



# Schell - Vista Fire Protection District

## District Fact Sheet

*The Schell - Vista Fire District Exists  
To Care For, Protect and Serve Our Communities*

### **Special District Origins**

The Schell - Vista Fire Department was started by local ranchers in 1942. In 1955, the Schell - Vista Fire Protection District (SVFPD or the District) was officially created as an independent Special District of the State of California.

The purpose of the District is to provide all-risk emergency and non-emergency services to the Schell - Vista area. The District is in the southeastern part of Sonoma County and is an unincorporated area covering approximately 100 square miles, with an estimated population of 4,500.

A five-person Board of Directors is elected by the citizens for a four-year term. The District legal authority and responsibilities are contained in the State of California Health and Safety Code under the "Fire Protection District Law of 1987."

### **Budgeting**

The District annual budget, adopted prior to July 1, provides the overall control of its revenues and expenses, including appropriations (budgeted expenses) on a line-item basis and the means of financing them (budgeted revenues). The District accounting system produces monthly reports on expense activity that assists the Board of Directors and the Fire Chief to monitor activities and programs.

### **Internal Controls**

As a recipient of federal, state, and county financial assistance, the District is responsible for ensuring that an adequate control structure is in place to comply with applicable laws and regulations related to those programs. This internal control structure is subject to periodic evaluation by the Board, Fire Chief and auditors.

In developing and evaluating the District accounting system, consideration is given to the adequacy of internal accounting control. It is designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the safeguarding of assets against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, the accuracy and reliability of accounting data, and the adherence to prescribed managerial practices.

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Schell-Vista Fire Protection District  
22950 Broadway, Sonoma, CA 94576  
(707) 938-2633



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### Services Provided

The District currently employs three full-time captains and three full-time engineers who are assigned to a 56-hour work week on a 3 platoon, 2 x 4 schedule. The valuable and much needed volunteer force is comprised of chief officers, four resident firefighters and 30 volunteer firefighters.

Annually the District responds to 800 calls for service annually from two strategically located stations (the main station is staffed full-time).

The District covers the unincorporated hills to the north and east of the City of Sonoma, the area south of Sonoma to Highway 37. The District has mutual and auto aid agreements with our neighboring counties and cities including:

- City of Sonoma, Napa County, City of Napa, Solano County, City of Vallejo and the Novato Fire District.

Within the boundaries of the District are:

- Highways 12, 116, 121 and 37 the Sonoma Marin Northern Pacific Railroad Authority
- Wildland areas, vineyards, wineries, dairies
- Single and multi-family residential units, commercial and light industrial occupancies, assisted living facilities
- Equestrian areas, open space areas, hiking trails and Sonoma Raceway.

The District is seated in the heart of the Wine Country, which is one the most visited areas in Northern California. With such diversity, it is essential the District be equipped with state-of-the-art apparatus and be appropriately staffed to handle all risk emergencies. The District participates in the California Master Mutual System as well as local automatic and mutual aid agreements.



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The District philosophy regarding fire, medical, or hazardous material emergencies has been one of a strong, rapid deployment of appropriate resources to mitigate any emergency, as recognized by a Class 4-6 Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating.

The District goal is to maintain overall total response time of 8 minutes or less, 90% of the time for all dispatched emergencies. Total response time is defined as the total time beginning when a 9-1-1 emergency call is answered to the time emergency responders arrive at the scene of an emergency. Under daily normal conditions, there are a full-time captain, a full-time engineer with up to three volunteer firefighters on duty 24 hours a day. When needed the District's 45 volunteer firefighters are called on to assist with larger incidents.

### **Apparatus**

The District fleet consists of one Medium Rescue, two Type One Engines, three Type Three Engines, two Water Tenders, one trailered Cascade System and several Utility Vehicles.

These vehicles are fully equipped to respond as needed to mitigate any emergency including medical, fire, rescue, hazardous material spill, or vehicle accidents. Paramedic service is provided by the Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority.

The District participates in a Joint Powers Agreement in the Sonoma County Hazardous Materials Response Team. Through the Homeland Security Grant process, the Team acquired a state-of-the-art emergency response vehicle for its Type II Hazardous Materials Team. The crew and vehicle aid with a wide variety of calls, such as spills, abandoned chemicals, carbon monoxide emissions, natural gas leaks, household chemical issues, structure fires, pipeline ruptures, vehicle accidents involving tankers and industrial accidents. The apparatus is stocked with modern hazardous materials detection equipment, advanced life support supplies, and has a computer link to a hazardous material information line.



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The District contracts with the Sonoma County Building Department for fire prevention, which includes vegetation management, and commercial and new construction inspections.

### **Executive Staff**

The Fire Chief oversees the general operations of the District in accordance with the policy direction prescribed by the Board of Directors. The Fire Chief is supported by his staff, consisting of an Assistant Fire Chief of Operations, two Battalion Chiefs and two Captains are part of the dedicated volunteer team. There are two members of the team that are responsible for financial functions of the District, including financial statement reporting, maintaining the general ledger, cash management, debt management, accounting and budgeting, accounts receivables/payables, and payroll.

### **Economic Outlook**

The Schell - Vista Fire Protection District financial position has steadily improved since being negatively impacted by the downturn of the global economy in 2010. There are positive signs of sustained economic recovery. Real estate valuations have been rising over the past number of years. The local unemployment rate has decreased over the last nine years as well. Financial markets have rebounded from their lows, but continue to be volatile due to geo-political events.

The District believes that it can still maintain a high level of service to our community but will review all areas where it can reduce cost and or increase revenues. The District has appropriate reserves to ensure equipment and apparatus replacement, facility infrastructure support. In November of 2018, the citizens of the District overwhelmingly approved a fire assessment throughout the District. The tax measure will be reviewed annually by staff and the Board of Directors. The amount of the assessment can be up to \$200 per single family dwelling and up to 14 cents per square foot of commercial properties. This new tax has placed the District in a positive position for decades to come. This tax can be adjusted annually according to the Bay Area CPI by the Board of Directors.