

# Councillor Request Inquiry #17-2021

2021

## Educating Residents on Firefighting Charges

Please provide information on how the County is educating residents on charges for firefighting that may exceed the normal home insurance fire coverage, and please provide information to Council on:

- County's policy and procedures in billing residents for fire response;
- Any difference between urban, acreage and rural fire response policy and procedures;
- Amounts billed to residents over the last 5 years;
- Any guidelines available to residents on the appropriate fire response coverage.

Emergency services provides the following response to Councillor Smith's request for information, as outlined during the Council meeting on April 13, 2021.

Generally, a fire response is a municipal service covered by property taxes, however there are specific activities conducted during a response that are not, such as: cellulose insulation removal, disposal fees, security services, etc. Costs are recovered when Strathcona County Emergency Services has secondary expenses to the immediate fire suppression effort required to make the area safe once the initial incident/fire is under control. There have been no billings for "fire response" however, billing has occurred for secondary expenses and those costs are dependent upon the extent of secondary services provided.

Bylaw 5-2021, [Fire Services Bylaw](#), Section 4, recovery of expenses, provides the authority to charge back *"The owner of a property is liable to the County for all expenses and costs related to the County extinguishing fires on the property."* These fees are outlined within [Schedule A](#) to Bylaw 49-2020, Fees, Rates and Charges for 2021 (page 54). In practice, we rarely apply these charges. Charges may be applied under circumstances where the fire occurred as a direct result of failure to follow a fire ban or other relevant bylaws.

Rural residences in Strathcona County may also be eligible for reduced fire insurance rates as Strathcona County Emergency Services has been accredited by [Fire Underwriters Survey](#) to provide Superior Tanker Shuttle Services. This means we are able to deliver an uninterrupted water supply for fire protection in certain rural areas without public hydrants. Further information on this service is available at [strathcona.ca](http://strathcona.ca).

We do recommend that residents contact their insurance company to confirm what coverage they provide and recommend as each property may have unique considerations.

SCES deployment guidelines outline the specific apparatus and personnel that are dispatched to emergencies. These guidelines target industry best practice and vary according to the specific need/emergency identified by the 911 caller. This is referred to as the "first alarm assignment". For fire emergencies in areas where hydrants are available (within Sherwood Park), the first alarm assignment consists of 2 fire trucks, one ladder truck, one command car, and one ambulance. For fire emergencies where hydrants are not available (rural Strathcona County including all acreage subdivisions) the first alarm assignment is 2 fire trucks, 2 water tankers, a command car, one ambulance, and we augment the response by paging part time stations 2 and 3 to respond with additional fire trucks and water tankers. Once on scene the incident commander will assess the situation and request additional resources as needed by calling a "second alarm". Resources from a second alarm may include overtime callback personnel, part time members, and/or mutual aid requests of neighboring communities.

Jeff Hutton  
Fire Chief and Director of Emergency Services  
Strathcona Emergency Services