

# Summit Fire & EMS

## 2024 Annual Report





When the new Engine 8 arrived in June, we put a twist on the traditional ceremonial “push back” into the station by enlisting the kids from Lake Dillon Pre-School to help.

Front page: In May, a tractor-trailer caught fire on a runaway truck ramp, spreading to some nearby trees and adding complexity to the emergency response.

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# Message from the Chief



**Chief Travis Davis**

Clearly 2024 has been a momentous year for Summit Fire & EMS — one of new challenges, steady growth, and significant progress in serving our community.

One of our proudest achievements this year was renewing our international accreditation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence. More than just a seal of approval, this recognition affirms our commitment to the highest industry standards and continuous improvement across all aspects of our organization —administration, budgeting, fire prevention, permitting, staffing and emergency response. This achievement is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of our entire team.

A powerful example of this commitment is our lifesaving work. In partnership with our colleagues at Breckenridge-based Red, White & Blue Fire and through the advanced training provided by the High Country Training Center, Summit Fire & EMS was honored with the Mission: Lifeline Gold Award from the American Heart Association reflecting our outstanding success in treating heart-attack victims. For our first responders, there is no greater reward than saving lives.

Preventing emergencies is just as critical as responding to them. Under the leadership of SFE Fire Marshal Kim McDonald, our Fire Prevention Division transitioned fully to an online permitting

system, streamlining the process for new construction, sprinkler installations, fire alarms, wildfire mitigation, and fire-safety reviews. While we're always happy to work with contractors and property owners in person, this new system offers a more efficient and convenient way to obtain permits and schedule inspections.

Our most high-profile project of the year broke ground in the spring: the long-anticipated construction of Station 10 at the north end of Silverthorne. This new fire station will enhance our emergency response capabilities in the fastest-growing area of our district. Thanks to the diligent work of Hyder Construction, the project remains on time and on budget, with a planned opening in spring 2025.

To prepare for the new station, we expanded our team over the summer, bringing on additional firefighters and medics. This ensures that Station 10 will be fully staffed with a mix of experienced veterans and highly trained newcomers, strengthening our ability to serve the community.

After a couple of years of deferment, we also resumed our vehicle-replacement schedule, upgrading multiple staff vehicles, fire engines and ambulances — many of which have been in service for more than a decade. Staying true to our commitment to fiscal responsibility, Summit Fire & EMS continues to fund all capital expenses without taking on debt, ensuring that we remain good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

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**A couple of SFE stalwarts received prestigious career awards in 2024: Division Chief Kim McDonald, shown here, was named Fire Marshal of the Year by the Colorado Fire Marshal's Association in October. Earlier in the year, EMS Coordinator Jill Ridenhour received the American Ambulance Association's 2024 Vanguard Award as a trailblazer for other women in EMS.**

Looking ahead to 2025, we are exploring an expansion of our Keystone fire station to meet the growing needs of our internal Fleet Services division. We are also launching a Community Risk Reduction Division, which will focus on proactive measures to prevent emergencies, providing education, support and outreach to enhance safety across our district.

For the first time, we will be introducing a seasonal wildfire crew, dedicated to strengthening our initial attack capabilities, collaborating on prevention efforts, and assisting property owners with fire mitigation. Additionally, we are evaluating capital improvements to repurpose our old fire station in Summit Cove as a permanent base for our wildland fire operations.

Finally, while I always am reluctant to take any of the focus away from the outstanding work of our team, it probably is appropriate to reveal

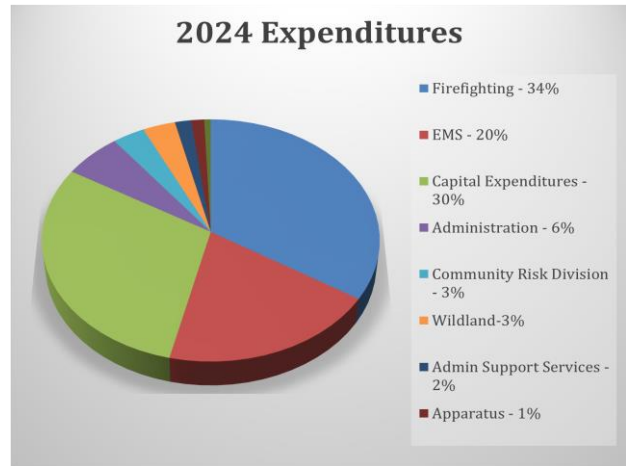
publicly that, after 32 years in the fire service, I have announced my intention to retire this summer. Our publicly elected Board of Directors will oversee the search for my successor, and I have full confidence that the dedicated professionals of this organization will continue to uphold the highest standards and exceed community expectations. I am immensely proud of where Summit Fire & EMS stands today and excited about its future.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our community. Your continued trust and support enable us to do what we do best — serve with compassion, dedication, and professionalism.

Stay safe, and thank you.

*- Chief Travis Davis*

## FINANCE



Summit Fire & EMS operated with a staff of 107 full-time employees in 2024, including 82 line-level first responders and 25 administrative, command and executive staff positions. The district operated four response stations, an administration building, and two adjunct stations, which serve as bases for the SFE Wildland Division and a U.S. Forest Service wildfire crew.

The district's financial philosophy emphasizes maintaining a highly trained, well-equipped, and experienced professional staff. This approach ensures the resources to respond effectively to all hazards while focusing on emergency prevention.

### Funding and Taxation

Property owners in the district contribute 13 mills annually in taxes, equivalent to \$468 for every \$500,000 of property value. The district has a longstanding policy of operating debt-free, paying up front for new vehicles to avoid using tax dollars for debt service.

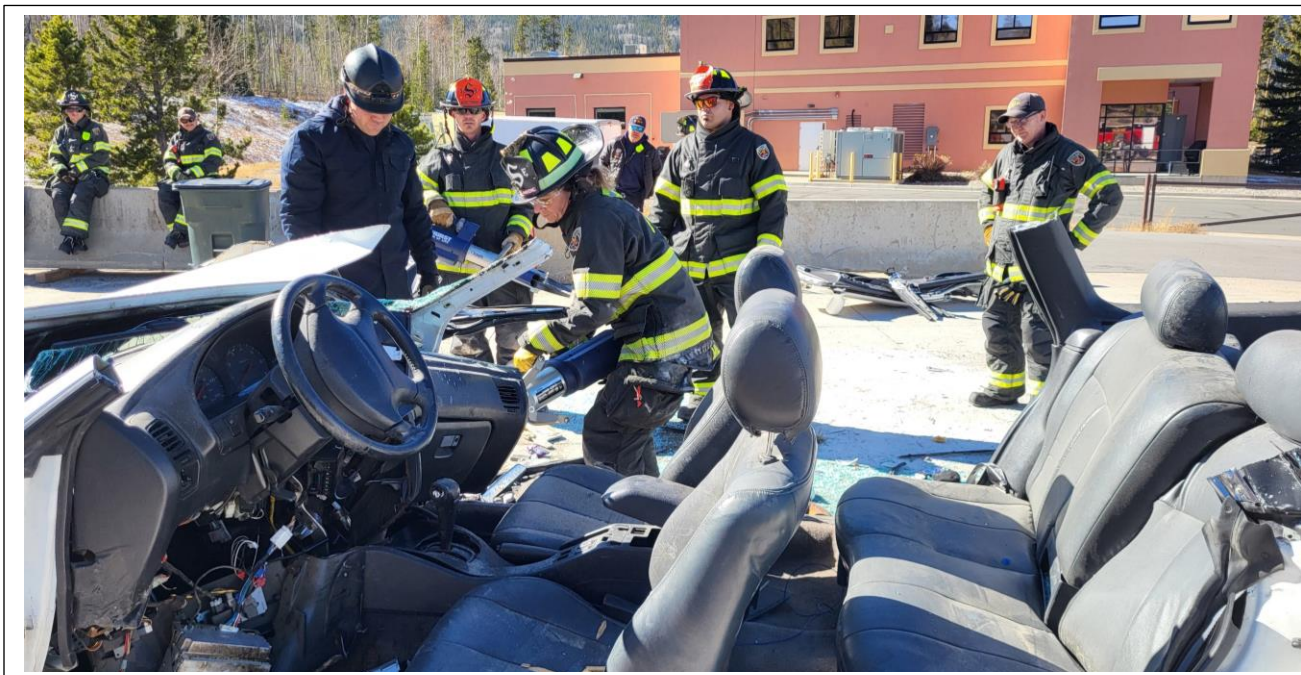
The budget is reviewed and approved by a publicly elected five-member Summit Fire &

EMS Board of Directors and is audited annually to ensure transparency and accountability.

The district's revenues for 2024 totaled \$33 million, exceeding the budgeted expenditures of \$30 million by \$3 million. This surplus was allocated toward capital expenditures, which totaled \$9 million in 2024. The ending fund balance of approximately \$35 million includes \$730,000 set aside as an emergency reserve and \$18 million reserved for future capital expenditures.

The district's approved 2025 budget of \$26 million reflects key priorities, including the opening of a new fire station in Silverthorne, with planned staffing of two personnel daily to enhance EMS and fire response coverage north of town. The budget also supports purchasing additional apparatus and equipment to ensure the district has the necessary resources to fulfill its mission and respond to all calls effectively.

The 2024 financial information provided is unaudited and subject to change. A copy of the 2025 budget is available upon request at the district's administration building.



**Training is a constant task in the emergency-response world, as we keep the skills of our firefighters and medics sharp and help them be prepared for any type of incident. At the High Country Training Center shared with Breckenridge-based Red, White & Blue Fire, our crews work monthly on practices such as vehicle extrication. Our crews put in more than 7,800 hours in 2024 at HCTC, at their stations and throughout the community.**

## OPERATIONS

As an all-hazards response agency, Summit Fire & EMS crew members must be prepared, trained and equipped to assist on far more than merely fires. In fact, fires are only a small part of our call volume, as nearly 60 percent of our 9-1-1 responses are for emergency medical services.

Under acting Operations Chief Rick Ihnken, the operations division responded to 4,237 calls for help in 2024, including nearly 2,500 EMS calls. Those numbers are relatively flat but have been trending upwards over the past 10 years, reflecting increases in population and visitation.

Notable incidents in 2024 included numerous extrications from motor-vehicle crashes, an overturned tanker on Loveland Pass with leaking hazardous liquids, a pileup of 12 motor vehicles inside the Eisenhower Tunnel, a six-vehicle crash on Interstate 70, a runaway truck fire that spread to the adjacent forest, a fire at Dillon Valley Elementary School, and several small wildfires.

YEAR	TOTAL CALLS	EMS CALLS
2024	4,237	2,496
2023	4,322	2,599
2022	4,268	2,204
2021	4,357	2,686
2020	4,135	2,507

In a continuing effort to reduce first-responder exposure to hazardous particles, crews in late 2024 were issued new, light outer clothing intended to be worn as an alternative when full firefighting bunker gear is not necessary.

We also are proud to note that members of the SFE Honor Guard volunteered at 14 events, serving to post colors and honoring three line-of-duty deaths from organizations around the state.



**Summit Fire & EMS firefighters and medics participate in focused, intensive CPR training monthly under the auspices of the High Country Training Center, a practice that has resulted in saving numerous lives and earning recognition with the Mission Lifeline Gold Award from the American Heart Association.**

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Summit Fire & EMS continues to rank among the top percentages nationally in patient-satisfaction surveys, a source of pride among the compassionate, competent professionals staffing our ambulances.

Many SFE medics are cross-trained as firefighters to bolster immediate response to emergencies that don't require care for any patients. Additionally, the organization increased EMS capacity by sending three firefighters to paramedic school in 2024. Meanwhile, ambulance crews have been hosting paramedic students from various programs as an informal recruitment effort.

While functioning as part of a tiered system, SFE has committed to keeping its ambulances and medics in district and available whenever

possible to provide EMS care to our community, rather than transporting patients to hospitals Denver – a round trip that can take five hours or more. As a result, private ambulance service Stadium Medical now handles more than 80 percent of out-of-county transports.

In 2024, SFE deepened collaborations with the Summit County Rescue Group through the Search and Rescue Paramedic program, allowing medics to join rescue teams in the backcountry to provide higher level emergency medical care.

Finally, the American Red Cross at its formal banquet in March recognized SFE A-Shift crew members with its Heroes Award for their life-saving efforts of Dillon resident who was in cardiac arrest.



**The Meadow Creek wildfire in October demonstrated the effectiveness of aggressive response to wildfires as soon as they are reported, quelling the threat before it grows. SFE collaborates with our wildfire partners at the U.S. Forest Service, our neighboring departments, the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control and others to reduce the chances of wildfires reaching developed areas of our community.**

## WILDFIRE

The Summit Fire & EMS Wildland Division oversees staff wildfire training and response to wildfires locally and nationally, as well as the management of community wildfire risk.

In 2024, the three-person division issued 56 new “backyard campfire” free permits and 301 renewals, conducted 54 courtesy wildfire mitigation assessments for property owners, completed 40 neighborhood/HOA assessments and conducted 225 mandatory defensible-space inspections for new construction.

Assisting county residents navigate challenges with homeowner’s insurance was a persistent theme. Guidance and mitigation prescriptions from SFE wildland specialists helped many county property owners get and keep their coverage in a tumultuous marketplace. In the fall, the Corinthian Hill neighborhood of Dillon

and the Cabin Creek HOA in Frisco both attained national Firewise neighborhood designations, marking a commitment to continually reducing the risk of wildfires to property, joining the Ruby Ranch, Hamilton Creek and Pebble Creek neighborhoods. SFE supports efforts by HOAs to apply for this designation.

With wildfire standing as the single most likely existential threat to our way of life here, every firefighter in the agency maintains a “red card” certification for fighting wildfires, and the department serves as the initial-attack response to wildfires within the district and in the surrounding White River National Forest.

The division coordinated firefighter response to several out-of-district wildfires during a very busy fire season nationally, bolstering SFE’s qualifications and experience.





**Summit Fire & EMS offers free fire-extinguisher training to local businesses upon request, among many other courtesy outreach efforts and professional guidance intended to support residents of the district and local civic organizations. Most can be scheduled directly through the website at [www.summitfire.org](http://www.summitfire.org).**

The SFE Community Risk Division, operating under the fire marshal, protects lives and property through planning, education and inspections.

With a staff of six full-time inspectors including supervisors, the division conducted 531 inspections for new construction and safety systems and another 476 annual fire-safety inspections of existing commercial properties. The organization updated 1,644 “pre-plans” that can be used to guide emergency response at businesses throughout the district. Inspection permits generated \$748,473, and another \$12,242 was collected from fines and re-inspections.

Collaborating with officials in Dillon, Frisco and Silverthorne, SFE is working to attach fire inspections to annual business-license renewals to ensure compliance and improve efficiency.

Besides conducting 70 fire drills at local schools, SFE staff members led 40 grade-specific classroom sessions on fire safety that reached 1,162 students from pre-K through fifth grade at each of the district’s four public elementary schools. Additionally, the department regularly participates in on-demand school and civic-group engagement such as hosting station tours, supporting special events, leading lessons on fire science and our role as community helpers and engaging in other activities in and out of the classroom.

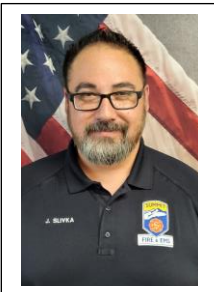
In 2025, SFE will establish a new Community Risk Reduction Division that will focus on statistics-based analysis to target common hazards and collaborate with community organizations to minimize their threat and frequency. This work dovetails with the department’s philosophy that the best way to help members of the public deal with emergencies is to avoid them in the first place.



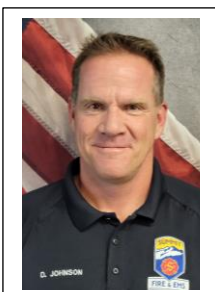
Being prepared to handle all matters of emergencies and anticipating problems that may develop later has become the calling of Summit Fire & EMS firefighters and medics. Training in June, for example, focused on the hazards of very difficult fires involving electric vehicles, an emerging threat because of their volatile batteries that burn tenaciously.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Summit Fire & EMS is governed by a five-member publicly elected board of directors, who generally serve three-year terms. The board is responsible for governance, financial oversight, policy setting and oversight of the fire chief. The current board is comprised of these volunteers:



**JoeBen Slivka**  
President



**Dan Johnson**  
Vice President



**John Piotti**  
Treasurer



**Jonathan Sinclair**  
Director



**Chuck Tolton**  
Director