



South Trail Fire & Rescue

Lee County, FL

South Trail Fire District: Making South Fort Myers a Better Place to Live, Work, and Play

In an effort to provide accurate information for the customers we serve in the South Trail Fire District, the following information is provided. This document highlights what the South Trail Fire District, working in cooperation with the other emergency service agencies in Lee and surrounding counties, provides to the community. Also highlighted in this narrative are the savings to the taxpayer as a result of cooperatively working with our fire service neighbors. Collectively the critical services we provide add to our quality of life and make the south Fort Myers community a better place to live, work, and play.

Who are We and What do We Protect?

South Trail Fire Protection and Rescue Service District is an all hazards emergency service organization set up by the State Legislature as a special district. As a district we are governed by a Board of five Fire Commissioners who live in the District and are elected to 4 year terms by the citizens of the District. The District is geographically located south of the City of Ft. Myers proper. We cover 55 square miles with the northernmost border being the City of Ft. Myers. To the east our District goes to Lehigh and includes the Gateway community. To the west the District extends to the Summerlin Road area and includes part of the Whiskey Creek community and Edison State College. Finally, to the South our District extends to San Carlos Park. If you live, work or play anywhere in this area, you are protected by the South Trail Fire District.

The Services We Provide

According the International Association for Fire Chiefs, “The fire service is the only entity that is locally situated, staffed, trained, and equipped to respond to all types of emergencies. The fire department responds to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, tornadoes and hurricanes as well as to man-made catastrophes such as hazardous material spills, arson and terrorism. As such, America’s fire service is an all-hazard, all-risk response entity”. The preceding statement, describing America’s fire service illustrates perfectly the services that South Trail Fire District provides to the residents and visitors of the South Fort Myers community. Below are detailed and specific services we provide:

Fire Suppression:

This is the traditional role of the fire service and one that our firefighters perform extremely well. Our professional firefighters regularly fight fires in homes, businesses, industrial, and wildland settings, as well as vehicle fires. Each fire requires specialized training and equipment and all of your South Trail firefighters are adequately trained to handle these emergencies.



Emergency Medical Service (EMS):

All District Firefighters are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians and many as Paramedics. We provide Advanced Life Support services, meaning we have paramedics trained and equipped on many fire engines and rescue trucks. These paramedics share a mutual protocol for operations with Lee County EMS and can, and do perform the same life savings skills as those paramedics assigned to ambulances.

Hazardous Materials:

Hazardous Materials response is a specialized and expensive service the fire service in Lee County provides. South Trail Fire District has personnel trained as operational responders, but in this case we have combined our efforts with other Districts and Departments to have a regional Hazardous Materials Response Team. This concept provides the citizens with a service that not only handles hazardous materials, but also critical response to weapons of mass destruction calls. The regional response concept is the most inexpensive means of providing this necessary service to the community.

Code Enforcement:

The South Trail Fire Prevention bureau is charged with enforcing occupancy and fire prevention codes. This involves enforcing laws, codes, and regulations that prohibit the existence of conditions deemed hazardous to the public. Our Fire Inspectors conduct fire inspections in existing buildings and also provide building plan review and assistance to the construction industry to assure that all new buildings are constructed in accordance with existing fire codes. This helps to assure your safety from the ravages of fire while you are out shopping, eating in a restaurant, going to the movies, attending a spring training baseball game, or otherwise enjoying the community.

Wildland Fire:

The South Trail Fire District has two brush trucks in operation and all firefighters are specifically trained to fight wildland fires. We work closely with the Florida Division of Forestry and all of the other fire districts and departments in Southwest Florida to fight the wildfires. Additionally, we employ highly trained and experienced chief officers who stay on rotational call to respond and assist with commanding the incidents throughout the county.

Wildland/Urban Interface Fire:

The difference between a wildland fire and an urban interface fire is that in an interface fire, homes and businesses are threatened by the sometimes fast moving fires. An urban interface fire is an extremely dangerous situation and this type of fire requires fire engines and additional firefighting personnel to protect the people and structures that are threatened.

Fire Prevention:

The best way to fight a fire is to prevent it from ever occurring in the first place. Our Fire Inspectors, with assistance from fire company inspection personnel, perform regular fire safety inspections throughout the District.

Fire and Safety Education:

Our public educators provide fire and safety education to 10 preschools and 7 elementary schools within the South Trail Fire District. Additionally, the District provides two adult-focused safety programs including “watch what you cook” to prevent kitchen fires and “stay on your feet” to prevent falls in older adults. South Trail also hosts the regional Juvenile Fire-setter program, an alternate program for juveniles who have been convicted of setting fires.





The District provides an average of 259 fire and safety education programs each year to 7416 persons.

Safety House:

The District provides for the community a “Safety House” which has been designed and constructed to provide the highest quality fire and safety education. The Safety House includes a puppet theater, a simulated fire truck, safety kitchen, education center, and many other features. Much of the design and work on the safety house was donated by caring businesses and people in the community.



Technical Rescue:

The Jaws of Life will not operate themselves. This simple piece of rescue equipment, which is used primarily to remove patients from crashed vehicles, takes a great deal of specialized training for proficiency. All South Trail Firefighters are trained in the usage of specialized technical rescue equipment like the Jaws of Life and many other types of specialized technical rescue situations.

Urban Search and Rescue:

As part of our technical rescue response, South Trail has joined forces with other SW Florida Fire Districts to create the Southwest Florida Urban Search and Rescue Team (USART) (Florida Task Force 6). The combined efforts of several agencies help keep the costs down for extreme specialized rescue services. The



rescue provided by the USAR team includes rescuing people trapped on high rise buildings (such as window washers), rescuing people stuck in a trench (such as construction workers), and people trapped in collapsed buildings, and confined spaces. The team also is trained and equipped to

respond to emergency flood situations, earthquake response, hurricanes, terrorist activities, tornadoes, large animal rescue, and many other specialized rescue

situations. This team is trained and equipped the same way as the FEMA teams that were sent to Haiti for the earthquakes. They provide the same service that this Nation provides to other countries, but at a local level, with local firefighters.

Airport/Aircraft Emergency Response:

The South Trail Fire District is the first structural fire response agency to respond to assist the airport fire department with any aircraft emergency. In fact, several small planes have crashed in the District over the years and South Trail has responded to each incident to help rescue crash victims.



Arson Investigation:

We have a team of highly trained arson investigators who work closely with the State Fire Marshal's office to investigate these crimes. Some of our employees also volunteer to be part of the Lee County Arson Taskforce, a combined force of Arson Investigators. Arson Investigation is a specialized discipline that is not provided by local law enforcement.

Explosive Response:

South Trail responds to all reports of bomb threats within our District. We work closely with the Lee County Sheriff's Office and the Bomb Squad to mitigate these emergencies.

Hurricane and Natural Disaster Response:

South Trail Fire District is part of the Lee County plan for regional response to hurricanes and natural disasters. In this plan, Lee County is divided into 10 different regional divisions that manage emergencies within their pre-designated geographic area during massive natural disasters. South Trail houses and staffs the Central Division. This regional command center will be housed at the new fire station on Daniels Parkway. The building is built to withstand 130 MPH winds. When this plan is activated we work closely with Lee County Emergency Management to aid with evacuations; provide sandbags for flooding, aid with points of distribution for ice and water, request aid from the State and FEMA for assistance, report impassable roads and waterways, and rescue victims of flood and wind damage.

Response to Terrorism:

The South Trail Fire District has assured that all personnel are trained in basic terrorism response. In addition to response to explosive or fire events, we are also equipped to begin decontamination of large amounts of people in the event of a chemical or biological release. In this response we work closely with the Lee County Health Department.

Working Together

South Trail fire District is committed to work together with other fire and emergency service agencies to provide the best possible service to the community. As previously reported, much of South Trail Fire District's response capabilities are accomplished in a fiscally prudent manner by working together with other agencies such as our surrounding fire districts, law enforcement, and EMS. Below are further details on how we work together.

Daily Fire and Rescue Operations:

Mutual Aid agreements:

All Fire Districts in Lee County and the surrounding counties have mutual aid agreements detailing how we come to the aid of one another.

Combined Incident Management Teams:

The Fire Districts in Lee County have pooled resources to provide experienced, trained, and educated leaders from each Fire Service Agency to response to major fires and disasters.

Closest Unit Response:

We have been working with technological advances to allow the closest emergency vehicles to respond to an emergency, regardless of the agency or location of the incident. In laymen's terms, when you dial 911 for assistance, the closest unit will come to your aid, regardless of the name on the side of the truck. This program is in its infancy in Lee County but we are working to expand the program.

Unified Dispatch Center:

All Lee County Fire Agencies and Emergency Medical Services utilize Lee County Communications as a common dispatch center. This allows us the ability to talk to and work with one another easily. Additionally, Fire

and EMS are simultaneously Dispatched which reduces response times to your emergencies.

Countywide apparatus and station numbering:

We cooperatively worked to provide consistent identification numbers on all apparatus and stations throughout Lee County.

Combined special rescue team:

As previously noted several emergency service agencies in Lee County have combined forces and resources to provide a special, highly trained and equipped Urban Search and Rescue Team.

Daily Medical Operations:

Why does an ambulance and a fire truck respond together to a medical call?

This is a valid question and asked by many of our customers. The simple answer is that this response methodology saves lives because of logistics. When a patient calls 911 for a medical emergency the fire department receives the call at the same time as the ambulance. However, because the fire truck (engine, ladder, or rescue) does not have to take the time to transport the patient to the hospital they are generally in the station, available for response, and closer to the emergency more often than the ambulance. Therefore, the fire truck is generally able to respond to the emergency *faster* than the ambulance. Fire Service response to medical emergencies is part of the entire emergency system and a critical part of the patient care cycle. All South Trail Fire District apparatus are staffed with either EMTs or Paramedics who are trained and equipped to provide emergency medical care at the same level as the ambulance crews.



Fire Service response to medical emergencies is part of the entire emergency system and a critical part of the patient care cycle. All South Trail Fire District apparatus are staffed with either EMTs or Paramedics who are trained and equipped to provide emergency medical care at the same level as the ambulance crews.

This level of service is the best service that can be provided to the community and is documented to save lives on a regular basis.

Same Medical Protocol:

All fire and EMS agencies utilize a combined medical treatment protocol assuring that you will receive the same treatment methodologies throughout the County.

Shared Medical Directors for several agencies:

Several agencies have pooled together to employ the same Medical Director (Physician) to oversee their paramedic programs. This has saved taxpayers thousands of dollars.

Training:

Combined mutual aid training:

The training personnel at each agency work closely together to provide mutual aid training at various times throughout the year. Examples include airport disaster drills, multiple casualty bus crash drills, and combined structure fire drills.

Purchasing:

Best prices through state bids:

All special districts, counties, and municipalities are able to receive heavy discounts on major purchases by “piggybacking” off another agency’s bid price list. As a result of this purchasing ability, we are able to mimic volume buying of equipment.

Hurricane and Disaster Response:

Regional response concept with Emergency Management:

Working closely with Lee County Emergency Operations the Fire Agencies in Lee County staff and operate 10 geographic regions throughout the county that are activated during times of natural and man-made disasters. This allows for quick and efficient disaster response and assures a complete and accurate assessment of community needs after a disaster which parlays into State and Federal aid coming to Lee County quickly.

Hazardous Material Response:

Regional Hazardous Materials Team:

The City of Ft. Myers Fire Department staffs the regional hazardous materials response team. This team is supported by State and Federal grants and is the primary team in Lee County. This concept saves tax payer money by reducing the need for other fire agencies to provide this service.

Terrorism:

Domestic Security Taskforce:

Fire agencies in Lee County work closely with Law Enforcement to increase communications and provide technical assistance with domestic security issues in the region.

Working together:

Regular meetings through the Lee County Fire Chief's Association (LCFCA):

Each month members of each fire agency, EMS, the Sheriff's Office, Lee County Communications, Florida Division of Forestry, and Lee County Emergency Management meet at Lee County Fire Chief Association meetings to discuss ways we can work more efficiently together, respond better to emergencies and disasters, and save money for taxpayers.

Communications Committee: Under the LCFCA we have an established communication committee tasked with improving the emergency communication system.

Standard Operating Guideline Committee: Under the LCFCA we have established a standard operation guideline committee to provide documents that agencies can use in establishing their operational readiness.

Cooperative hiring program (CPAT): Several agencies work together with common hiring practices. This system has saved time and money and assures that hiring practices meet nationally accepted principles and standards.

Future Advances:

The District is working together with Lee County EMS and Lee County Communications to implement a program (already being tested in parts of the County) to assure the right equipment responds to the right emergency based on the medical need. Under the current system a 911 call elicits a standard response of an ambulance and fire apparatus regardless of the type of call. With the assistance of highly trained Dispatchers and a computer program that helps differentiate the response needs based upon information provided by the caller, we can improve the efficiency of response.

Conclusion:

South Trail Fire Protection and Rescue Service District provides the highest quality fire and rescue services to the community we serve. Part of the way we accomplish this mission in the most cost efficient means possible is by working closely with our neighbors in the emergency services. If you have further questions about the services we provide, or the methods we use to provide these services in a cost effective manner, please contact Fire Chief William Lombardo at 239-433-0080 or via e-mail at blombardo@southtrailfire.org.



Photographed by Jehna Givens