

Fact Sheet

Garden City Fire Protection Fee

The following fact sheet includes general information, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and customer service forms.

General Information

Over the last three years, Garden City has undertaken a detailed and comprehensive work effort to transition from a volunteer to a professional Fire Department and improve the level of fire protection service for residents and property owners in Garden City. Activities undertaken by the City during this transition include:

- Receipt of a SAFER grant award that allowed the City to hire five (5) additional, full time fire fighter positions;
- Update of Pre-Fire Plans to improve fire protection services for structures in Garden City; and
- Reduction of the City's Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating from a Class 9 to a Class 3 which resulted in an approximate savings of \$80 - \$120 per year on homeowners insurance policies for the average homeowner/residential property.

The City Council has made the decision to implement fire protection fees to enable the City to accomplish the following goals: (1) ensure that Garden City residents and business owners receive fire fighting services at the desired service level; (2) continue to fund the five additional, full time fire fighter positions after the conclusion of the SAFER grant in 2014; (3) ensure that there is adequate funding for operational and training expenditures; (4) enable the City to work to maintain the ISO rating of 3; and (5) protect the lives and property of all citizens through emergency response, education and fire prevention. Furthermore, the user fee approach is the most fair and equitable way to apportion the cost of delivering fire protection services to the City's customers.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a fire protection fee? A fire protection fee is a charge for fire protection and emergency management services provided by the Garden City Fire Department (GCFD) to all properties in the City. The revenue collected can only be used for the provision of fire protection and emergency management services to customers within the City.

When will the City begin charging the fire protection fee to customers? The City will begin charging the fee to customers in January 2011 to coincide with the start of the City's Fiscal Year Budget.

Who is required to pay a fire protection fee? All properties and utility customers within Garden City are required to pay a fire protection fee.

How are fire protection fees calculated? Garden City has elected to establish fire protection fees for customers within the City based on the needed fire flow required by individual properties/customers. Needed fire flow, as described in ISO's Manual, "Guide for Determining Needed Fire Flow," Edition 05-2008; is calculated by assessing numerous variables including: building square footage, building material, material storage, proximity and connection to other buildings, fire rated design, and the availability of sprinkler systems. By including all of these variables, a fire protection fee based on needed fire flow more equitably represents the emergency response cost to the fire department. The total amount of needed fire flow for a particular property/building is divided by the billing unit to determine the customer's fire protection fee bill.

Example Calculation: 2,000 GPM of fire flow/500 GPM of fire flow per REU = 4 REUs

What is "needed fire flow"? Needed fire flow is the amount of water that should be available for providing fire protection at a particular building, property or location in the City. As the amount of needed fire flow increases, so does the amount of fire fighters, equipment, and resources needed to respond to a fire at a particular property.

What is the REU or billing unit? 500 Gallons per Minute (GPM) of needed Fire Flow is equivalent to 1.0 billing unit or Residential Equivalent Unit (REU). The fire flow amount of 500 GPM is the minimum recommended amount of fire flow needed to respond to a fire at a typical, detached single family residential house.

What is the billing rate for the fire protection fee? The billing rate is currently \$5.00/REU/month.

Will the billing rate increase? The City Council sets the billing rate in the Fire Protection Fee Rate Ordinance, and has the authority to raise the rate to support GCFD operations.

Isn't this just another tax? A fire protection fee is not a tax. Although the fire protection fee is an additional cost to customers, it is not a tax because it bears little to no relation to the taxable value of a property. Instead, customers are charged a fire protection fee based on the fire flow needed to respond to a fire on their property.

Can I get a credit on my fire protection fee bill? Yes, the City does offer credits to non-residential customers for onsite fire mitigation or other activities that will reduce the cost burden on the GCFD to provide fire protection services. Credits are offered for automatic sprinkler systems, fire resistant construction, fire prevention BMPs, and the provision of emergency shelter services. For more information on credits and how to apply, please go to the City's website and download a copy of the Garden City Fire Protection Fee Credit Manual. You can also come to Garden City Hall to pick up a copy of the credit manual.

Where is the GCFD located? The GCFD currently provides fire fighting services through two Fire Stations located at 160 Main Street and 2406 Highway 80.

What services does the GCFD deliver to my property? - Or - What am I paying for? The GCFD responds to approximately 350 calls for assistance each year with an average response time of less than five minutes. A summary of services provided by the GCFD are as follows:

• Fire response • Search and rescue operations • Accident response • Vehicle extrication • Emergency management • Hazardous materials mitigation • Fire inspections	• Wild land fire control • Maritime firefighting and rescue operations • Preplanning and fire plan preparation • Fire Prevention • Fire Safety Education/Fire Clowns • Training & Orientation
---	--

In the past, how were fire protection services funded? Since the GCFD was founded in 1953 until May of 2007, when the first three (3) daytime paid personnel were hired, Garden City was an all-volunteer fire department until 2009. The small amount of funding that was provided to cover equipment and basic operations was provided by the General Fund which is derived primarily from sales tax. In 2008, Garden City received a federal SAFER grant from FEMA in the amount of \$479,334 to assist with the hiring of five new, full time professional fire fighter positions. Through the financial assistance provided by the SAFER grant, the City now employs the Fire Chief, eight full time paid firefighters, and thirty five volunteers. The grant pays the City a decreasing proportion of the award each year, beginning in 2009 and concluding in 2013. The fifth year of the grant program (2014) the grant pays zero dollars to the City and the City must cover 100% of the personnel cost as a condition to the grant acceptance. The City is fully committed to maintaining these full time positions indefinitely and to continue to provide the increased service level to the residents and businesses afforded by these additional professional fire fighters.

Can I have a GCFD fire fighter come to my property/building/site to perform a fire inspection? Yes, please contact the GCFD directly at (912) 966-7780/81.

GARDEN CITY FIRE PROTECTION FEE

Customer Service Form

Request Number: _____		Date: _____		Cust. Rep. Initials: _____	
Type of Request			Customer Information		
General Information: _____			Account Number _____		
Credit Information: _____			Customer Name _____		
Billing Inquiry: _____			Property Address _____		
Billing Dispute: _____			Telephone Number _____		
Other: _____			Email Address _____		
Customer Comments: _____					
Response:					
Question answered, no follow up needed. _____					
Offered Application for User Fee Charge Review. _____					
Follow-up needed.					
Referred Question to _____					
Referred Question to _____					
Referred Question to _____					
Additional Follow-up Required:					
Follow-up assigned to: _____		Date Completed: _____		Initials: _____	

Application for Fire Protection Fee Charge Review

Name of Applicant: _____

Property Street Address: _____

Fire Protection Fee Account Number: _____

Applicant's Daytime Phone Number _____

Applicant's Email Address _____

Name and Address of Applicant's Representative (if any) _____

Daytime Phone Number for Applicant's Representative _____

Brief Explanation of Circumstances Relating to Request for Fire Protection Fee Review _____

Do Not Write Below This Line – City Staff Use Only

Date Application Received _____ Accepted By _____

Results of Review

Date Review Completed _____

☐ Fee Reduced Amount of Refund _____ New Monthly Bill Amount _____

☐ Fee Increased Amount of Increase _____ New Monthly Bill Amount _____

☐ No Adjustment Made