



## **Proposal Overview: Establishing a Fire Safe Council Center at MVFD Station #2**

March 18, 2025

**Introduction:** After a series of productive discussions with Chief McEachen, we are pleased to present a proposal that revitalizes Morongo Valley Fire Department (MVFD) Station #2, transforming it into an active, community-focused resource at no direct cost to MVFD or the Community Services District (CSD). This initiative will repurpose an underutilized building, converting it into a vibrant hub for community preparedness, education, and resilience.

**Building on Community Success:** Following the community's positive reception of our Smokey Bear Fire Danger sign along Highway 62, we seek to further strengthen our partnership with MVFD and CSD. Given Morongo Valley's high fire severity rating, a dedicated Fire Safe Council (FSC) presence at Station #2 will address critical community preparedness and fire mitigation needs.

**The Need in Morongo Valley:** Morongo Valley's classification as a very high fire severity zone highlights the urgent need for proactive preparedness, education, and mitigation. Establishing a local FSC office provides targeted, timely, and sustainable solutions specifically tailored to the area's unique risks.

**Fire Safety, Education, Mitigation, and Disaster Response Hub:** We will also partner with and facilitate disaster and fire preparedness events, with a focus on engaging youth through interactive experiences, including visits from Smokey the Bear (costume) and demonstrations by Sparky the Dog (robotics). Station #2 will serve as a comprehensive community hub designed to enhance fire safety, provide ongoing education, and improve local mitigation and disaster response capabilities. Key activities will include

- Regular community training sessions, workshops, and demonstrations tailored to local needs, covering defensible space, evacuation planning, and homeowner preparedness.
- Coordinated defensible assessments of all homes annually, which in the State Responsibility Area (SRA), to ensure compliance with fire mitigation and safety standards.
- Centralized storage and rapid deployment of essential mitigation and emergency preparedness equipment.
- Implementation of volunteer-driven programs, including:
  - CERT (Community Emergency Response Team): A national program providing residents with training in basic disaster response skills, enabling them to safely support the community until professional responders arrive.
  - Fire Corps: A volunteer program supporting local fire departments by engaging community members in non-operational roles, such as public education, administrative support, and fire prevention activities.

**FSC Operational Oversight & Management:** The FSC will assume full responsibility for the management, administration, and coordination of all proposed programs and associated grants, including:

- Comprehensive grant application processes, management, reporting, and operational oversight for CERT, Fire Corps, and other community-focused fire safety initiatives.
- Collaboration with MVFD to strategically segment Morongo Valley into distinct areas for achieving Firewise USA community recognition, enhancing overall fire safety and potentially leading to insurance discounts for local homeowners.
- Relieving administrative and operational burdens from MVFD, freeing resources and capacity within the department.



**Proven and Effective Model:** The FSC and fire department/district partnership model has demonstrated consistent success throughout California. This proven approach ensures local relevance, impactful results, and efficient resource allocation in communities comparable to Morongo Valley:

- Fire Safe Council of San Diego County operates within the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County, a government office, in partnership with county fire agencies and CAL FIRE to coordinate wildfire preparedness programs.
- Carbon Canyon Fire Safe Council (Chino Hills/Brea) is housed within and supported by the Chino Valley Fire District, integrating its efforts directly with local fire department resources.
- Lakehills Fire Safe Council (El Dorado Hills) operates out of El Dorado Hills Fire Station #84, serving as a direct community resource for fire prevention and education.
- Humboldt County Fire Safe Council operates out of Humboldt County government offices, overseeing the county's wildfire protection strategy.
- Yuba Watershed Protection & Fire Safe Council collaborates with Yuba County officials, CAL FIRE, and the Yuba Water Agency, operating from public agency offices to integrate fire safety efforts with government infrastructure.

**Cost-Effective Implementation:** We propose a nominal lease agreement—symbolically priced at \$1 per term—with the FSC covering all utilities, routine facility maintenance, and related operational expenses.

**Funding Opportunities and Long-Term Sustainability:** With our established 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and extensive grant management experience, the FSC is uniquely positioned to leverage existing resources and secure new funding opportunities, including:

- Existing grants for chipper days, dead tree removal, and FSC operations.
- CalOES Listos Grant for CERT programming.
- California State Nonprofit Security Grant Program for facility enhancements.
- EPA Region 9 Thriving Communities Resiliency Center Grant for rural community resilience centers.
- CalOES Hazard Mitigation Grant for large-scale fire risk mitigation initiatives.

**Community and Operational Benefits:** Beyond direct safety improvements, an FSC presence in Morongo Valley will provide:

- Enhanced community engagement and proactive education.
- Increased visibility of MVFD and CSD's dedication to community safety and resilience.
- Strengthened partnerships among FSC, MVFD, CSD, local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

**Conclusion and Call to Action:** This collaborative effort represents an exceptional opportunity to enhance Morongo Valley's preparedness, resilience, and overall safety. We respectfully seek your enthusiastic support for the FSC's use of MVFD Station #2, which will significantly advance community preparedness initiatives and create lasting benefits for all residents.

*We look forward to your support in making this vision a reality.*

Respectfully submitted.

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