



SMITHS STATION FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Fire Fee Faq's

Q: When was the current fire fee established?

A: 2012

Q: Has there been any increase of the fire fee since 2012?

A: No

Q: Doesn't my property taxes pay for fire/ems protection?

A: No, the only funds county departments receive is from fire fee's

Q: Does Alabama Law authorize a Fire Protection District to charge fee's and/or rates?

A: Yes, § 11-89-7

(a) The district shall have the following powers...:

(b) (10) To furnish and provide fire protection service in the service area or in any part thereof upon such reasonable terms and for such reasonable rates and consideration as the board may prescribe;

Q: Who sets the rates and/or fees for the Fire Protection District? Does the public get to vote on the rates?

A: Much like water/sewer rates, building permit fees, trash fees, etc the rates are set by the governing board and not subject to public vote.

Q: Does Alabama law spell out any specific requirements related to the amount Fire Protection Districts should charge as fees & rates?

A: Yes. Code of Alabama § 11-89-12 states:

Rates, fees, and charges for fire protection service rendered by the district from any of its fire protection facilities shall be so fixed and from time to time revised as at all times to provide funds at least sufficient to:

(1) Pay the cost of operating, maintaining, repairing, replacing, extending, and improving the systems and facilities or either from which such services are rendered;

(2) Pay the principal of and the interest on all bonds issued and obligations assumed by the district that are payable out of the revenues derived from operation of those systems and facilities as the said principal and interest become due and payable;

(3) Create and maintain such reserve for the foregoing purposes or any of them as may be provided in any mortgage and deed of trust or trust indenture executed by the

district under this chapter or in any resolutions of the board authorizing the issuance of bonds, the assumption of any obligation or the acquisition of any such system or facility;

Q: Are there any other fire protection districts in our area?

A: Yes: Beulah Fire & East Alabama Fire are both organized under the same section of Alabama Code as the Smiths Station Fire Protection District

Q: How did you come up with the rates that are being charged by the Smiths Station Fire Protection District?

A: The new rates are exactly the same as the rates being charged by Beulah Fire District

Q: When will the new rates go into effect?

A: October 1, 2022

Q: How will I receive my bill from the Smiths Station Fire Protection District?

A: Your bill will arrive in the mail

Q: How can I pay my bill?

A: you will be able to mail a check, use your bank's bill pay features, or pay online using a credit/debit card

Q: How often will I be billed?

A: Initially everyone will be billed on a monthly basis. If you prefer you can request to be billed annually.

Q: I am renter, who is responsible for the fire fee?

A: Just like the existing fire fee and trash fees, etc the property OWNER is responsible. If you're a renter and get a bill please notify our office so that we can correct the error in our system.

Q: What about the old fire fee?

A: You will see a prorated credit on your bill each month for the current fire fee until it expires.

Q: Why don't you add the new fire fee to our water bill like other departments do?

A: This was discussed. However, there was two main issues with doing this. First, we are a separate entity from the water companies that we serve. Second, our coverage area has two different water companies, and this would have presented an unnecessary complication.

Q: I thought everyone paid a flat 50\$ per year under the old fire fee, how come your presentation shows an average of 40\$ was paid per household?

A: This is a common misconception. The old fire fee was based primarily on "roof tops" of buildings (including sheds, barns, etc) that were larger than a certain minimum square footage.

As a result, a single-family homeowner would pay 50\$ per year. If that single-family homeowner also had a large shed or barn, they would be charged 100\$ or more per year under the old system depending on how many outbuildings they had.

However, a duplex that contains 2 separate "living units" would only pay 50\$ per year under the old system. Likewise, an apartment building with 24 separate "living units" under a single roof would also only pay 50\$ per year under the old system.

This is why the new system of billing is based on "living units" and not "roof tops". Using our example from above of a duplex they were only paying 25\$ per "living unit" per year under the old system and in our example apartment building they were only paying \$2.08 per "living unit" per year under the old system.

Q: What about hardship cases?

A: A process similar to the one in place at Beulah Fire is being developed and more information will be available soon.

Q: Where can I find more information and/or ask questions?

A: Mailers have gone out and are the first step in a public information campaign. In the next couple of weeks. Smiths Station Fire Protection District will be hosting a community meeting online and in person where you will be able to ask questions. You can also submit questions online at: www.smithsstational-fpd.gov/faqs