



2023 SPECIAL ELECTION FAQ: Fire & Emergency Medical Services in Carefree

BACKGROUND

Carefree uses Rural Metro Fire Department for fire and emergency medical services. Neighboring communities have recently decided to move away from a fire and emergency medical service model with Rural Metro. As a result of Rural Metro's shrinking service areas, Carefree has become more isolated from regional assistance during a time of need (see maps on page 2). Town officials have the fiduciary responsibility to inform the community of this risk.

On May 16, 2023 Carefree residents will have the opportunity to vote in a special election to determine the direction the Town will take in regard to fire and emergency medical services within the community. If voters approve this decision it will create a solvent and sustainable revenue stream to fund a transition to a more robust and dependable regional emergency response system called Automatic Aid.

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?

Resolution 2022-18 calls for a special election to occur in May 2023 to consider a primary property tax to enable the community to support the long-term financial commitment to become part of Automatic Aid. By state law such special election can only occur in May.

- Should voters elect to approve a property tax to fund this service, Resolution 2022 -19 is in place as a safeguard to restrict the funds collected with the primary property tax to fund the contract for Fire and Emergency Medical Services.
- If approved, the tax assessment will begin in July 2023 and will be due with the first Maricopa County collection in October 2023.
- Should voters elect not to approve a property tax to support an Automatic Aid contract, the Town of Carefree will continue its service contract with Rural Metro and inherit the risk of inadequate regional assistance during a time of need.

PROPOSED TAX LEVY

- The proposed primary tax levy is capped at \$2.0 million and will never exceed this amount without a public vote as outlined in the Town's ordinance.
- This levy does not cover the entire costs of funding the contract with an Automatic Aid partner. The Town will balance the remaining annual costs of its new fire contract with the Town's annual sales tax collection, to pay for the 25-year commitment.

HOMEOWNER IMPACT

- Property taxes are not assessed on the market value of a home but a discounted valuation called Limited Property Value.
- A primary tax level of \$2.0 million would translate for the average home in Carefree with a Limited Property Value (LPV) of \$630,000, to \$55.67 per month or \$668 per year.
- For comparison, prior to the Town assuming the master contract with Rural Metro 20 years ago, residents were independently paying an average of \$750 annually to Rural Metro. In today's dollar, that annual subscription would exceed \$1,000 annually.

CAREFREE SPECIAL ELECTION MUTUAL AID VS. AUTOMATIC AID: What are the differences?



MUTUAL AID

In a Mutual Aid model, fire departments may come to one another's aid in time of crisis. However, such request for assistance is not guaranteed. This request is made to a separate dispatch center and such request must be administratively approved by the respective fire department. This results in delays and therefore, not optimal during life safety events. The majority of emergency calls in Carefree are medical emergencies where minutes matter (see graphic on page 3). It is important to note that the City of Scottsdale recently cancelled its historical Mutual Aid Agreement with Rural Metro, further isolating the Carefree area.

PROS:

- Rural Metro firefighters know our community well
- Less expensive contract fees

CONS:

- Delay in response time if responders are attending to another call at the same time
- No back-up responders are immediately available in the event of a large incident- placing the responding firefighters at greater risk for fatigue and injury
- Calls for back-up support are at the discretion of the responding agency and may be denied if not a life-safety issue.
- Should back-up responders agree to assist, the community may be billed to pay for the additional resources provided.
- Rural Metro is a for-profit agency and may decide to leave the community due to their diminishing service contracts.



AUTOMATIC AID

In an Automatic Aid model, aid is seamlessly dispatched from the closest emergency equipment regardless of jurisdictional boundaries through a centralized dispatch system. Automatic Aid is a regional partnership, relied upon for daily operations. Neighboring communities work together to plan fire station locations, share specialized resources such as: hazardous material response, water and mountain rescue resources and wildland fire equipment.

PROS:

- One, streamlined dispatch system
- Provides the customer with the fastest response to their emergency
- Specialized fire and rescue teams are shared
- Coordinated training & procedures
- A minimum of four personnel with a minimum of two paramedics deployed to initiate basic or advanced life support activities as appropriate (AMFA, 2023)

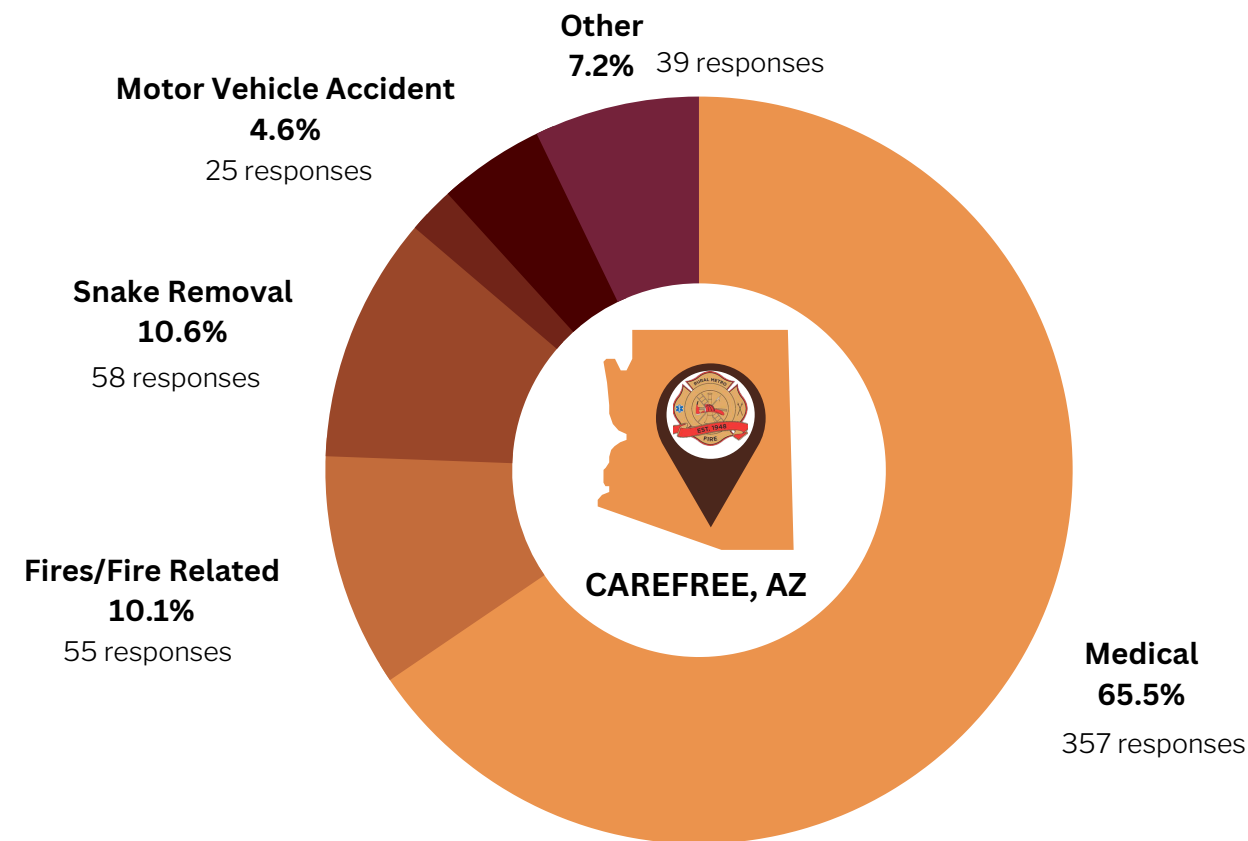
CONS:

- Increased contract fees
- Requires supplemental tax funding

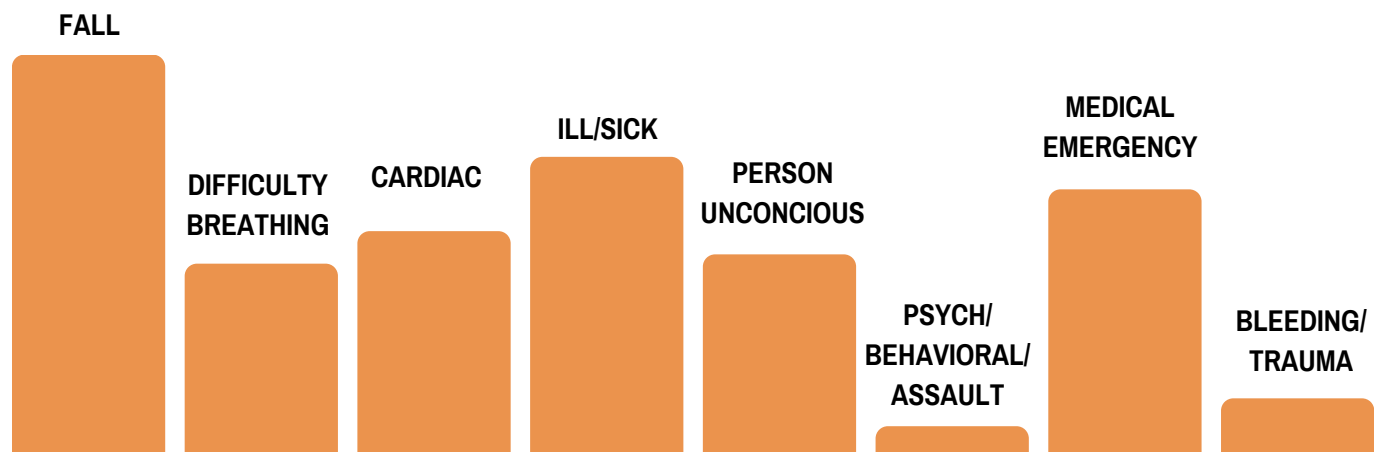
Source:
"Fire Suppression and Rescue Services." Arizona Fire & Medical Authority,
Arizona Fire & Medical Authority, <https://www.afma.az.gov/fire-rescue>.



2022 TOTAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSES
provided by Rural Metro in Carefree, AZ

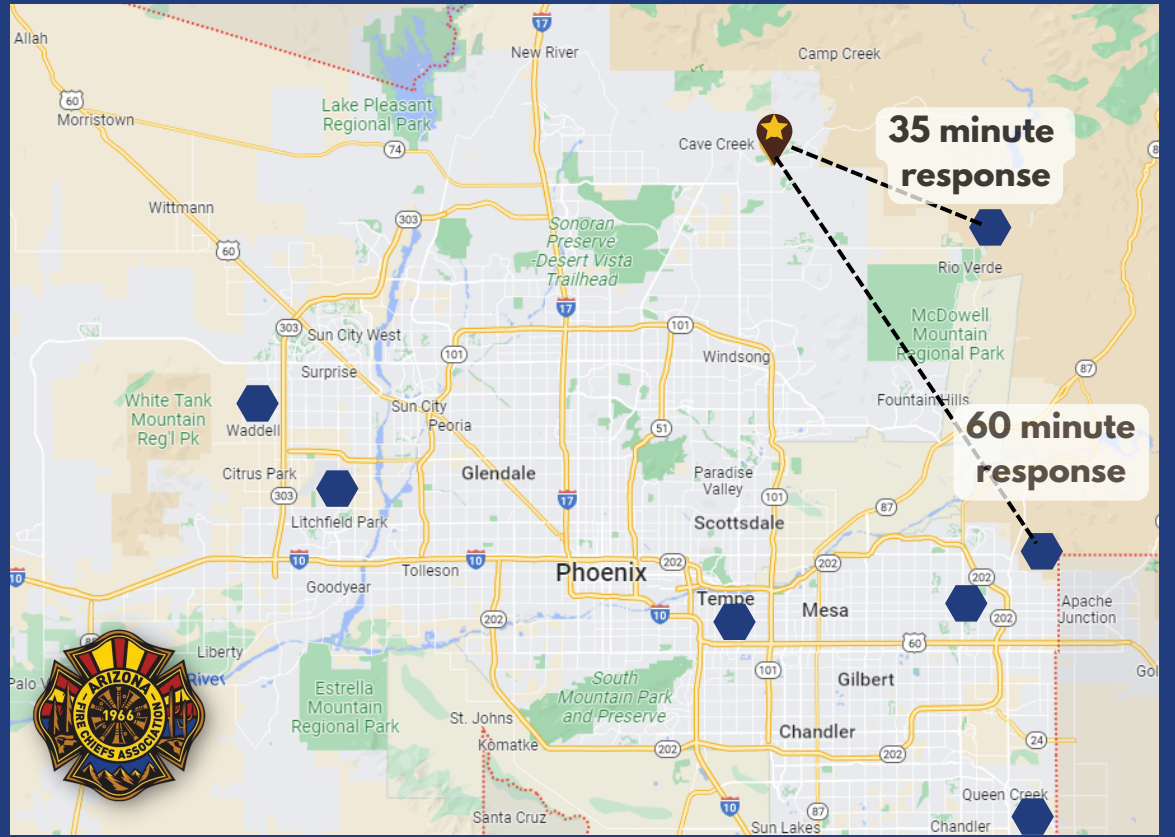


357 MEDICAL RESPONSES



Source: Carefree Fire Department 2021-2022 Annual Report

RURAL METRO
MUTUAL AID BACKUP LOCATIONS:



REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP
AUTOMATIC AID BACKUP LOCATIONS:

