



MOUNTAIN GREEN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

4565 W. Old Hwy Mountain Green, Utah 84050-9728
Station: 801.876.2277 Chief: 385-350-1673



Mutual Aid: A Necessity for the Functioning of the Mountain Green Fire Protection District

by Brian Brendel, Fire Chief

July, 2022

Mutual Aid & Automatic Aid allows fire departments across the nation to operate in a standard, industry acceptable and safe way.

Prior to about 1980, it was possible for fire departments to function autonomously, without assistance from outside agencies to provide additional needed staffing and equipment. With the advent of OSHA codifying workplace safety, and the safety requirements listed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Codes and Standards, guidelines must be followed in order to "minimize the possibility and effects of fire" and to also limit liability to fire departments in performance of their function. NFPA Codes and standards are administered by more than 250 technical committees comprising approximately 8,000 persons, all volunteers, and adopted throughout the world.

Despite Mountain Green's small size, we are centrally located and are part of the entire area fire service of Morgan, Weber, and Davis Counties. Fire Departments support each other because they cannot do it alone. Thinking that a fire department can function on its own, providing all the needed response standards and equipment, without becoming bankrupt, is obtuse thinking which completely disregards the reality of modern-day requirements.

- OSHA maintains requirements for minimum numbers of firefighters for certain fire entry operations. (Such as interior firefighting and search.)
- NFPA and NIST (National Institute of Standards) and ANSI (American National Standards Institute) have staffing, safety, equipment design, response and standard practice "recommendations" that are actually held as solid standards that courts hold Fire Departments to in liability cases.

These are just two examples of requirements we must follow and are in large part provided by Mutual Aid. These requirements defend the use of Mutual Aid to achieve a safe operating environment for our personnel that is a very common Fire Service practice.

While accepting Mutual Aid is easy, we must also reciprocate. Mutual Aid is also not "Moocher-al" Aid. We have to go on their calls if we expect them to come on ours. And



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Mutual Aid provides significant opportunities for our inexperienced folks to gain valuable experience that they will use when the emergencies happen here.

Our goal as firefighters is to save lives and property. We keep in mind the symbolic nature of the Fire & Rescue and EMS Service itself: Man's humanity to man. The firefighters, fire stations & equipment are very important community symbols for the public to see and know they are there when needed most. They symbolize trust in local government, a trust we are very serious about upholding and must not allow to be denigrated.

Fire Responses

In order to protect communities from loss of residences in conflagrations, Fire Departments were formed in the cities. Over time, presence of these fire forces migrated to the rural areas. Fires are, in fact, "the same all over", whether in a smaller community or large city. It takes the same number of firefighters to safely control a fire in incipient stages to prevent it from becoming out of control.

Fire grows exponentially every second. Buildings are overwhelmingly made of wood, and now contain much more "solidified gasoline" (plastics) than ever before. This combination yields a very destructive force of nature that can easily escape human control and create multiple buildings on fire in very short order (a "conflagration"). A fire here burns the same as in Salt Lake City, and takes just as many folks to safely control it. And we have an added factor: the Wildland.

House fires can start wildland fires; wildland fires can start house fires. We have to nip all of that in the bud. That is why National Standards call for amassing 15 firefighters on scene of an NFPA/NIST "standard" house fire. How do we get those numbers? By Mutual Aid, or in our instance, AUTOMATIC aid.

We are indeed fortunate to have even more than a Mutual Aid agreement with our neighbors. We currently have Automatic Aid/Mutual Aid agreements with Weber Fire District, South Weber City Fire, and Morgan Fire&EMS. This allows us to get nearly 15 firefighters on scene of a daytime structure fire in about 10-12 minutes:

- During weekday daytime hours, when volunteers are practically unavailable, Mountain Green has 2 paid firefighters on Engine 131 to respond and provide initial water on an incipient fire, or to perform an emergent rescue.

1 Engine, 2 firefighters



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- South Weber City has a staffed Engine which will normally respond to us with a paid crew of 3 firefighters. **1 Engine, 3 firefighters.**
- Weber Fire Huntsville Station sends a fully staffed Engine with 3 paid firefighters. **1 Engine, 3 firefighters**
- Morgan Fire & EMS Department has volunteers during all hours. They normally respond to Structural calls with 2-3 volunteers and typically follow up with another Engine with 1 volunteer. **2 Engines, 3-4 firefighters.**

Total: 4 -5 Engines, plus Chief, and an Ambulance crew: total 15 firefighters

The aforementioned OSHA requirements are very specific about the number of firefighters required on a scene to perform interior firefighting duties in an “Imminently Dangerous to Life and Health” (“IDLH”) environment. These environments are found in a house fire where entry needs to be made through smoke to extinguish fire and search for potential trapped victims. Because respirators are used (“S.C.B.A.”—Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, an OSHA respiratory standard,) when 2 persons enter the IDLH, OSHA requires 2 must remain outside as a rescue team. This “2 in, 2 out” requirement can be fulfilled with a pump operator and a Chief officer or Incident Commander outside. But for us, we only have 2 people plus the Chief. Having just 3 persons really doesn’t fulfill that requirement, except in situations of an obvious rescue. MUTUAL AID FULFILLS THAT REQUIREMENT. When the mutual aid second Engine arrives, our geared-up crew can make entry immediately. In meantime, the 2-person crew has scouted the building, called for additional resources, stretched hose lines, positioned ladders and equipment as needed, poured water through a window as needed.

In order for us to perform at our utmost, to save lives and property, we must have Mutual Aid. In order for us to “get it”, we must also.... provide it.

Governing Body

As members of the Weber-Morgan Fire Chief’s Association, all area chiefs meet monthly to stay in communication about area trends and situations, but also in part to agree upon standard response packages. These packages, called “stacks”, were not invented yesterday. They were created by consummate fire service professionals in the area, with years of experience, who come to agreements that certain numbers of assets are needed at particular emergencies. As we provide that service to other communities, so too is that service provided to us in our time of need.



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Assured Emergency Response

An Automatic Aid provision in an agreement ensures that the “next due” agency in the stack will respond if the primary is unable to do so, due to an “out of service” situation or an unavailability due to emergency calls. Examples:

- Mountain Green Engine 131 is on a Traffic Accident response in Cottonwoods. A call for a vehicle fire comes in on Trappers Loop.
 - Ladder131 is dispatched. Due to time of day/weekday, there are no volunteers responding to staff the vehicle.
 - Weber Fire Huntsville Engine 65 is then dispatched.
- Mountain Green Engine 131 reports “out of service, flat tire” while responding to a single-engine response, such as a dumpster fire call:
 - Next-in-stack S Weber Engine 1 is unavailable, on a call
 - Next-in-stack Weber Fire Huntsville Engine 65 is dispatched

Technical Emergency Services:

Certain Emergency Services are extremely technical, and higher levels of those services require “technician firefighters” per regulating organizations (NFPA/OSHA, etc.) in addition to firefighter first responders. Mutual Aid agreements also cover those situations, as long as we reciprocate with “normal responses” for the technical fire agency’s “regular” emergencies. An example is our agreement with Weber Fire District to provide us HazMat services, while we provide additional resources for more “normal” emergencies through the canyon to Uintah or up to Huntsville/Eden. Other agreements provide us Heavy Vehicle or Collapse Rescue (Semi’s, Trains, trench collapses, etc.), Technical Rescue (i.e., Confined Space –tunnel, sewer or enclosed vault—rescue, Farm Machinery rescue, rope rescue, swift water rescue, ice rescue, etc.) All of the aforementioned require technical skills that are difficult for us to provide, yet we must have the capability to do so in a moment’s notice: for a child caught in a drainpipe; a farmer’s arm trapped in a combine; or a car dangling off a ravine on Trappers Loop.

Emergency Medical Services:

Emergency Medical Services are provided to our citizens by a tiered response system from throughout Weber, Morgan, and Davis counties. EMS calls make up about half of our responses. Because EMS can be billed directly by other agencies, the tiered system allows



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responses out of other jurisdictions to provide our medical transport, including helicopter transport, and paramedic services. (Although we have Advanced EMT's [AEMT's] who can do many lifesaving interventions including starting IV's, giving medications and monitoring heart rhythms, Morgan County or Mountain Green do not specifically have paramedic services at this time, thus paramedics must come from Davis or Weber Counties.) The tiers are set up with the "stack" system, but all begin with a local Emergency First Responder, Mountain Green Fire. A transport unit is dispatched, and paramedics are added dependent upon patient severity of illness or injury.

Examples:

- Engine 131 and Morgan Fire&EMS Ambulance 121 dispatched for a Traffic Accident Rollover with entrapment at MM92 I-84
- Auto Aid adds Heavy Rescue 41 from Riverdale Fire for the entrapment
- Dispatch reports a severe injury, E131 requests South Weber Medic 1
 - S Weber Medic 1 not available,
 - Ogden Rescue Paramedic 5 is dispatched

Utah's Emergency Medical Services system is regulated by the Bureau of EMS of the Utah Health Department. Mountain Green is a state-certified First Responder agency, as well as a state-certified Advanced Life Support provider agency. (ALS-Quick-Response-Vehicle, or "QRV".)

Mutual Aid is a Game Changer, but we had to change our game, first.

Things have changed significantly in the provision of both Emergency Medical Services and Fire Department Operations in Mountain Green during the past 5 years. In 2017, there were no or few daytime responders for emergencies in Mountain Green. There was no Advanced Life Support. Mutual aid agreements did not exist between Mountain Green and the adjacent paid fire districts—let alone Automatic Aid responses for fires or technical emergencies. We had few personnel, and not many in the pipeline. We had one structural fire engine. Our equipment lagged behind national standards, and we were understaffed and ill equipped to provide proper emergency service.

With the advent of aggressive continuous recruiting, we increased our volunteer firefighters who now number 21 men and women, all of whom are state-certified at some level for various firefighting and EMS levels of service. All are CPR/AED (automated external



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defibrillator) certified. All but 1 are Wildland Firefighters. Half are fully certified for interior fire attack. One-third are EMT's, one is a volunteer AEMT, one is a certified paramedic.

Our daytime crew of 2 certified Firefighter/AEMT's work each weekday from 0800-1800. They come from a pool of a dozen part-time firefighters and officers from 6 different professional agencies. They offer our citizens professional services, expertise and experience at a level unknown in Morgan County until two years ago, when our day crew program was established. They have rapidly responded to fires and medical calls in Mountain Green, providing at least 2 "saves" for persons in extreme medical situations, and fire attack to slow or stop incipient fires.

Our equipment has been significantly upgraded. We have new Wildland gear, SCBA and other fire and EMS equipment including state-of-the-art hazardous gas detectors, and a 12-lead EKG capable cardiac monitor. Our Ladder truck, which we purchased through a relationship with Weber Fire Chief's Association member Northview Fire, was a significant addition to our fleet for a low cost. It is both a second structural pumping "Engine" and an all-important safety vehicle for our firefighters, providing 8 ground ladders of varying lengths for quick egress or rescue from a second or third floor, and an aerial ladder to reach the significant setbacks of our larger homes, providing a safe working platform for our firefighters.

All of those improvements have made other area Fire/EMS agencies take notice of our District and consider us as part of the team. The level of training, commitment, equipment, and overall improvement, along with our increased availability for emergency response with day crew firefighters and added volunteers nights and weekends, have yielded a desire for other agencies to enter into Mutual/Auto Aid agreements with us. We have upped our ante and brought more to the table, to allow us to provide modern, professional fire and EMS services to our Mountain Green community. Our participation in area organizations such as Weber Fire Chiefs and Weber 911 Dispatch Operations Committee and Fire Subcommittee, has helped produce advanced agreements between the largest Fire Departments in Weber and Davis Counties, including Layton and Weber Fire Districts, and our "little Mountain Green". These Mutual Aid agreements have established an unprecedented level of safety for our community and will continue to do so into the future.