



# ARVADA FIRE

## PROTECTION DISTRICT

### Arvada Fire Protection District

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## Letter from the Chief

BY CHIEF JON GREER

As I write this, I am reminded of my pastor at church. He hates to talk about “tithing” or giving, but his parishioners know that when he mentions it, something is up. Similarly, there is something on the horizon that will adversely affect the Arvada Fire Protection District—and I believe residents need to know about it. It is called the Gallagher Amendment. This 35-year-old Colorado Constitutional Amendment attempts to maintain a

55%/45% statewide balance between non-residential (such as commercial) and residential property taxes. Further, the Gallagher Amendment mandates that the assessment rate for commercial property is fixed at 29%. The residential rate, on the other hand, is annually evaluated and adjusted to hold the 45/55 split constant. Residential assessment rates have dropped by nearly two-thirds since Gallagher was introduced (see below):

Year	Residential Assessment Rate	
1983	21%	first year of Gallagher Amendment
1987	18%	
1995	10.36%	
2003	7.96%	
2017	7.20%	
2019	6.11%	projected by Legislative Council

How are property taxes calculated? To make this simple, let's assume that, according to the county assessor, your home is worth \$100,000. That \$100,000 is then multiplied by the residential assessment rate, which in 1983 was 21%. You were then “taxed” on \$21,000 in assessed value.

Today that residential assessment rate is 7.2%. On a home that is worth

\$100,000 you are taxed on \$7,200 in assessed value. As shown in the above table, that rate is calculated to drop somewhere below 7% in 2019. Below is a table showing the change in property tax that you would have paid in 1983 and different years based upon the Fire District's current mill levy of 14.71 mills. This is based upon a home with an assessed value of \$400,000.

	\$400,000 Home			
Assessment Year	1983	2003	2017	2019
Assessment Rates	21%	7.96%	7.20%	6.11%
AFPD Property Tax	\$ 1,236	\$ 468	\$ 424	\$ 359

The value of your home has skyrocketed in the last several years, so your property taxes have gone up. Nevertheless, in 2020 when this new rate will take effect, we will lose over \$4 million that year alone and also in the years to follow.

The following is a comparison of the property tax you would have paid in 1983 and what is forecast in 2019. In 1983 you would have paid \$309 on a home valued at \$100,000. In 2019, if forecasts are correct, you would pay \$359 on a home valued at \$400,000. You can see the data below.

Year	Residential Assessment Rate	Home Value	Assessed Value	Property Tax
1983	21%	\$100K	\$21,000	\$309.00
2019	6.11%	\$400K	\$24,000	\$359.00

A \$50 increase in 35 years! By comparison, the District bought a 95' aerial fire truck in 1990 for \$450,000. Today that same truck would cost about \$1.4 million.

I want to assure you that we are working now to be financially secure well into the future. The reality is that if this trend of skyrocketing residential property values continues or property values go down, either would be devastating to the Fire Department. One of the main reasons is that the assessment rate cannot go back up by law to compensate for a reduction in property values as Gallagher was initially designed. Even the author of the Gallagher Amendment has stated that this is not the way it was supposed to work.

This is a significant issue for the Fire Department—one which, as I stated before, all residents need to be aware of. ■

## Fireworks

The onset of summer brings a rise in the number of questions received about the use of fireworks. The laws and rules that regulate the sales and use of fireworks can be confusing.

The simple fact is that under Arvada City ordinance section 62-43 sales, purchase and use of all fireworks in the City of Arvada is illegal. This includes sparklers. An adult who violates this ordinance is risking a fine of up to \$999 and possible jail time up to 180 days. Juveniles in violation of the ordinance cannot be jailed but are still subject to the fine.

Although nearly all cities in the metro area have ordinances that prohibit sale and use of fireworks, why do we still see fireworks sales stands? This is where the confusion starts.

The Colorado Revised Statutes provide that the sale and use of “permissible fireworks” cannot be prohibited in unincorporated county areas. It is for this reason that you will see fireworks sale stands in certain areas that are outside the boundaries of a municipality. The Colorado Revised Statutes also provide that municipalities under home rule can adopt ordinances that are more restrictive than State statute; this is what the City of Arvada, as well as nearly all other cities in our area, have chosen to do by making the sale and use of all consumer fireworks illegal.

It is also important to point out that both State statutes and city ordinance allow the large public fireworks displays conducted by professionals such as the one that occurs at the Stenger Sports Fields. The fireworks used for these display are a different classification of fireworks. Due to the different classification and nature of these fireworks there are licensing and permitting requirements that the companies which produce these displays must comply with, in order to conduct a show.



What can you do if you see or hear fireworks being used in the City of Arvada? First, determine if you are dealing with simple use and noise, or if there is an actual fire or emergency. If there is a fire or an emergency dialing 9-1-1 is appropriate. If there is not an emergency and a person is just seeking to report a fireworks complaint, please do not call 9-1-1 as doing so may clog the 9-1-1 lines and delay notification when someone with an actual emergency is calling.

As the 4th of July approaches the call volume of fireworks complaints naturally increases. To help manage the call volume and keep the 9-1-1 system open for actual emergencies, the Arvada Police Department will activate a special fireworks complaint line. Unfortunately, the number for the fireworks hotline cannot be confirmed before the printing of this *Arvada Report*, but it will be published both on the City of Arvada website and the Arvada Fire Website as well as other methods prior to the 4th of July week.

The Arvada Fire Protection District recommends that for a legal and safe celebration of the 4th of July leave fireworks alone and see a professional display. ■

# Congratulations to Chief Steward and Chief Ferry

Recently, Division Chief Clay Steward received his Chief Fire Officer Designation and Fire Marshal Kevin Ferry received his Fire Marshal Designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence and its Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC).

Designated officers are often described as being progressive and well-rounded. Part of the reason for this is the holistic scope of the CPC model. It looks at the “whole officer,” focusing on seven components that cover the span of an officer’s experience:

- Education
- Experience
- Professional Development (training and certifications)
- Professional Contributions and Recognitions
- Professional Memberships and Affiliations
- Technical Competence (depending on the credential, 7 to 20 different competencies)
- Community Involvement

Arvada Fire has some very dedicated individuals who have also achieved a designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence. Our other designees include Eric Berger, Scott Burns, Brendon Dougherty, Todd Gilgren, Deanna Harrington, Todd Hyatt, Steven Parker, and Robb Roome. We are so proud of the members of our team who go above and beyond to make sure they are providing our district with the best level of service! ■



Steward



Ferry

## Congratulations to Chief Mitchell

The International Association of Emergency Medical Services Chiefs (IAEMSC) announced the results of its 2018 election of officers. Arvada Fire’s EMS Chief Dave Mitchell was nominated and subsequently elected as President-elect. This is a prestigious position and we know Chief Mitchell will excel in this capacity.

The International Association of EMS Chiefs (IAEMSC) is a non-profit professional association established to support, promote, and advance the leadership of response entities and to advocate for the EMS profession. The IAEMSC membership consists of leaders from both career and volunteer EMS organizations, representing a diverse group of public and private EMS agencies that respond to over 6.2 million emergencies and transport nearly 3.3 million patients each year. ■



# Lightning Safety Awareness Week

## WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!

**Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 24 – 30.**

Lightning kills over 50 people in the U.S. each year and inflicts life-long debilitating injuries on hundreds more. Florida is the “Thunderstorm Capital” of the U.S., but other parts of the country have lots of lightning too, especially in the Southeast, Midwest, and the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains. Colorado ranks third in the nation for lightning fatalities.

Fortunately, most lightning deaths and injuries are easily avoided. Remember, **NO PLACE OUTSIDE IS SAFE NEAR A THUNDERSTORM.**

The first step in lightning safety is to plan your outdoor activities to avoid as much of the lightning threat as you can. Watch the local weather forecasts and know your local weather patterns. The forecast from your local National Weather Service office can be found at [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov).

When outside, keep an eye on the sky. If you are planning an outdoor event, bring along a NOAA Weather Radio or AM radio or Internet Weather Alert system and check it regularly. Most people are struck by lightning before or just after a storm because they wait too long to seek shelter or go back outside too soon. If you hear thunder roar, go indoors--immediately. Don't go outside until 30 minutes or more after hearing the last thunder.

The safest place from lightning is inside a large, fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing, e.g., a typical house. But stay away from any conducting path to the outside: corded telephones, electrical appliances, and plumbing. Don't watch lightning from doorways or windows. If you can't get to a house, a vehicle with a metal roof and metal sides is a good second choice. Roll-up the windows, lean away from the door, and don't touch any conducting path going outside, e.g., radio, keys in the ignition, steering wheel, etc. Remember, it's not the rubber tires insulating you from the ground that make vehicles safe, but rather the metal shell that conducts the electricity around you. Convertibles, motorcycles, cars made of fiberglass and plastic, and open shelled outdoor recreation vehicles are not safe.

If you can't get to a house or vehicle, than at least avoid the most hazardous places and activities. Stay off elevated places, like mountains, buildings, high playground equipment, etc. Keep away from open areas, including sports fields and beaches. Get away from tall isolated objects like trees. Going under trees to keep dry persists in being the second leading cause of lightning casualties in the U.S. Don't do it! Stop water-related activities, including swim-

ming, boating, and fishing. Get out at the first hint of lightning. Get off open vehicles like cabin-less tractors, bulldozers, four-wheel recreational vehicles, etc. But remember, **NO PLACE OUTSIDE IS SAFE NEAR A THUNDERSTORM.** You are much safer going inside a house or car.

All lightning deaths result from cardiac arrest. If you're with a victim, call **9-1-1** to get professional medical help and then apply CPR if possible. A common myth is that lightning victims are electrified and dangerous to approach. False! About 90% of lightning victims survive, so your first aid may save a life.

For more information on lightning safety, visit [www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov). ■

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