

# Grand Valley Fire Protection District Profile

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## Planning Team

Name	Title
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## Location & Geography

The Grand Valley Fire Protection District is 320 square miles in size and is a mix of private and federal lands. The Grand Valley FPD owns 3 fire stations:

- Station #1, Battlement Mesa Fire Station is where the District administration offices and operations staff are located.
- Station #2, Parachute Fire Station is where a full complement of equipment is staged to provide immediate coverage for the Town of Parachute. A crew of 2-3 staff is located at this station.
- Station #3, Rulison Fire Station is located on the eastern portion of the District. It was built at a time when there were several volunteers living in this area. Now it is used to store the District's reserve equipment and provide immediately ready equipment in the Rulison area, which can be accessed by either GVFPD or Colorado River Fire Rescue personnel.

The stations listed above are also identified as the District's critical facilities. The District also leases a 5-acre piece of property located along County Road 215, on the north end of Parachute that it will be developing as a training center (Non-Critical at this time).

## 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.

## Development Trends

The most recent oil shale boom and bust was during the boom of the late 70's and the Exxon bust of 1982 and the subsequent Unocal shutdown of 1988-89. Natural gas development came back to the area shortly after the oil shale pullout. Each time there is a boom; there is an increase in population, construction, and other activities and conversely a decrease during periods of bust. Since 2017 the district has been able to pass a small levy and small increases in the general budget for the district; however, there is an overall declining trend in assessment valuations. This decline is due to the natural oil and gas storage capacities becoming maxed out and the continuing decline in natural gas prices.

The local planning team states that rental units and homes in the area fill quickly and there is a consistent wait list for properties. Any available homes on the market at a reasonable price are quickly purchased. There are several new developments planned in the coming years to add approximately 200 homes. However, many of these homes are anticipated to cost approximately \$400,000 and will be more accessible to affluent residents moving away from large cities in the state.

The District experienced a large rise in retirement aged persons. The makeup of the community was largely bedroom community working families and retirees. During the last boom period, area rent went up and large numbers of retirees left the District. When rents fell back down to previous rates, these members of the community did not return. Now the District is predominantly a mix of old time residents, up-valley blue-collar workers and oil & gas workers.

After the Exxon oil shale bust, Battlement Mesa saw a boom in housing starts. After the Exxon bust, the man camp was removed and the sites were converted to modular home sites for sale. Some of the initial increase was due to the Unocal plant start up and employees moving into the area to be closer to the jobsite. Another group of persons moving to the area were the retirees. Battlement Creek Village, Mesa Ridge, Stone Ridge, Canyon View and the Fairways were all developed to accommodate this additional growth. Parachute benefited from an increase in housing starts as well. The age of area began to shift to an older population. It remained such until the latest natural gas boom, at which time the retirees began to start leaving and the population started shifting back to a younger family aged group.

### Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

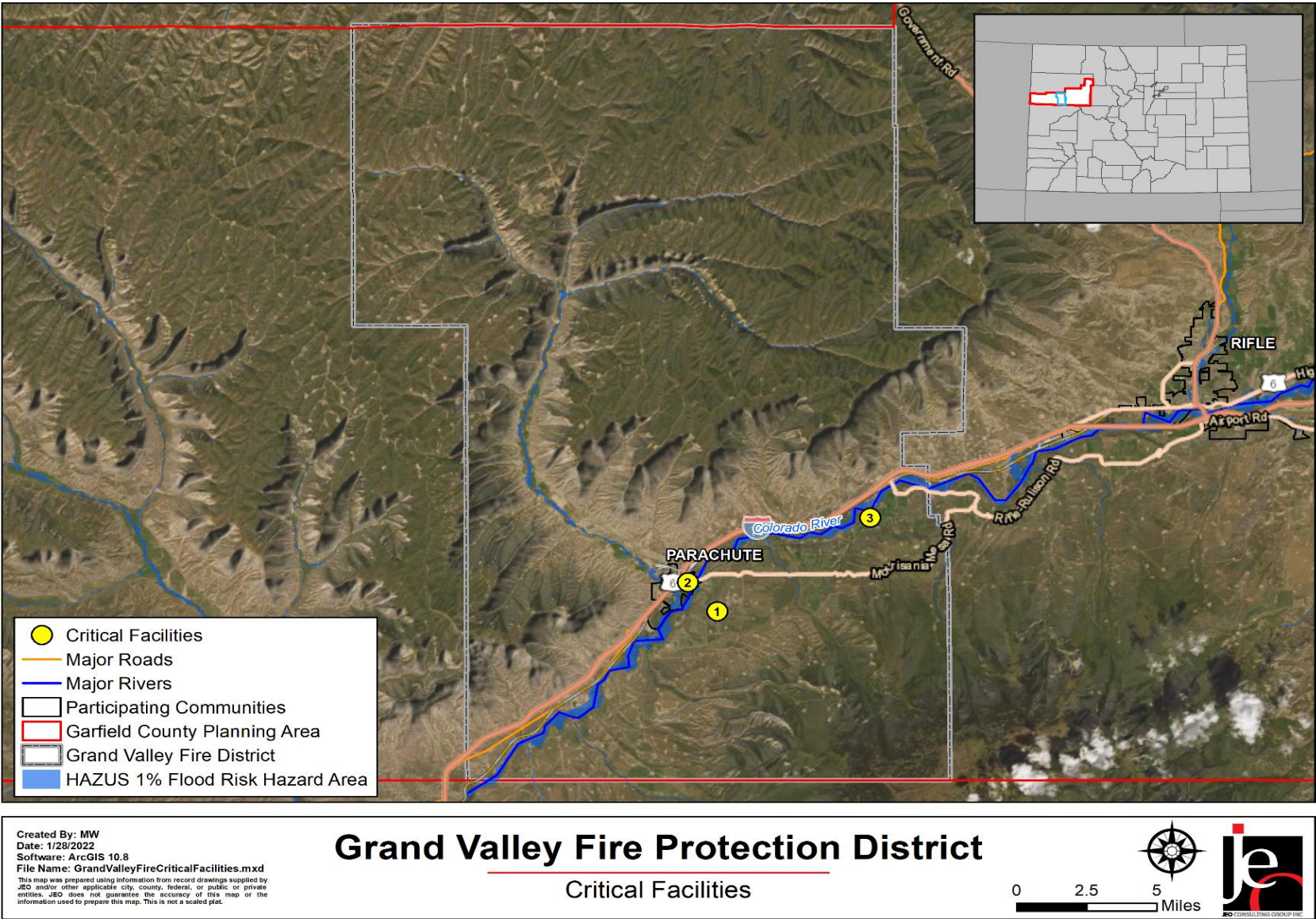
Each participating jurisdiction identified critical facilities vital for disaster response, providing shelter to the public, and essential for returning the jurisdiction’s functions to normal during and after a disaster. Critical facilities were identified during the original planning process and updated 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 Grand Valley Fire Protection District and whether they are in known hazard areas.

**Table GVFPD.1: Critical Facilities**

Number	Name	Generator (Y/N)	Floodplain	Dam Inundation	Wildfire Hazards	Geologic Hazards
1	Station 1	Y	No	No	Low	None
2	Station 2	N	No	Yes	Low	Soils
3	Station 3	N	No	No	Low	None

Although not listed in the table above, critical infrastructure may also include power substations, cell towers, alert sirens, or key transportation corridors in the district. While these assets are typically owned and maintained by other agencies, they are key resources for emergency response and mitigation strategies to reduce natural hazard risk.

Figure GVFPD.1: Critical Facilities



## **Grand Valley FPD 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 Grand Valley FPD 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 the Grand Valley FPD local planning team, including:

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

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

### **Wildfire**

The Grand Valley Fire Protection District, as well as the rest of Garfield County, is prone to several wildfires per year. The local planning team indicated that most wildfires within the district are naturally caused. However, some fires are caused by controlled burns, trailer safety chains, and steel belts in tires. The district utilizes several methods to implement wildfire mitigation each year. Along with education and outreach, the district specifically targets certain areas within the district to implement mitigation projects each year. Specific concerns exist for any large scale event which taxes the majority of the districts resources. The district has a seasonal wildfire response team which primarily responds to initial attack or containment activities during the wildfire season. However, during periods without major fire outbreaks the team focuses on wildfire mitigation actions in communities or around residential homes outside of community boundaries. The local planning team noted the lack of available staff as a concern in order to accomplish these mitigation activities adequately across the district. In order to help address this staffing shortage, the district is implementing a wildland fire certification program at the local high schools to train members prior to graduation.

### **Mitigation Success:**

The District has budgeted funds to be used toward mitigation and community awareness since the Monument Gulch fire of 1999. The District has partnered in the past with the Division of Wildlife, Soil Conservation and Battlement Mesa Company on both pre-fire and post-fire mitigation activities. The District has developed a “How to be Firewise in Western Colorado” video, using local talent and a grant from the Colorado State Forest Service. The District has partnered with the Town of Parachute to conduct fire mitigation and training with its new members around the Town’s water supply cistern.

There is a state sub-committee which is currently discussing developing and implementing a WUI code for zoning ordinances and building codes. However, this action is currently only in the preliminary stages.

### **Flood**

Flooding is a concern due to the Colorado River and Parachute Creek. Currently there are no DFIRMs available for the district as Garfield County is currently in a remapping effort with the



state and FEMA. The District would like to work with the County and other partners to address flood risk to the following non-District-owned infrastructure that is critical to the District operations:

- The increased potential for bridge damage to the Parachute/Battlement Mesa Bridge that was of concern during high-water flows.
- Town of Parachute water treatment facility
- Battlement Mesa water treatment facility.

The Grand Valley Fire District is not an eligible participant for the National Flood Insurance Program and thus does not participate. As the primary impacted infrastructure in the district are transportation routes and community properties, the district must rely on or work with other agencies to implement flood risk reduction activities. At this time there are no specific flood mitigation activities planned.

### ***Landslides, Mud/Debris Flow, Rockfall***

The area between Rifle and Parachute was identified as prone to landslides. Specific concerns include disturbed soil as a part of oil/gas development or wildfire, water quality concerns in landslide falls into river, and localized flooding when landslides fill ditches. The district is also concerned with lack of access through key transportation corridors during landslide events, such as in Glenwood Canyon or along Interstate-70.

### ***Severe Winter Weather***

The biggest concern regarding winter storms is the impact on transportation routes and the ability of the district to perform rescues. Past major winter storms have stranded motorists, tourists, and residents in remote areas or in Parachute. These stranded motorists have exceeded local hotel capacity.

One area of specific concern is the bridge across the Colorado River on County Road 300 between Parachute and Battlement Mesa. Much of the District's population commutes to other communities for employment, and a large percentage of them cross the bridge. Icy conditions from winter storms can cause an increase in accidents on the bridge which if closed, will cause an eight mile detour to either the Una bridge crossing or the Rulison bridge crossing.

### ***Hazardous Materials***

The main concern regarding hazardous materials is the proximity to I-70, railroad, and oil/gas industry. The local planning team indicated there are facilities where chlorine is stored and used located at the Battlement Mesa water plant within the district. The most common materials released are fuels caused by traffic accidents. For oil/gas industry related spills, the fire district provides immediate response and containment, then the oil/gas companies manage response and clean up.

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. Grand Valley has 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.

### ***Soils***

According to the local planning team, Parachute is built on alkaline soils that are prone to expansion. This leads to significant investments in property and infrastructure repairs each year. There is also an additional cost for the maintenance and repair for emergency response vehicles

which are either traveling on or assisting calls to areas effected by expanding or contracting soils. Specifically, the tires and suspension systems on rigs can be damaged or worn down by traveling on poor transportation roads.

**Additional Concerns**

One concern of the district is the reliance on the oil and gas industry. The local planning team indicated that 84 percent of the district General Property Tax funding comes from the oil and gas industry. When the oil and gas industry fluctuates, it has a large impact on the district’s budget. At the time of this plan writing, the district experienced a 48 percent cut to the annual budget due to the economics of this industry. Because the district owns all its resources (has no debt), the budget fluctuations have the largest impact on staffing. This affects not only the response to hazardous events but the implementation of mitigation actions as well.

Another source of concern is the lack of access points across the Colorado River. Evacuations would be a challenge with three bridges over sixteen miles; especially if one of those routes was blocked and/or damaged. The district has identified several evacuation corridors if needed during severe events. However if multiple roads are blocked during severe storms, especially winter storms, the primary transportation corridors are the priority rather than other potential avenues.

Lastly, concerns exist for existing communication equipment and systems. During large scale events or events which require several agencies to be involved, several emergency channels are needed for each agency. Current communication equipment limits the number of available channels and is highly taxed. The district is currently looking to develop a Communications Plan which will help identify what communications equipment is needed, what channels are allocated per agency, and what improvements are needed to the system in the coming years. Additionally the district is working on developing mutual aid banks for communication equipment with surrounding districts.

**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 Grand Valley Fire Protection District will continue to utilize existing relationships with local, county, state, and federal agencies to aid in the implementation of mitigation projects.

**Table GVFPD.1: Capability Assessment**

Overall Capability	2017 Plan Limited, Moderate, High	2022 Plan Limited, Moderate, High
Does the jurisdiction have the financial resources needed to implement mitigation projects?	Limited	Moderate
Does the jurisdiction have the staff/expertise to implement projects?	High	High
Does the jurisdiction have the community support to implement projects	High	High
Does the jurisdiction have the time to devote to hazard mitigation?	Limited	Limited

## 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 were updated, the local planning team reviewed the HMP for opportunities to incorporate the goals, risk and vulnerability data, and mitigation actions into the plan update as appropriate. The district will continue to utilize this process for future plan updates.

Grand Valley Fire Protection District participated in the 2022 Garfield County CWPP. 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. Grand Valley Fire Protection District will continue to participate in future updates to this plan.

Grand Valley Fire Protection District participated in the Parachute-Battlement Mesa Emergency Operations Plan that was completed in early 2017. This plan addresses the hazards of greatest concern to the District, identifies scenarios that would require evacuations, and provides a clear assignment of responsibility during an emergency. The plan also includes mitigation activities that are consistent with the goals and strategies of this hazard mitigation plan update.

To help address critical access issues in the district, Grand Valley FPD developed a River Access Plan. The River Access Plan was identified in the Spring of 2021. It was decided that with the increased river usage from the Town of Parachute's new TOP Adventure business, the district needed more defined access points in case of a river rescue. District crews patrolled the river and identified 7 points that could be beneficial in case of a river rescue event. Crews identified the landowners, and the Deputy Fire Chief has reached out to them with a request to create an access point on their land with permissions to use these for training and emergency response. The district is currently in the process of evaluating each point of access and creating a plan for creating an access point to present to the landowners for permission. The intent is to have these entry points established before the summer of 2022 with detailed maps to be added to the apparatus map books.

Lastly, Grand Valley FPD has a Strategic Plan last revised and approved in 2022. The plan lists specific strategic tactics to accomplish its goals which are described below:

- Community Service: developing a community outreach program; maintain current ISO rating; provide valued prevention education programs; and strengthen community partnerships.
- Fiscal Sustainability: continue debt-free financial operations; ensure prudent financial investment in infrastructure and equipment; develop diversified revenue base; and establish long-term financial planning practices.
- Organizational Excellence: develop performance program; create a “contribute, participate, and listen” work environment; ensure appropriate staff capabilities and qualifications; actively recruit volunteer membership

### 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.

#### ***New and Ongoing Actions:***

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
<b>Identify Risk Areas:</b> Utilize the NHMP and CWPP to identify areas of risk and start to preplan areas of the districts wildland urban interface	Wildfire	1	Staff Time	Fire Districts' Budget	5+ years	High	Fire Chief	The Grand Valley FPD continuously identifies and prioritizes areas of risk for mitigation projects. Each spring the staff divvy up areas of concern throughout the district to identify potential mitigation work.
<b>Public Education:</b> Develop and implement outreach and education efforts for a range of natural hazard types which impact the county including wildfire, landslides, evacuation procedures, etc.	All Hazards	1,5	Staff Time	Fire Districts' Budget	5+ years	High	Fire Chief	This action was originally identified in the 2012 plan. Fire District utilizes several public education strategies including an annual meeting, publications, etc.
<b>Assist Public with Grant Process:</b> Assist property owners with the Colorado State Forest Service grant process	Wildfire	4,5	Staff Time	Fire Districts' Budget	1-3 years	Low	Fire Chief	This action was originally identified in the 2012 plan. The Fire District would be willing to assist property owners in mitigation projects or grant management when funding and staff time are available.
<b>Improve Access Infrastructure</b> Identify and utilize additional crossing	Flooding		Unknown	Fire District's Budget, Other	2-5 years	Medium	Fire Chief	This is a new mitigation action. Additional access points are needed along the Colorado River.



Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
points on the Colorado River for river rescues.				agency budgets				
<b>Communication Upgrades</b> Improve communication capabilities and radio interoperability	All Hazards	1,5	Unknown	Fire District's Budget, Other agency budgets	5+ year	High	Fire Chief	This is a new mitigation action. The district is working on a Communications Plan to identify local needs and equipment upgrades.
<b>Backup Generators</b> Purchase additional generators for fire stations to provide redundant power	All Hazards	1,5	\$25,000	Fire District's Budget	2-5 years	Low	Fire Chief	This is a new mitigation action. Station 2 needs a backup generator.
<b>Implement CWPP Projects</b> Implement fuel management projects in vulnerable areas and projects identified in the Garfield County CWPP.	Wildfire	1,5	Varies by project	Fire District's Budget	Ongoing	High	Fire Chief	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.

### **Completed Actions**

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Goals	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding	Timeline	Priority	Lead Agency	Status
<b>Community Wildfire Protection Plan:</b> Participate in the ongoing development of an updated Community Wildfire Protection plan to ensure that	Wildfire	1,2,3,4,5	Unknown	Fire Districts' Budget, Garfield County General Fund,	1-2 years	High	Fire Chief	Grand Valley FPD has participated in the Garfield County CWPP and plans to continue participating in

Section Seven: Grand Valley Fire District Profile

<p>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>				<p>Title III Fund</p>				<p>CWPP updates in the future.</p>
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**Removed Actions:**

Action and Description	Hazards Addressed	Reason for Removal
<p><b>Community Wildfire Protection Plan:</b> Complete the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and identify areas of potential mitigation</p>	<p>Wildfire</p>	<p>This action was originally identified in the 2012 plan. Redundant with other mitigation actions</p>
<p><b>Identify Flood Risk Areas:</b> Work with the County and other partners to address flood risk areas and impacts to critical infrastructure</p>	<p>Flooding</p>	<p>The Fire District regularly monitors infrastructure for flooding impacts and coordinate with County. This action was removed and replaced with a more actionable mitigation action "Improve Access Infrastructure."</p>