

Colorado River Fire Rescue Profile

Planning Team

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Location and Geography

While they are formally called Colorado River Fire Protection District by state agencies, the District is commonly known as Colorado River Fire Rescue and will be addressed as such for the rest of this report. Colorado River Fire Rescue was established as a fire authority in 2012 as a joint effort between Burning Mountains Fire Protection District and Rifle Protection District. The fire districts merged in 2012. The Colorado River Fire Rescue covers a territory of approximately 851 square miles. The coverage area includes public land (Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service, Garfield County, etc.) as well as private land. Three urban areas lay within the District's boundaries: the city of Rifle, the Town of Silt, and the City of New Castle.

The District maintains six facilities:

- Station #41 at 1850 Railroad Avenue, Rifle Co 81650
- Station #42 at 220 County Rd. 352A, Rifle Co 81650
- Station #43 at 419 Last Chance Dr., Rifle Co 81650
- Station #61 at 611 Main Street, Silt Co 81652
- Station #63 at 5255 County Rd. 335, New Castle Co 81647
- Station #64 at 775 Castle Valley Blvd, New Castle Co 81647

The stations listed above are also identified as the district's critical facilities.

Rifle:

- Rifle is a Home Rule Municipality located in Garfield County. The land area covers about 5.7 square miles.
- Rifle's population grew from 9,451 people in 2015 to 9,650 in 2019, an increase of more than 279 people at an average annual growth rate of 0.5 percent.
- The City of Rifle serves as the gateway to Northwest Colorado. Rifle is served by Interstate 70 (east/west) and Highway 13 (north/south). Highway 13 is one of the most heavily used hazardous material shipping routes in the State of Colorado.

Silt:

- The Town of Silt is a Home Rule Municipality located in Garfield County. The land area covers 2.8 square miles.
- Silt's population grew from about 2,976 in 2015 to 3,115 in 2019, an increase of 139 people at an average annual growth rate of 1.2 percent.
- Residential development within the Silt Mesa area has increased significantly over the last 20 years, and presents an interface with the more urbanized and the more rural area of that part of the County.
- The Union Pacific Rail line and Interstate 70 both bisect the town and are critical transportation arteries for the town and region.

New Castle

- New Castle lies along the Fire District’s eastern boundary and encompasses 2.53 square miles.
- New Castle’s population grew from about 4,569 in 2015 to 4,875 in 2019, an increase of 309 people at an average annual growth rate of 1.6 percent.
- Since 1990, the vast majority of the new single-family dwelling units were located in two major subdivisions, Castle Valley Ranch Planning Unit Development (PUD) and Lakota Canyon Ranch PUD. Both subdivisions lie north of the original New Castle town site and are separated from the original town site by Mt. Medaris.
- New Castle can be accessed using 5 different routes and these transportation routes are key for daily commerce and public safety during evacuations.

Transportation

The District is bisected by I-70, a major transportation route that serves the entire region and is critical to ongoing functioning of the economy and Highway 13 which runs northward towards Meeker in Rio Blanco County.

Development Trends

The Colorado River Fire Rescue District was formed in 2012 when Burning Mountain FPD and Rifle RFP merged. All equipment, personnel, and resources available to each district was then available to CRFR. All communities within the district, Silt, Rifle, and New Castle, have experienced population growth over the past decade. The majority of this development has occurred in the fringes of each community or areas adjacent to the WUI.

The fire district is looking to make sure all areas in the county are covered by a fire protection district and continues to strive to provide necessary services to properties and areas not currently protected. There is an automatic mutual aid agreement in place for Glenwood Springs FPD to the east of the district and with Grand Valley FPD to the west. As development and growth continues to occur in the district, CRFR will look to expand local staff and resources capabilities.

Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

Each participating jurisdiction identified critical facilities vital for disaster response, providing shelter to the public, and essential for returning the jurisdiction’s functions to normal during and after a disaster. Critical facilities were identified during the original planning process and updated by the local planning team as a part of this plan update. The following table and figure provide a summary of the critical facilities for Colorado River Fire Rescue and whether they are in known hazard areas.

Table CRFR.1: Colorado River Fire Rescue Critical Facilities

Number	Name	Generator (Y/N)	Floodplain	Dam Inundation	Wildfire Hazards	Geologic Hazards
1	Station 41	Y	No	Yes	Low	Soils
2	Station 42	N	No	No	Low	Soils
3	Station 43	Y	No	No	Low	Soils
4	Station 61	N	No	Yes	Moderate	Soils
5	Station 63	N	No	No	Moderate	Landslide
6	Station 64	Y	No	No	Moderate	None
7	Communication Tower (at Rifle Gap Reservoir)	N	Yes	Yes	Low	None

Figure CRFR.1: Colorado River Fire Rescue Critical Facilities



Hazard Prioritization

The Garfield County Hazard Mitigation Plan evaluates a range of natural and man-made hazards which pose a risk to the county and communities. However, during the planning process, the local planning team identified specific hazards of top concern for Colorado River Fire District which required a more nuanced and in-depth discussion of local events, vulnerabilities, and mitigation actions the community wishes to pursue. The following section expands on the hazards of top concern identified by CRFR's local planning team, including:

- Wildfire
- Flood
- Landslide, Mud/Debris Flow, and Rockfall
- Severe Wind
- Severe Winter Weather
- Drought
- Hazardous Materials

For a review and analysis of other natural hazards, please see the county-wide summary in *Section Four: Risk Assessment*.

Wildfire

The primary concern of the CRFR is wildfire. There are numerous homes or properties located within the wildland urban interface in each of the communities the district serves (Rifle, Silt, and New Castle). These properties have an increased risk of damages due to wildfire and may require rescues with the assistance of the district during severe events. There are also several homes located in remote areas of the district which are a concern due to a lack of adequate transportation corridors. Local concerns focus on the difficulty of reaching these homes in time to save them from fire. Specifically, the district identified Odien Drive as a new WUI area of concern due to recent development. The district regularly works with local homeowners to install defensible space. Recent mitigation work has occurred near Elk Creek Road north of New Castle and new fuel breaks have been installed along B Avenue and 7th Street in New Castle. However, additional work is still needed to reduce hazardous fuel loads. The list below includes areas of concern and areas the district is working on to either reduce fuel loads or install fire breaks as well as their priority level.

- Fuelbreak Lakota areas, east side of Faas Ranch Road (high)
- Fuelbreak at tow slope east of schools and water tank on USFS land near Castle Valley Ranch Road (high)
- Fuelbreaks Hidden Valley and Elk Run area (high)
- Fuelbreak and tree thinning Elk Creek Campground (high)
- Tree thinning on Elk Creek Road near 1700 area (high)
- Tree thinning and fuelbreaks near 3724-3768 on Harvey Gap Road (high)
- Firewise developing for subdivision off of Harvey Gap Road (moderate)
- Tree thinning along Odien Drive (high)
- Tree thinning and fuelbreaks in Ram Lane area (moderate)
- Defensible space around water tanks north of Silt (moderate)
- Fuelbreaks in Mineota estates area (high)
- Fuelbreaks along Divide Creek Road (high)
- Fuelbreaks along Middle Elk Creek Road (high)
- Fuelbreak for Porcupine Creek Subdivision (high)
- Fuelbreak for Beaver Creek Manor (high)

- Fuelbreak for Red Apple area (low)
- Fuelbreak for Rifle Village South (moderate)
- Fuel management Grass Mesa area (high)
- Fuelbreak for Cedar Springs (high)
- Fuelbreak for Teepee Bible Camp (moderate)
- Fuel reduction along Rifle Creek in Rifle (moderate)
- Fuelbreaks around multiple subdivision north, west, and east of Rifle (moderate)
- Fuel treatments around Rifle Estates and Upper Rifle Creek drainage (high)
- Fuelbreak for Jewell Lane (high)
- Fuelbreak for C Avenue (low)
- Fuelbreak for Rollie Gordon Park (high)
- Fuel reduction at Morning Star Drive (med-high)
- K&K Lumberyard and Harness Lane (low/med area of concern)
- Fuel reduction at Morrow Drive (high)
- Areas of concern around Apple Tree Park (low)
- Fuelbreaks along Moki Road (moderate)
- Fuel reduction at Puma Paw Rd (low)
- Fuel reduction at Stony Ridge Rd (moderate)
- Fuelbreaks at Scutter Lane (moderate)
- Areas of concern around 17764 Co Rd 252 (low)
- Defensible space around homes and outbuildings (high)
- Mowing vegetation along roads (moderate)

The district would like to see a WUI code integrated into the local building codes which require fire resistant building materials. As of fall 2021 there is a state sub-committee currently discussing a WUI code for Colorado. While a WUI building code is not currently required, CRFR highly emphasizes the use of the code for all new development. The district also noted a vulnerability regarding mutual aid resources when major transportation corridors and the Glenwood Canyon pass is closed during severe events.

Flood

Local concerns relate to flood waters disrupting transportation routes and rescuing rafters and boaters on high waters. The local planning team indicated that areas around both Silt and Rifle are prone to flash flooding. The convergence of Rifle Creek and Government Creek was identified as a location prone to high water following heavy rainfall.

An additional concern regarding flooding in the district is the increased prevalence of burn scars throughout the county. Past major fires in Glenwood Canyon have left behind significant burn scars with dead vegetation. These areas are more prone to have unstable soils, landslides, debris flows, mudflows, and flash flooding. Difficulty receiving mutual aid or rescue resources is a concern when the canyon is closed. Past flooding events in the county have closed access to Eagle and Gypsum areas due to mudslides which have blocked the highways.

The Colorado River Fire Protection District is not an eligible participant for the National Flood Insurance Program and thus does not participate.

Landslide, Mud/Debris Flow, Rockfall

Debris flows regularly occur near Newcastle and Silt after large rain events (approximately six times in ten years according to the local planning team). Past events have closed the interstate

and blocked access to Eagle and Gypsum. Local concerns focus on the potential to cut off transportation routes, block rescue attempts, and required resources to clear debris. The local planning team indicated that landslides result in a roadway closure every couple of years.

Severe Winds

Past severe wind events have led to roofs flying off homes, trampolines blowing away, and trees falling on power lines. The damage to power lines can lead to an increased fire risk as well as power outages.

Severe Winter Weather

The main concern is the impact on transportation routes and the district's ability to respond to emergencies. The local planning team noted recent winters have been warmer than average; however, this has produced an increased risk of ice on roads and utilities due to the thawing and freezing cycle.

Hazardous Materials

The presence of the oil and gas industry in the CRFR district increases the risk of hazardous materials spills. Areas of principal concern are Highway 13, Beaver Creek, and the gas lines south of the Colorado River. However, the local planning team noted the total number of exploratory drill rigs in the district have declined in recent years. There is currently only one rig actively drilling for gas. This, in turn, has impacted the local economy and available funding for the district.

There is not a HAZMAT team located in the district. The nearest full team is located either in Grand Junction or on the front range. CRFR and other local FPDs have trained technicians and some equipment; however it is not adequate for a large scale event and additional staffing would be required to maintain all safety precautions. Maintaining HAZMAT equipment, staffing, and training is currently cost-prohibitive to the district and other districts in the county.

Drought

Drought is a concern for the district not only because the increased risk of wildfire, but also because of water quantity concerns. Rural areas of the district were identified as having insufficient water supplies and thus are vulnerable during drought periods. The district typically brings water with them when responding to fire calls. As of fall 2021 due to drought conditions across the State of Colorado the district has lost some available water resources previously used to combat fire events. Currently the district has agreements with and has been pulling water from municipal resources to fill rigs when responding to fire calls.

Other Concerns

Another concern of the district is the reliance on the oil and gas industry. The local planning team indicated that nearly 90 percent of the budget is from the oil and gas industry. When the oil and gas industry fluctuates, there is a significant impact on the district's budget. However, as of fall 2021, a new mill levy was passed in the district to help supplement funding. Voters approved a phased-in levy to assist the fire department in covering expenses. This change has reduced reliance on the fluctuating oil and gas industry and instead places emphasis on the local residents the fire protection district actually serves.

Lastly, evacuation planning is an ongoing concern for the local communities. Due to the fluctuating circumstances around significant fire events or other hazard types, no formal evacuation map has been developed in the county. A local subcommittee in New Castle is currently working to address evacuation concerns in town.

Capability Assessment

Due to the unique structure of fire protection districts, the typical capability assessment table was not used. The following table summarizes the district's overall capabilities. The Colorado River Fire Rescue will continue to utilize existing relationships with local, county, state, and federal agencies to aid in the implementation of mitigation projects.

Table CRFR.2: Capability Assessment

Overall Capability	2017 Plan	2022 Plan
Does the jurisdiction have the financial resources needed to implement mitigation projects?	Limited	Moderate (new mill levy passed Nov. 2021)
Does the jurisdiction have the staff/expertise to implement projects?	High	High
Does the jurisdiction have the community support to implement projects?	High	Moderate
Does the jurisdiction have the time to devote to hazard mitigation?	Moderate	Moderate

Plan Integration

Plans listed in below were reviewed by the local planning team to identify opportunities to integrate the HMP with current planning mechanisms. These documents were also used by the local planning team to assist in identifying risks, vulnerabilities, and potential mitigation actions. The documents directly contributed to the hazard prioritization and mitigation action items sections of this district profile. When these plans and other relevant district planning mechanisms are updated, the local planning team will review the HMP for opportunities to incorporate the goals, risk and vulnerability data, and mitigation actions into the plan update as appropriate.

Colorado River Fire Rescue participated in the 2021 Garfield County CWPP update. This plan identified areas within the district with an increased risk of wildfire and identifies strategies to mitigate wildfire impacts. Risk data and mitigation actions in the CWPP were integrated into the HMP. The district will continue to participate in future updates to this plan. Additionally, CRFR noted they would like to develop a district specific CWPP for a more nuanced view of needed mitigation work in the district.

Mitigation Action Items

Short and long-term action items identified through the planning process are an important part of the mitigation plan. Action items are detailed recommendations for activities that local departments, citizens and others could engage in to reduce risk. Although not all the actions below fit the definition of mitigation, they add to the overall resilience of the community and are thus included within the hazard mitigation plan.

New and Ongoing Actions:

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
<p>Community Wildfire Protection Plan: Participate in the ongoing development of an updated Community Wildfire Protection plan to ensure that future updates to the CWPP and the Garfield County Natural Hazard mitigation plan are coordinated to reflect the best available data and comprehensive set of risk reduction actions.</p>	Wildfire	1,2,3,4,5	Unknown	Fire Districts' Budget, Garfield County General Fund, Title III Fund	2-5 year	High	Operations Division Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. CRFR participates in the Garfield County CWPP last updated in 2021. The district would like to develop a CRFR-specific CWPP.
<p>Implement CWPP Projects Implement fuel management projects in vulnerable areas and projects identified in the Garfield County CWPP.</p>	Wildfire	1,5	Varies by project	Fire District's Budget	Ongoing	High	Fire Chief	This is a new specific mitigation action which includes the 2017 action "Fuel Management".. The fire district implements fuel management projects as funds or resources are available. See the Garfield County CWPP for a list of specific fuel management projects identified for the district.

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
<p>Develop Resource List for Predicting Damaging Events: Develop a resource list for predicting damaging events subsequent to a disaster</p>	All Hazards	1,2	Unknown	Fire District's Budget	2-5 years	High	Prevention Division Chief, Operations Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. The CRFR is in the process of identifying all resources in the district on GIS. There are currently several standalone maps with relevant information which should be combined for easier use.
<p>Firewise: Develop Firewise (Ready, Set, Go!) program for vulnerable communities</p>	Wildfire	1,5	Staff Time	Fire District's Budget	5+ years	High	Prevention Division Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. The CRFR currently works with interested communities to help them meet the requirements of the Firewise program. The Cedars subdivision and Elk Run subdivision in New Castle have recently joined the Firewise program. Elk Creek subdivision is currently evaluating the process to join.
<p>Rural Water Supply Plan: Develop a rural water supply system and/or plan</p>	All Hazards	3,5	\$25,000	Fire District's Budget	5+ years	Low	Fire Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. Not yet started. Additional resources are needed due to drought conditions in the state.

Section Seven: Colorado River Fire District Profile

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
Conduct Hazmat Training Conduct hazmat training and exercises to build relationships among (private/public) members of the response community	Hazardous Materials	1,5	\$10,000, Staff Time	Fire District's Budget	1-2 years	Medium	Fire Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. This action has not yet been started.
Develop Regional Response Plan: Develop regional response plan for pipeline releases. This would include mapping vulnerable areas and critical management sites.	Hazardous Materials	1,2,3,4,5	\$30,000	Fire District's Budget, Garfield County General Fund	1-2 years	High	Fire Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. This action has not yet been started.
Public Education and Risk Communication: Develop and implement outreach and education efforts for a range of natural hazard types which impact the county including wildfire, landslides, evacuation procedures, etc. Purchase necessary resources as needed for programs.	All Hazards	1,3,5	\$15,000, Staff Time	Fire Districts' Budget	5+ years	High	Prevention Division Chief	This is a continued mitigation action combining two actions from the 2017 plan – "Risk Communication" and "Education and Outreach". Fire District utilizes several public education strategies including an annual meeting, publications, etc. The Rifle Rendezvous & County Fair were identified as potential engagement locations. A sign board has been purchased to aid in public notification.
Purchase Necessary Equipment: Purchase equipment to aid in fuel loads projects.	Wildfire	1,5	\$10,000	Fire District's Budget	2-4 years	Medium	Fire Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. A small chipper was identified as needed.

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
Improve Communication Capabilities: Improve communication capabilities & radio interoperability.	All Hazards	1,5	\$250,000	Garfield County General Fund, DOLA	5+ years	Medium	Fire Chief	This is a continued mitigation action. A new tower is planned to be constructed at Rifle Gap Reservoir. Additional communication towers are needed in the southern portion of the district.