

The Case for a New Station



The Gunnison County Fire Protection District has been asking the same question for years: how long can we keep going in a building that was never designed to be a fire station? The answer is now clear.

The current station — a converted metal storage building from the 1970s — fails to meet basic building and fire codes, cannot safely house the equipment and volunteers who protect this community, and has been rated the worst facility in the city's portfolio. The building below it on that list has already been demolished. A new fire station is not a want. It is an overdue necessity.

**51
Years Old**

Current station was converted from a metal storage building in the 1970s

**40
Volunteers**

Serve 2,700 sq. miles — the largest response area of any fire dept. in Colorado

**\$17 mil.
At Risk**

In equipment assets currently housed in a building that fails basic safety codes

What's Wrong with the Current Station?

- **Safety code failures.** The building does not meet current NFPA health and safety standards for fire stations — including requirements for ventilation, decontamination, and separation of hazardous materials from living areas.
- **Carcinogen exposure.** Bunker gear — which absorbs toxic carcinogens from structure fires — is stored in the same space where volunteers eat and sleep. This is a documented cancer risk. Members of this department have been diagnosed with occupational cancers.
- **Equipment at risk.** \$17 million in apparatus and equipment is housed in a structure that fails basic building codes. Every piece of equipment lost to a facility failure is a direct cost to taxpayers.
- **Inadequate space.** The building has no adequate space for the 13 pieces of apparatus the district needs to serve 2,700 square miles of response area, including wildland brush trucks, a ladder truck, hazmat equipment, and swift water rescue gear.
- **Response time impact.** There is no facility for on-site sleeping quarters, which means volunteers responding overnight must first drive to the station before a truck can leave. Every minute of delay matters.
- **Past its useful life.** Maintenance costs are no longer economical. Energy costs are high. The building cannot be meaningfully upgraded — it must be replaced.

What a New Station Provides

The proposed facility is a code-compliant fire station — not an elaborate one. It includes engineered vehicle bays for apparatus up to 80,000 lbs (more than four times what ambulances weigh), NFPA-compliant decontamination rooms, training space for 40 volunteers, on-site sleeping quarters that reduce overnight response time, and proper storage for all apparatus and \$17 million in community assets. Every element addresses a documented operational or safety need. Nothing more.

The design has been revised in direct response to community feedback. The new facility reflects what voters said: functional, appropriate to Gunnison, and built to last – not to impress.

The Volunteer Advantage — And Why the Station Matters to It

The Gunnison County Fire Protection District is one of the most capable volunteer departments in Colorado. Forty volunteers — including plumbers, welders, excavator operators, mechanics, and medical professionals — respond to fires, vehicle accidents, swift water rescues, hazmat incidents, wildland fires, and technical rescues across 2,700 square miles of some of the most challenging terrain in the state.

What they do is extraordinary. Where they do it from is not.

The Real Cost Comparison

The most important number in this conversation is not the cost of the new station. It is the cost of the alternative.

Volunteer Department

New station cost:

~\$26M construction

One time. For a building that lasts 100 years. Annual savings from volunteers vs. paid dept: \$8-10M/year

Paid Department

Annual operating cost:

\$8-10M/year

Every year. Indefinitely.
Plus: a new station is still required

The volunteer department saves district taxpayers an estimated \$8 to \$10 million every year. Over 20 years — the life of the proposed bond — that represents \$160 to \$200 million in savings. The new station is not just an expense. It is an investment in keeping one of the most cost-effective public safety models in Colorado intact.

What this Costs You

The proposed 8-mill levy increase is calculated on the assessed value of your property — not the market value. Here is what it means in practice:

Home Market Value	Monthly Increase	Annual Increase
\$100,000	\$4.08	\$48.96
\$400,000	\$16.32	\$195.84
\$600,000	\$24.48	\$293.76

Home Market Value	Monthly Increase	Annual Increase
\$800,000	\$33.09	\$397.12
\$1,000,000	\$42.16	\$505.92
\$1,500,000	\$64.83	\$777.92

These figures are estimated from the 8-mill levy increase applied to assessed value. Your exact cost depends on your property's assessed value as determined by the Gunnison County Assessor. Contact the Assessor's office or visit GunnisonFire.org for help calculating your specific amount.

Questions? We have answers.

Visit GunnisonFire.org for the FAQs and design information.

Or contact the District directly: 970-209-7666 • hferchau@gunnisonco.gov