



COOPERATIVE FIRE RESPONSE & EMERGENCY SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP

A Proposal to the Morongo Valley Community Services District

Submitted by HDEAA Nonprofit Corp. DBA as Desert Region Fire Safe (DRFS)
A 501(C)3 Nonprofit Organization.

1. Executive Summary

Desert Region Fire Safe proposes expanding its existing relationship with MVCSD and MVFD through a cooperative fire-response and emergency-support partnership at no additional cost to the District. DRFS would provide, outfit, maintain, insure, and staff a nonprofit-owned Ford F-350 utility apparatus for supplemental firefighting, emergency medical assistance, and all-hazards incident support, with all associated expenses covered by DRFS.

The unit would be based at MVFD Station 2, where DRFS already operates its Fire Prevention Office under an existing District lease. DRFS would provide the apparatus, equipment, personnel, training, maintenance, insurance, and routine operational funding. No District purchase of apparatus, additional staffing, or routine operating funding is requested.

The proposed partnership combines appropriately qualified DRFS emergency-response personnel with an organized Fire Corps volunteer program supporting apparatus readiness, wildfire prevention, logistics, and community preparedness. DRFS has received approval to begin a local Fire Corps program and has begun work to establish its first Firewise USA community.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would define responsibilities, operational limitations, insurance, liability, station use, and coordination. MVFD would retain jurisdictional authority and incident command.

2. Why This Partnership Matters

Morongo Valley's rural geography, surrounding wildland areas, dispersed development, and limited access routes present distinct emergency-response challenges. With fire services operating from a single station, local resources can be stretched during significant incidents or when personnel and equipment are committed elsewhere.

DRFS personnel already work throughout the desert regions of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties on wildfire mitigation, defensible-space assessments, preparedness, and community outreach. This work builds familiarity with local neighborhoods, access routes, hazards, and residents. The proposal builds on that existing presence to strengthen MVFD's capabilities without creating a separate fire department or duplicating professional services.

Equally important, the partnership would create new opportunities for Morongo Valley residents to become directly involved in supporting their local fire services through the Fire Corps volunteer program. Bringing community members into prevention, preparedness, and emergency-support activities can strengthen relationships between residents and MVFD, foster greater community ownership, and build public confidence in local fire services.

Together, the supplemental apparatus and volunteer program would demonstrate a visible expansion of local fire and emergency-support capabilities, increasing community involvement and strengthening MVFD's presence without requiring additional District staffing, apparatus purchases, or routine operating funding.

3. An Existing Foundation: Prevention, Readiness, and Response

DRFS operates its Fire Prevention Office at Station 2 and conducts wildfire risk reduction, public education, and community preparedness programs. Two developing initiatives further strengthen the proposed partnership:

Local Fire Corps program

DRFS has received approval from the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to establish a local Fire Corps program, a national initiative that engages community volunteers in supporting fire departments and emergency services through non-firefighting roles.

DRFS will recruit, train, and organize volunteers to support its own operations, including apparatus care, equipment inventories, supplies, logistics, wildfire prevention, and community outreach. Through the proposed partnership, Fire Corps volunteers may also assist MVFD with station and apparatus support, equipment readiness, and on-scene incident activities such as firefighter rehabilitation, responder hydration, incident logistics, auxiliary communications, Red Flag Warning patrols, and evacuation support, within their training and authorized roles.

The program will strengthen local emergency preparedness, expand community participation, and provide additional support capacity while allowing qualified emergency responders to focus on operational duties.

Firewise USA initiative

DRFS is establishing its first Firewise USA community in Morongo Valley, bringing residents together to reduce wildfire risks through defensible space, home hardening, and neighborhood preparedness. Once officially recognized, participating properties will qualify for wildfire mitigation insurance discounts under California's Safer from Wildfires regulations, which require insurers to recognize Firewise USA communities in good standing.

Together, these activities link prevention (reducing risk), readiness (maintaining equipment and people), and response (qualified supplemental assistance).

4. Apparatus and Proposed Capabilities

DRFS has acquired a Ford F-350 utility vehicle formerly used in emergency services. After MOU execution, DRFS would outfit it as a supplemental brush and emergency-support apparatus, appropriate to its intended functions.

Fire suppression and fireground support

- Wildland and limited exterior fire suppression; initial fire control within unit capabilities
- Fire patrol, mop-up, firewatch, and fireground logistics

Medical and all-hazards incident support

- Basic life-support and emergency medical assistance
- Traffic collision support, including scene safety, EMS assistance, and incident logistics
- Firefighter and emergency-responder rehabilitation
- Search and rescue support within personnel and equipment capabilities
- Evacuation support, public notification, and assistance to affected residents under the responsible agency's direction
- Roadway scene protection and traffic control when appropriately authorized
- Storm, flood, disaster, communications, supply, and resource-coordination support

Community risk reduction

- Defensible-space assessments, Firewise activities, preparedness education, and public events

The unit would not provide interior structural firefighting, technical rescue, or patient transport. Activities would be limited by qualifications, equipment, insurance, applicable law, and the responsible agency's authority.

5. Operational Role and Coordination

The DRFS unit would support MVFD and other responsible agencies through requested or otherwise authorized assignments, operating within personnel qualifications, equipment capabilities, and established incident-command procedures.

DRFS's existing field activities throughout the Morongo Basin create opportunities for its personnel to identify emerging hazards, report incidents, and provide assistance when appropriate. This local presence can contribute to situational awareness and improve coordination between community-based resources and responding agencies.

Given the geographic separation of the two MV stations, DRFS personnel may occasionally encounter emergencies before responding fire department resources arrive. In these circumstances, appropriately qualified personnel may provide lawful assistance within their training and equipment capabilities, notify emergency dispatch, and coordinate with arriving responders.

DRFS is not establishing an independent first-response service, but its personnel are not expected to stand by when they encounter an emergency and can safely provide assistance within their qualifications.

The proposed partnership would formalize this existing community presence into an organized supplemental resource, with MVFD retaining jurisdictional authority and incident command.

6. Personnel, Fire Corps, and Operational Readiness

DRFS has received approval from the National Volunteer Fire Council to establish a local Fire Corps program, which will serve as the organized volunteer-support component of this partnership. The program will support apparatus readiness, prevention, logistics, and authorized non-operational incident activities, while qualified DRFS emergency-response personnel perform assignments requiring specialized certifications and training.

Apparatus and equipment readiness

- Cleaning, washing, organization, and general care of the brush truck
- Visual inspections, basic preventive care, and reporting of deficiencies within volunteer qualifications
- Equipment and medical-supply inventories, tracking, restocking, and storage
- Readiness checklists, logistical support, and documentation

Authorized incident-support activities

- Responder hydration, canteen and rehabilitation support within training and supervision
- Incident supplies, auxiliary communications, documentation, and logistics
- Observational Red Flag Warning patrols, shelter support, and other non-hazardous assignments when authorized

Prevention and community programs

- Defensible-space outreach, Firewise activities, smoke-alarm and preparedness education
- Community events, volunteer recruitment, training administration, and public information

DRFS would establish appropriate orientation, supervision, training, and activity records. Safety-critical mechanical work, operational readiness decisions, hazardous response, and clinical care would remain with qualified, authorized personnel. Fire Corps membership alone would not authorize firefighting or EMS duties.

7. Relevant California Partnership Models

LA County Fire / LAEPF Community Brigade

The Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Foundation's Community Brigade Pilot Program, developed in partnership with the Los Angeles County Fire Department and initially launched in seven Santa Monica Mountains communities, demonstrates how a nonprofit organization can integrate trained community members into a formal fire-service partnership.

Unlike a conventional Fire Corps volunteer-support program, the Community Brigade incorporates separately trained and equipped volunteers who perform authorized firefighting activities, including limited fire suppression, ember and spot-fire control, structure-protection support, and mop-up under fire-department direction. The program also supports evacuation activities, wildfire preparedness, and community risk reduction. The formal partnership was approved in October 2023.

The 2026 Natural Hazards Center study, *Trial by Fire*, examined the program's experience during major Southern California wildfires, highlighting the value of community trust, local knowledge, communications, and coordination with professional responders.

DRFS proposes a smaller, locally tailored approach that applies these principles within its available equipment, personnel qualifications, and authorized scope of operations.

San Bernardino County Fire Corps

San Bernardino County Fire's Emergency Services Support program provides a closer regional example of non-operational volunteers supporting fire personnel with on-scene logistics, Red Flag Warning patrols, shelter reception, transport assignments, public outreach, and technical support. County materials describe defined training, supervision, and station-based support responsibilities.

These models serve different purposes: Community Brigade illustrates formally authorized community firefighting support; Fire Corps illustrates structured volunteer assistance that allows qualified responders to focus on emergency operations. The proposed DRFS partnership incorporates both concepts while keeping their personnel qualifications and authorizations distinct.

8. Benefits to MVCSD and Morongo Valley

- Additional local support for fire, medical, roadway, evacuation, and other incidents
 - No requested District apparatus purchase, new positions, or routine program funding
 - Better use of DRFS's existing Station 2 presence and community field activities
 - Volunteer-supported apparatus care, inventory, logistics, and ongoing readiness
 - Integration of Firewise, defensible-space, education, and emergency support
 - Clear command relationships, accountability, and operating limitations under an MOU
-

The intended result is a practical force multiplier for MVFD, not a replacement for professional firefighters or existing District resources.

9. Proposed Partnership Framework

The proposed partnership would combine DRFS's nonprofit resources and existing Station 2 presence with MVFD's established emergency-response structure.

DRFS would own and operate the apparatus and provide its equipment, qualified personnel, training, insurance, maintenance, and routine funding. MVFD would retain jurisdictional authority, with the DRFS unit available to supplement authorized emergency operations.

The apparatus would be based at MVFD Station 2 under an agreement that expressly permits its use while preserving the existing lease. A separate Memorandum of Understanding would establish the specific terms for station use, operational coordination, personnel responsibilities, insurance, liability, and other requirements.

The arrangement is intended to add local capabilities without transferring apparatus ownership to MVCSD or requiring the District to assume routine program expenses.

10. Phased Implementation

1. **Phase 1** — Execute the MOU, including station-use and operational terms.
 2. **Phase 2** — DRFS outfits the apparatus with appropriate equipment, supplies, safety systems, and identification.
 3. **Phase 3** — DRFS verifies personnel qualifications, equipment readiness, applicable coverage, and compliance.
 4. **Phase 4** — Following completion of outfitting, training, insurance, and readiness preparations, DRFS notifies MVFD that the apparatus is available for authorized assignments under the cooperative agreement.
 5. **Phase 5** — Begin authorized cooperative operations while continuing prevention, Fire Corps, and Firewise activities.
-

11. Requested Board Action

HDEAA Nonprofit Corp., doing business as Desert Region Fire Safe, respectfully requests that the MVCSD Board of Directors approve the proposed cooperative Fire Response and Emergency Support Partnership and authorize the appropriate District representatives to finalize and execute an MOU, subject to applicable legal and insurance review.

The partnership would establish a DRFS-owned supplemental apparatus based at Station 2, supported by qualified emergency-response personnel and an organized Fire Corps volunteer program, while preserving MVFD's jurisdictional and operational authority.

Selected References

- LAEPF, Community Brigade Pilot Program:
<https://laepf.org/community-brigade-pilot-program>
- LAEPF, Community Brigade volunteer roles:
<https://laepf.org/join>
- San Bernardino County Fire, Emergency Services Support Fact Sheet:
<https://www.sbcounty.gov/uploads/SBCFire/documents/programs/Fact-Sheet-ESS.pdf>
- San Bernardino County, National Volunteer Week / Fire Corps:
<https://main.sbcounty.gov/2025/04/24/county-celebrates-national-volunteer-week-serve-where-it-matters-most/>
- Natural Hazards Center, Trial by Fire (2026):
<https://hazards.colorado.edu/quick-response-report/trial-by-fire>
- National Volunteer Fire Council, Fire Corps:
<https://www.nvfc.org/programs/firecorps/>
- NFPA, Firewise USA:
<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa>