

What is a Fire Protection District?

Per Indiana Code, a fire Protection district may be created for fire protection, fire prevention, and other purposes related fire protection and fire prevention.

A district may consist of one or more townships or an entire county.

A district may be established by county legislative bodies, freeholders, or municipalities (cities and towns) in all 92 Indiana counties

Who runs the District?

Per Indiana Code, the County Commissioners appoint a board of fire trustees. These trustees must be qualified by knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to fire protection and related activities of the District.

In Brown County, a fire trustee is appointed from each of the four townships with one extra “at large” member of voting purposes.

The Board of Fire Trustees is required to meet at least four times per year.

Powers and Duties of the District:

- Has the same powers and duties as the township trustee with respect to fire protection;
- Sign contracts with the volunteer fire departments for services
- Create uniform rules for investigations and hearings;
- May levy taxes at a uniform rate on property within the District

How is the District Funded?

- As with other units of local government, the Fire District budget and local property taxes are determined by the County Council;
- Federal and State grants are extra funding sources for special projects;
- The District is a special feature for grant qualification with foundation and endowment grantors.

Advantages of a Countywide Fire Protection District

- Enhanced planning and coordination
- Increased funding
- Tightened administrative accountability
- Improved operating efficiency
- Enhanced quality of services provided to the public
- Creation of career opportunities for volunteers
- Improved recruitment of volunteers
- Establish specialized emergency services (wildland fire teams, swift water rescue teams, search and rescue teams, Community Emergency Response Teams)
- Lower homeowner insurance rates

- Lower fire department insurance rates (one group policy)
- Countywide integrated training
- Centralized purchasing for lower costs of goods
- Reduction in confusion, frustration and occasional open confrontation among volunteers
- Review board to hear and mediate problems

LET'S CLEAR THE AIR!

“A fire district will raise your taxes.” **FALSE**

The Fire Protection District must present its yearly budget to the County Council for approval. The County Council has the final word on ALL tax rates.

“A fire district can issue bonds and take out loans.” **TRUE**

In the same manner that the Township Trustees have this power to provide fire protection, so can a Fire District. A Township Trustee can also establish Cumulative (CUM) Funds for the purchase of equipment and buildings, (as in Washington and now Van Buren Townships.) The CUM Fund is simply another fire tax.

“A fire district removes your control of your fire protection.” **FALSE**

Indiana Code requires fire protection be provided for county residents. Whether it's through the County Commissioners, Township Trustees or Countywide Fire Protection District Brown County residents will have emergency services. The membership of the Board of Fire Trustees' represents every township and mirrors other successfully appointed boards in the County such as the Library Board, the Election Board, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Area Plan Commission.

“The fire district will take equipment and give it to other fire departments.” **FALSE**

ALL equipment and ALL fund raising money will stay with the fire department that purchased the equipment and conducted the fund raising.

“Four of the six fire departments oppose the creation of a fire district.” **MISLEADING**

The two largest fire departments in the County have supported the formation of a countywide fire protection district. The volunteer membership in those two departments is greater than all of the other four departments combined. Restated – over 50% of all volunteer firefighters in Brown County support a countywide fire protection district.

Bottom Line – The Brown County Fire Protection District has passed ALL legal challenges. Why not give them a chance to provide the opportunities they are prepared to bring to Brown County's emergency services?