Ridge Fire volunteer pool. Fuels management is another area that a larger combined district has leverage with in order to gain grants, deploy a fire marshall to support community scale vegetation management, and to do voluntary property inspections to support homeowners in preparing for fire season and evacuations.

How much will this cost me as a taxpayer?

Generally a very modest amount. When the municipal services review is complete, and the annexation of Monte Rio Fire is approved by LAFCO, the territory that was once Monte Rio Fire Protection District will become a part of Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. The existing Monte Rio Fire parcel tax will be extinguished, and it will be replaced with Gold Ridge Fire's parcel taxes. The residential rates for Gold Ridge are very similar to Monte Rio's rates, and will result in approximately a ~\$34 increase per year on the property tax bill. Commercial rates are also very similar. Some taxpayers may see a small decrease, while some will see a small increase.

Will I be able to vote on the Board of Directors when the annexation occurs?

Yes. Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has open public elections with a staggered board rotation, just like Monte Rio. There is a seven member Board currently governing the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District, and when Monte Rio Fire Protection District's territory consolidates into Gold Ridge's territory, then any voter living within the territory can run for the public board seat.

If I have a complaint or want to make a comment to the Gold Ridge Fire District Board, can I still do so?

Absolutely. Gold Ridge Fire Protection District has open public meetings once a month. Their meetings are subject to the Ralph M Brown Act, and agenda's are required to be posted ahead of time and meeting information made accessible to the public.

What territories does the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District serve?

Lakeville, Two Rock, Bodega, Valley Ford, Hessel, Twin Hills, Freestone, Camp Meeker and Fort Ross communities and many areas between are served by the Gold Ridge Fire Protection District. Gold Ridge also provides mutual aid support to its neighboring districts, such as Occidental, Graton, Rancho Adobe, and Sonoma County Fire District (Forestville, Bodega Bay, etc).

How can I get more information?

Contact Steve Baxman at (707) 484-2320, or email lmccormick@goldridgefire.org to ask specific questions about your specific parcel(s), or to learn more about the consolidation process.