

## **APPENDIX F**

- **Printed Media Article regarding open houses**



## Carefree fire services: Upgrade to a Cadillac or stick with old faithful

BY ALLISON BROWN

The Town of Carefree will host five public open houses at various locations over the coming weeks to review the town's options for fire and emergency services and hear from residents about what they want to do.

"These workshops will educate attendees on the current level of service enjoyed by residents and the possible evolution to automatic aid," said Gary Neiss, Carefree town administrator. "Join us to learn what it means, what it costs and how the town will pay for fire and emergency services."

With the exception of the last meeting — scheduled for 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 17 via Zoom — all the open house events are in person and do not require any kind of registration. However, those who plan to attend are asked to view a video presentation outlining the options and costs of fire and emergency services so that everyone has a preliminary basis of understanding and can go into the meeting prepared for a more in-depth discussion. Neiss said that video can be found in the town's digital newsletter, on the Town of Carefree YouTube page or by visiting the link posted on a sign in the Post Office.

"What the town is trying to do is put factual information out in front of people, ask them to review it, to bring their questions, bring their comments and then council won't make the decision," said Mayor Les Peterson at a recent council meeting. "The council will record the decision of the residents, what you want to do with fire."

Currently, the Town of Carefree contracts with Rural Metro for fire and emergency services, as it has for the past 20 years, according to Neiss. In fact, Rural Metro has been taking care of Carefree since the 1960s, when residents paid an annual subscription fee of approximately \$750 for services. When the town entered a master contract with Rural Metro in the early 2000s, it also built its own fire station and purchased its own truck



Daisy Mountain Fire and Medical staff talked about their roles in emergency calls in July 2022 in Cave Creek at Abrazo Cave Creek Hospital. (Submitted)

and other equipment. Rural Metro supplied the staff.

This model has worked well, but a number of outside forces have caused town officials to consider other options. Neiss, along with Peterson and others have repeatedly said looking into other options had nothing to do with any dissatisfaction with Rural Metro services.

One of those outside forces was Cave Creek's decision to break its contract with Rural Metro and establish its own fire department. Cave Creek contracted with the Daisy Mountain Fire District for services, similar to Carefree's contract with Rural Metro. Cave Creek purchased a fire station, truck, equipment and other essential items, and Daisy Mountain provided the training and staff.

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— MAYOR LES PETERSON

None of that directly impacts Carefree, but the big change was that Cave Creek was then accepted into the regional automatic aid system. It was part of the mutual aid system, which is what Carefree is part of.

See CAREFREE FIRE SERVICES page 23

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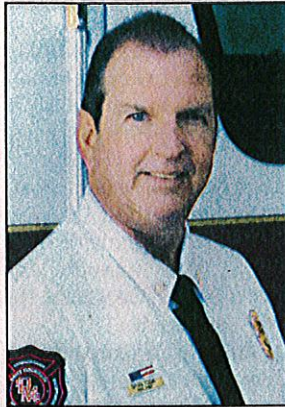
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**Carefree Fire and Emergency Services remaining open house schedule:**

- 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3: Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, 9205 E. Cave Creek Road.
- 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 10: Carefree Town Council Chambers, 33 E. St.
- 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 17: Zoom (registration required).

"With mutual aid, when a department needs assistance, the fire department calls a neighboring department. And it's up to the responding department to decide whether or not they will come to the aid of the calling district," said Peter Burns, a member of Carefree's Public Safety Advisory Committee, at a town council meeting.

"But under automatic aid, each emergency vehicle is equipped with a tracker, so dispatch knows where every piece of equipment in the Valley is. When a call comes in, they will dispatch the closest appropriate asset to that call, regardless of jurisdiction boundaries."

Automatic aid is the most efficient emergency response system, but to ensure that it stays running efficiently, there is a long, strict list of qualifications fire departments must meet in order to join. Carefree does not currently meet those qualifications, and to do so would require a significant financial investment.

The mutual aid versus automatic aid discussion was furthered when the Scottsdale Fire Department terminated its mutual aid contract with Rural Metro in Carefree in January. In fact, according to Rural Metro Chief Tim Soule, Phoenix, Mesa, Avondale and Scottsdale have all canceled their mutual aid agreements. However, Soule said that doesn't mean that a call for help is going to be ignored.

"Since those agreements have been canceled, at times we've needed mutual aid, we've requested it and we've received it," he explained. "The contract was basically around getting paid; it wasn't necessarily about providing mutual aid service."

Of course, there is no argument that mutual aid provides the same level of service that automatic aid does. The automatic aid system is an immediate and seamless process.

"The automatic aid system is a tremendous system and provides a tremendous amount of resources. It's a Cadillac, and if you can afford Cadillacs, then you definitely want to have that," Soule said. "I just want you to know that Rural Metro will certainly be supportive whatever direction the citizens of Carefree decide to take. There is no bad option out there. Staying with Rural Metro has advantages and disadvantages. Moving to an automatic aid fire entity has advantages and disadvantages."

Those options, along with their advantages and disadvantages, are exactly what will be discussed at the open houses. It will ultimately be up to the residents to determine if they want to pay for a Cadillac or not — if being part of automatic aid is worth paying more or if Rural Metro offers the best bang for their buck.

For more information about Carefree's fire service history, current options and the meetings, visit [Carefree.org](http://Carefree.org).



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**TECH4LIFE from page 22**

Woods and his team are heavily involved with several of the local area businesses and nonprofits. They not only volunteer to support several nonprofit's annual events and assist with their technology needs, but they also tour businesses through places like the Kiwanis Marketplace.

"I have learned that touring the actual facility and meeting the people involved will invoke a conversation within the community to support what others can do to increase awareness, volunteerism and donations," said Woods.

Tech 4 Life stayed open during the pandemic to support all the technical needs of area residents.

"It was an interesting adventure" said Woods. "We were able to help many folks stay in business and stay healthy. In the end, our community partnerships kept Tech 4 Life going. Tech 4 Life's other motto is 'Buy Local or Bye Bye Local.' Tech 4 Life would like to keep working towards impacting our

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