

# MARIN COUNTY FIRE SERVICES SPECIAL STUDY (DRAFT)

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# FIRE STUDY CONTEXT

- Discretionary special study (not an MSR but draws on previous reviews from 2018–2022).
- At the request of the Commission in 2019, staff started this study with the understanding it was a low-priority project

## Relationship to the Past MSR

- *This report synthesizes work from the last 7+ years and works to update the Commission and public to recent changes in fire services throughout the county.*
- Why?
  - *In the last 7 years, many major changes/advancements have occurred, including the formation of MWPA, the consolidation of Southern Marin Fire and Mill Valley, and the creation of the OEM and much more.*
  - *Our goal here is to use previous MSRs to analyze departments while highlighting progressive changes, the ability for agencies to use Marin LAFCo as a resource, and reiterate recommendations from the past, as well as new ones.*

# FIRE SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Bolinas Fire  
Protection District  
(BFPD)

Central Marin Fire  
(CMFD) (JPA)

Inverness Public  
Utility District  
(IPUD)

Kentfield Fire  
Protection District  
(KFPD)

Marin County Fire  
(MCF)

Marinwood  
Community  
Services District  
(MCSD)

Novato Fire  
Protection District  
(NFPD)

Ross Valley Fire  
(RVFD) (JPA)

San Rafael Fire  
Department  
(SRFD)

Southern Marin  
Fire Protection  
District (SMFPD)

Stinson Beach  
Fire Protection  
District (SBFPD)

Tiburon Fire  
Protection District  
(TFPD)

# OVERVIEW

## A Diverse Network of 12 Fire Service Providers

Marin County's system is made up of 12 total agencies, including:

8 independent fire protection districts, 2 Joint Powers Authorities (Ross Valley & Central Marin), 1 city-run department (San Rafael), 1 county-run department (Marin County Fire)

This mix creates a hybrid governance landscape in which service delivery varies by region and jurisdictional structure.

## 38 Stations Distributed Across the County

Agencies collectively operate **38 fire stations** strategically positioned to serve both urban and high-risk wildland areas.

Station distribution reflects Marin's terrain, WUI exposure, and regional response patterns. Many stations host multi-agency crews during peak fire season through mutual-aid and CAL FIRE staffing agreements.

## Approximately 557 Full-Time Fire Personnel

Across all agencies, Marin maintains an estimated 557 career firefighters, in addition to seasonal staff, volunteers, reserves, and specialized teams.

Several agencies have increased staffing in the last five years, particularly in West Marin and hybrid volunteer/career districts.

Workforce provides a full all-hazards response: fire, EMS, wildland, rescue, and prevention.

7 of 12 agencies are ISO Class 1-2, placing Marin among the highest-rated fire systems nationally.

# OVERVIEW

## Integrated Governance: Mix of Cities, Districts, and JPAs

The system includes a combination of independent special districts, city departments, and JPAs that collaborate through:

- Shared command models
- Contract service agreements
- Mutual/automatic aid
- Joint training and prevention programs

This complexity reinforces the value of LAFCo's countywide analysis to identify overlaps and opportunities for efficiencies.

## Countywide Dispatch Centralized Under the New ECC (2024)

Marin launched a single emergency command center in 2024, consolidating what were previously fragmented dispatch systems.

The ECC provides:

- Countywide call-taking and dispatch for fire/EMS
- Standardized resource deployment zones (North, Central, South, West)
- Modern CAD, MERA radio integration, and streamlined interagency communication

This represents one of the most significant operational changes since the last round of MSRs.

## MWPA: \$20 Million Annually for Prevention & Readiness

Formed in 2020, MWPA provides approximately **\$20 million per year** for:

- Defensible space inspections
- Vegetation management
- Evacuation route maintenance
- Home hardening incentives
- Public education and readiness campaigns

MWPA funding has transformed wildfire mitigation capacity across all agencies.

# PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

- Southern Marin & Mill Valley Consolidation COMPLETED AS OF 2022
- West Marin – Expansion of Year-Round EMS Capacity
  - Original MSR noted reliance on seasonal ambulance staffing. Agencies are working on year-round staffing by 2030.
  - Updated recommendation: continue planning and funding for permanent, year-round EMS coverage.
- Angel Island Fire Service Coordination
  - Multi-agency work group recommended. Several exploratory meetings have occurred, but no structural change yet.
  - Recommendation continued coordination needed due to recurring response workload placed on Tiburon FPD despite the island being outside its legal boundary.
- Central Marin FD & Kentfield FPD Governance Exploration
  - Recommendation: continue dialogue or consider a phased approach (shared admin, then service consolidation if viable).
- Tiburon-Belvedere Governance Alignment
  - Recommendation being the consideration of formal annexation of the City of Belvedere. In 2024 the agencies-initiated study of this concept; process is ongoing.
- Ross Valley – Explore Creation of a Single Fire District
  - Recommendation begin formal conversations on independent district formation to address long-standing governance fragmentation, duplicated administration, and service cohesion issues.

# PAST RECOMMENDATION

- San Rafael Region – Regionalization & Sustainability

- *Recommendation to explore formation of a single regional fire agency or strengthen long-term agreements to ensure continuity and reduce vulnerability to contract termination timelines*

- *New updates reflect emerging staffing discussions between SRFD and Marinwood in 2025.*

# NEW RECOMMENDATION

- Stinson Beach FPD – New Firehouse Planning

- *Significant change since the 2022 MSR: transition to more full-time staffing.*

- *Current facility does not support hybrid volunteer/career structure.*

- *Recommendation: explore state, federal, and private funding options for a new firehouse designed for year-round staffing*

- Shared Administrative Services Across Agencies

- *Based on updated staffing and operational data, many agencies—particularly smaller districts—struggle to recruit and retain administrative personnel (HR, finance, IT, training, fire prevention).*

- *Recommendation is to develop a framework for countywide or multi-agency shared administrative infrastructure*

# NEXT STEPS

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The public comment period remains open through **January 22**, giving agencies and residents time to review and provide feedback.

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Commission : Feedback and discussion regarding the draft

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Goal: to have all comments from the commission and agencies returned by January 22<sup>nd</sup> and have any requests incorporated by the February 2026 Meeting

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# DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

