



Section 5.17:

Fire Protection



5.17 FIRE PROTECTION

This section identifies fire protection services within the City of Murrieta and provides an analysis of potential impacts associated with the buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035. Information in this section is based on information in the proposed General Plan 2035 Safety Element, and information provided by the Murrieta Fire Department.

5.17.1 REGULATORY SETTING

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION¹

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is dedicated to the fire protection and stewardship of over 31 million acres of California's privately-owned wildland. Additionally, Cal Fire provides varied emergency services in 36 of the State's 58 counties via contracts with local governments. The Cal Fire's firefighters, fire engines, and aircraft respond to an average of more than 5,600 wildland fires per year. These fires burn approximately more than 172,000 acres of land annually. Beyond its wildland fire fighting role, CAL FIRE answers the call more than 300,000 times for other emergencies and disasters each year.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT²

The Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) is one of the largest regional fire service organizations in California. The RCFD operates 95 fire stations in 17 battalions, providing fire suppression, emergency medical, rescue, and fire prevention services. The RCFD responded to 110,224 incidents during the 2005 calendar year. The RCFD is staffed with approximately 952 career and 1,100 volunteer personnel, and currently serves approximately 2 million residents in the area of approximately 7,004 square miles. The RCFD service area consists of the unincorporated county areas, 18 contract cities, and one Community Service District (CSD).

MURRIETA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Protection Plan

The Murrieta Fire Department (MFD) is the primary provider of fire suppression, pre-hospital emergency medical care, disaster preparedness coordination, hazard mitigation, and fire

¹ California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection website, <http://www.fire.ca.gov/about/about.php>, accessed December 4, 2009.

² Riverside County Fire Department website, http://www.rvcfire.org/opencms/about_us/, accessed December 4, 2009.



prevention services in the City of Murrieta.³ The MFD adopted a Fire Protection Plan in 2005 that provides policy-oriented and long-range guidance regarding the MFD’s services, equipment, and personnel.

Fire Prevention and Other Services

Besides fire suppression, the MFD services also include fire investigation, public safety education, fire protection engineering, building inspections for code compliance, weed abatement, hazardous materials inspections, and emergency preparedness planning and training.

Mutual Aid Agreements

The MFD also participates in the California Master Mutual Aid Agreement, as well as an Automatic Aid Agreement with CAL FIRE and RCFD for multiple locations in and adjacent to the City boundaries.

The MFD participates in an Automatic Aid Agreement with the RCFD to expedite service delivery to the eastern portion of the City, along Winchester Road and in the area between Winchester and the I-215 north of Clinton Keith Road.

5.17.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

FACILITIES

The Murrieta Fire Department has five stations located to optimize response times throughout City, listed in *Table 5.17-1, Murrieta Fire Facilities*.

STAFFING

As of 2010, there were 61 authorized positions in the MFD. These positions include 15 Captains, 15 Engineers, and 15 Firefighters.⁴ The MFD has a target staffing level of five stations with three-person engine companies plus one on-duty Battalion Chief for a total of 16 on-duty suppression personnel at all times.

Firefighters are cross-trained to provide other emergency services. All fire suppression personnel are trained to the level of Emergency Medical Technician Defibrillator (EMT-D). All 15 Firefighters are trained as Paramedics, as well as the nine Engineers and six Captains. All Firefighters are trained in hazardous materials decontamination procedures; certain Firefighters are trained in Urban Search and Rescue.

³ Murrieta Fire Department, “Fire Department,” <http://www.murrieta.org/services/fire/index.asp>, accessed January 4, 2010.

⁴ Gary Whisenand, Division Chief, Murrieta Fire Department, telephone conversation, January 8, 2010.



**Table 5.17-1
Murrieta Fire Department Facilities**

Station	History	Equipment
Fire Station No. 1 41825 Juniper Street	Opened April 1966 Enlarged to 4 bays in 1987	1 Type I Engine 1 Type II Engine 1 Light/Air Unit 1 Mobile Command Post 1 Water Tender 1 Reserve Type I Engine 3 CERT Units
Fire Station No. 2 40060 California Oaks Road	Opened May 23, 1990	1 65-foot aerial ladder truck 1 Reserve Type I Engine
Fire Station No. 3 39985 Whitewood Road	Opened November 1, 1992 Closed October 2, 1993 Reopened February 4, 1994	1 Type I Engine 1 Reserve Type I Engine 1 Type III Brush Engine
Fire Station No. 4 28155 Baxter Road	Opened October 15, 2005	1 Type I Engine 1 OES Type III Brush Engine
Fire Station No. 5 38391 Vineyard Parkway	Opened 2010	1 Type I Engine 1 Type III Brush Engine 1 Special Ops Trailer
Sources: Murrieta Fire Department, "Fire Department Facilities," http://www.murrieta.org/datapages/datafull.asp?id=5 , accessed January 4, 2010. Stephanie Smith, Senior Management Analyst, Murrieta Fire Department, Fire Protection Services Questionnaire, December 9, 2009.		

RESPONSE TIME AND ISO RATING

The MFD has a target response time of 6½ minutes from the time of the alarm on all calls, which includes 5½ minutes of drive time and a one minute “turnout” time. Stations in the outlying regions experience longer average response times, such as the eastern portion of the City along Winchester Road and in the area between Winchester and the I-215 north of Clinton Keith. A fire station in this area would help achieve the target response time.

Insurance Services Office (ISO) rates fire department staffing and equipment, communications centers and water systems. The numeral classification rating is utilized to establish the community's commercial and industrial insurance rates. For every decrease in one rating point, these insurance costs decrease by approximately 10 percent. The MFD’s ISO rating is 4 in areas with fire hydrants and 9 in outlying areas that do not have water supply.

PROTECTION FOR HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

As Murrieta develops with more Class A high-rise office buildings, further investments in equipment and personnel are needed. Fire suppression for high-rise buildings is better



accomplished with four people assigned to each engine company rather than three. An aerial truck company with a ladder extension of 100 feet and staffed with four persons will be able to access and provide fire suppression for buildings such as Loma Linda University Medical Center-Murrieta.

FIRE PREVENTION

The MFD engages in several activities that are aimed at preventing fires. Besides the Weed Abatement program for wildfires, the MFD also provides fire protection engineering, building inspections for code compliance, and hazardous materials inspections. The MFD also provides education and training in public safety and emergency preparedness.

The Murrieta Sphere of Influence is served by the RCFD. The MFD may also provide service to the Sphere of Influence by means of an Automatic Aid Agreement with the RCFD.⁵

WILDLAND FIRES

A wildfire is an uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels and exposing or consuming structures. Wildfires are often unnoticed and spread quickly. Although not located in a wilderness area, the threat of a wildland fire in or near Murrieta is high due to the wildland urban areas in and around the City. A wildland is a geographical area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels. Significant development in areas of the City and its surroundings are considered wildland and have experienced prolonged droughts and are excessively dry and at risk of wildfires. The threat is particularly significant during dry summer months and when there are strong Santa Ana winds. The fire season extends approximately 5 to 6 months, from late spring through fall.

Wildland fire hazards exist in varying degrees over approximately 90 percent of Riverside County and the City of Murrieta in open space, parklands, and agricultural areas. The undeveloped hillside areas in and adjacent to the City of Murrieta present a potentially serious hazard due to the high potential for large scale wildland fires. The escarpments along the western boundary of the City are notorious for their threat of wildland fires that move quickly through the area. Similar wildland areas exist in the Greer Ranch area in northern Murrieta, and the Hogbacks and Los Alamos area. Refer to *Exhibit 5.17-1, High Fire Hazard Zones* for locations within the City considered high fire hazard zones.

Fire hazards arise from a combination of reasons: undeveloped and rugged terrain, highly flammable brush-covered land, and long dry summers. There are heavy fuel loads, especially in watershed areas unaffected by fire for many years. Structures with wood shake roofs ignite easily and produce embers that contribute to fire spread. The aftermath of wildland fire produces a new area of potential landslide as burned and defoliated areas are exposed to winter rains.

⁵ Gary Whisenand, Division Chief, Murrieta Fire Department, telephone conversation, January 8, 2010.



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HIGH FIRE HAZARD ZONES

The MFD provides services that include fire prevention, suppression, planning and engineering, disaster preparedness, rescue services, and emergency medical services. The Sphere of Influence area is served by RCFD through a contract with Cal Fire. The agencies also provide overlapping service under agreements for automatic aid and wild-land fire response. RCFD has experienced devastating fires in the wildland/urban interface area. Conditions of development are currently required, such as Class A roofing, noncombustible siding and 100-foot fuel buffer zones, to protect communities from wildland/urban interface fires. Additionally, other techniques, such as fuel modification and firebreaks, may be utilized to reduce the threat from wildland fires. Furthermore, community planning, awareness, and involvement are proven elements of effectively reducing the occurrence and damage associated with wildland fires.

FIRE FLOWS

Water supply has been improved in areas that were identified in the Fire Protection Plan as lacking adequate fire flows, namely, historic Murrieta and Washington Avenue south of Murrieta Creek. Fire flows in these areas are no longer a concern due to upgrades done by the Western Municipal Water District.⁶

FUNDING

The MFD is independently funded through a combination of ad valorem tax and parcel assessment. The MFD is a subsidiary district of the City of Murrieta, and maintains an independent revenue stream through the tax rolls dating back to 1947.

In addition, capital improvements are funded through Development Impact Fees and special Development Agreement Fees; refer to *Table 5.17-2, Fire Department Development Impact Fees*.

**Table 5.17-2
Fire Department Development Impact Fees**

Use	Fee
Rural Estate Dwellings	\$668.31/unit
Single Family Dwellings	\$668.31/unit
Multi-Family Dwellings	\$988.44/unit
Office Uses	\$0.20/square foot
Commercial Uses	\$0.40/square foot
Industrial Uses	\$0.09/square foot
Source: City of Murrieta Annual Fiscal Fee Schedule, 2009-2010.	

⁶ Gary Whisenand, Division Chief, Murrieta Fire Department, telephone conversation, January 8, 2010.



5.17.3 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD CRITERIA

The issues presented in the Initial Study Environmental Checklist (Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*) have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this Section. Accordingly, fire protection service impacts resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 may be considered significant if they would result in the following:

- Substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which may cause significant environmental impacts in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives.
- Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.

Based on these significance thresholds and criteria, the proposed General Plan 2035's effects have been categorized as either "no impact," a "less than significant impact," or a "potentially significant impact." Mitigation measures are recommended for potentially significant impacts. If a potentially significant impact cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through the application of mitigation, it is categorized as a significant unavoidable impact.

5.17.4 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- **BUILDOUT OF THE CITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN 2035 COULD RESULT IN THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL FIRE FACILITIES OR PERSONNEL.**

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Future fire protection levels would be considered adequate if existing emergency response times and staffing levels could be maintained and if the MFD's fire service standards and fire flow requirements are met. However, if buildout associated with the proposed General Plan 2035 causes MFD standards to not be achieved, fire protection services would be considered inadequate, thereby constituting a significant impact. As a result, additional facilities, personnel, and equipment may be required to maintain adequate levels of fire protection within the City.



The MFD has indicated that proposed General Plan 2035 would not create significant changes to its services, and does not recommend any mitigation measures beyond the General Plan 2035 goals and policies and existing regulations. However, as the General Plan 2035 is implemented, the MFD may need the addition of a Truck Company with a staffing of four to accommodate the potential office development. Additionally, the MFD noted that the 2010 Fire Code requires residential sprinkler systems in each new home built. This became effective January 1, and would be implemented into every new residential building permit.⁷

Buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 would result in additional demands on existing fire services, as individual projects are developed and associated increases in population are realized. New developments associated with the buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035 would be required to comply with all applicable fire code and ordinance requirements for construction, access, water mains, fire flows, and hydrants. Individual projects would be reviewed by the MFD to determine the specific fire requirements applicable to the specific development and to ensure compliance with these requirements. This would ensure that new developments would not reduce the staffing, response times, or existing service levels within the City. Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Additionally, the proposed General Plan 2035 Safety Element includes goals and policies that address fire protection services and identify the need to provide adequate resources to respond to health and fire emergencies within the City, including adequate staffing of fire response personnel and trained medical technicians. Adherence to the goals and policies would reduce fire protection service impacts to a less than significant level.

Goals and Policies in the Proposed General Plan 2035:

SAFETY ELEMENT

Goal SAF-5 Damage from fire hazards is minimized through preventive measures, education, and fire protection services.

Policies

SAF-5.1 Continue efforts to reduce fire hazards associated with older buildings, multi-family housing, and fire-prone industrial facilities throughout the City.

SAF-5.2 Provide public safety education programs through the Fire Department to reduce accidents, injuries and fires, as well as to train members of the public to respond to emergencies.

⁷ Written correspondence with Sean Kean, Battalion Chief, Murrieta Fire Department, January 2011.



- SAF-5.3 Continue to coordinate fire protection services with Riverside County, CAL FIRE, and all other agencies and districts with fire protection powers.
- SAF-5.4 Ensure that outlying areas in the City can be served by fire communication systems as new development occurs.
- SAF-5.5 Require that all dedicated open space or undeveloped areas meet specifications for fire safety.
- Goal SAF-6** The Murrieta Fire Department provides a timely response to fire and other emergencies.

Policies

- SAF-6.1 Respond to 90 percent of medical and fire incident calls within 6½ minutes from dispatch.
- SAF-6.2 Ensure that each Paramedic Assessment Engine Company provides the capacity to treat moderate or greater injuries, transport patients to hospitals, advance a hose line for fire control, and to effect a rescue of trapped occupants.
- SAF-6.3 Provide adequate levels of fire suppression personnel for all areas.
- SAF-6.4 Ensure sufficient personnel and equipment to provide fire suppression for high rise buildings.
- SAF-6.5 Locate, staff, and equip Fire Department units to provide service to all areas within the City within a maximum of 12 minutes total response time for 90 percent of all mass casualty incidents or major structure fires.
- SAF-6.6 Evaluate the feasibility and benefits of incorporating Emergency Medical Dispatch into the dispatching system to provide emergency medical assistance to callers.
- SAF-6.7 Strategically cross-train Fire Department personnel as Emergency Medical Technician Defibrillators and Paramedics as well as in Urban Search and Rescue, swift water rescue, and hazardous materials decontamination.
- SAF-6.8 Maintain and implement a Fire Department Strategic Plan to address staffing and facility needs, service goals, deployment strategies, and other department goals.
- SAF-6.9 Strive to achieve an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification of 3 in areas with fire hydrants and 9 in areas that are not connected to an existing water district supply system.



Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures beyond the goals and policies identified in the proposed General Plan 2035 are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Not Applicable.

WILDLAND FIRE HAZARDS

- **BUILDOUT OF THE CITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN 2035 COULD INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HOMES OR BUSINESSES SUSCEPTIBLE TO WILDLAND FIRE HAZARDS.**

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Potentially Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: As shown on *Exhibit 5.17-1*, two areas of the City are within high fire hazard zones. The first area is in the northwest portion of the City, while the second area includes the escarpments along the western boundary of the City. No new development or intensification of development is proposed with the General Plan 2035 for these areas, thus no new homes or businesses would be susceptible to wildland fire hazards.

However, other areas of the City, though not in designated high fire hazard zones, have the potential to be subject to large scale wildland fires, including in the Greer Ranch area in northern Murrieta, and the Hogbacks and Los Alamos Hills area. The General Plan 2035 proposes additional development in the Clinton Keith/Mitchell and North Murrieta Business Corridor Focus Areas. The Clinton Keith/Mitchell Focus Area is generally east of the Greer Ranch area and west of the I-215 freeway. The North Murrieta Business Corridor Area is east of the I-215 freeway and north of Clinton Keith Road, which is just north of the Los Alamos area. Thus, there is the potential for the homes and businesses in those two areas to be subject to wildland fire hazards. The MFD currently requires development, as part of a project's conditions of approval, to install Class A roofing, noncombustible siding, and/or 100-foot fuel buffer zones, to protect communities from wildland/urban interface fires.

The proposed General Plan 2035 Safety Element Goal SAF-7 and the related policies specifically address wildland fires. In addition, Mitigation Measures FP-1 through FP-4 require the preparation of fuel modification plans and sufficient water supply during construction. Implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 goal and policies and the recommended mitigation measures would reduce impacts to a less than significant level.



Goals and Policies in the Proposed General Plan 2035:

SAFETY ELEMENT

Goal SAF-7 Reduced incidence of damage to life and property from wildland fires.

Policies

- SAF-7.1 Continue to require development in high fire hazard areas to use fire-resistant building materials and landscaping, and to meet fire chief specifications for fuel modification, access, and water facilities.
- SAF-7.2 Evaluate all new development to be located in or adjacent to wildland areas to assess its vulnerability to fire and its potential as a source of fire.
- SAF-7.3 Encourage the use of development features such as roads and irrigated/landscaped open space to buffer homes from wildland fire.
- SAF-7.4 Promote community education about preventing wildfire ignition, using fire-resistant building features, and creating defensible space around homes.
- SAF-7.5 Continue to implement a weed abatement program to reduce fire hazards on private properties.

Mitigation Measures:

- FP-1 The Murrieta Fire Department shall review future development projects to determine if a Fuel Modification Plan is required. If required, project applicants shall prepare the Fuel Modification Plan in accordance with Fire Department requirements prior to the issuance of a grading or building permit.
- FP-2 Brush clearance shall be conducted prior to initiation of construction activities in accordance with Murrieta Fire Department requirements.
- FP-3 Adequate access to all buildings on the project site shall be provided for emergency vehicles during the building construction process.
- FP-4 Adequate water availability shall be provided to service construction activities.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.



5.17.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

- **DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN 2035 AND CUMULATIVE DEVELOPMENT COULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE IMPACTS TO FIRE PROTECTION PERSONNEL, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES.**

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Development associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would result in additional demands on existing fire services and equipment. New developments associated with the implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would be required to comply with all applicable fire code and ordinance requirements for construction, access, water mains, fire flows, and hydrants. Individual projects would be reviewed by the MFD to determine the specific fire requirements applicable to the specific development and to ensure compliance with these requirements. Specifically, the proposed General Plan 2035 includes policies to enforce requirements that all development proposals be reviewed in order that they may be analyzed for safety implications and to provide an adequate level of fire equipment, peakload water supply, and personnel to protect the community. The MFD's 2005 Fire Protection Plan provides policy-oriented and long-range guidance regarding fire services to ensure services are adequately funded, staffed, and equipped to provide a timely, effective response to both minor and major public safety concerns. The City would need to consider impacts to fire services and facilities as part of the long-term planning process, and has done that with the proposed General Plan 2035, which serves as a long-term planning document and anticipates future growth. The City reviews budgets on an annual basis and will plan for the anticipated future growth associated fire demands. Funding for fire services and facilities would be paid in part by developer fees and general funds. This would ensure that new developments would not reduce the staffing, response times, or existing service levels within the City. Therefore, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would result in less than less than significant impacts to fire protection and emergency services. As such, implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would not result in cumulatively considerable fire protection impacts.

Goals and Policies in the Proposed General Plan 2035: Refer to the goals and policies referenced above in this Section 5.17.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures beyond the goals and policies identified in the proposed General Plan 2035 are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Not Applicable.



5.17.6 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Fire protection impacts associated with implementation of the proposed General Plan 2035 would be less than significant by adherence to and/or compliance with goals and policies in the proposed General Plan 2035 and recommended mitigation measures. No significant unavoidable fire protection impacts would occur as a result of buildout of the proposed General Plan 2035.

5.17.7 SOURCES CITED

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection website, <http://www.fire.ca.gov/about/about.php>, accessed December 4, 2009.

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