

22 April 2021



Timberline Fire Protection District

660 Highway 46, Black Hawk, Colorado 80422
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www.timberlinefire.com

Dr. David W. Fahey, Director
NOAA Chemical Sciences Laboratory
325 Broadway, R/CSL
Boulder CO 80305

Dear Dr. Fahey,

Timberline Fire Protection District (TFPD) wishes to express our interest in acquiring the property previously known as the Fritz Peak Observatory, which is currently being disposed of by the Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This property is located at 19126 State Highway 119 in Rollinsville, Colorado, and includes 5 plus acres of land, a laboratory building, a residential cottage, and an observation platform constructed on Little Dutch Peak.

We understand that this property may be eligible for transfer to TFPD under the provisions of Federal Management Regulations Section (FMR) 102-75.750 for use as an emergency management facility.

The property is eminently suitable for the FMR's purpose under this section by providing a site to support TFPD's mission.

Introduction

Timberline Fire Protection District serves both Gilpin and Boulder Counties in Colorado. The district is 30 miles west of the Denver/Boulder metropolitan area, spanning the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Highway between the casino gaming towns of Black Hawk and Central City and the Boulder County town of Nederland. TFPD provides emergency services for approximately 175 square miles of mountain territory with elevations ranging from approximately 6,000 to over 13,000 feet.

We are an all-hazards agency, responding to everything from medical calls and vehicle accidents, to structure and wildland fires, and backcountry and technical rescues, with a local population of approximately 6,000 year-round residents. In addition to the many subdivisions and communities within our boundaries are the Golden Gate Canyon State Park, thousands of acres of National Forest and BLM lands, countless popular hiking trails, world-class backcountry skiing and climbing destinations, a vast network of OHV trails, and the southeastern portion of Eldora Mountain Ski Resort.

Additionally, TFPD responds through mutual aid agreements to the gaming towns of Blackhawk and Central City, which at busy times can see as many as 50,000 visitors per year. We also see a seasonal population surge of 15,000-20,000 people in our national forests, as well as 2 million visitors

per year in Golden Gate Canyon State Park, which is in the center of the district.

Current Challenges to our Mission:

Currently TFPD leases apparatus staging space from Gilpin County Public Works in the Rollinsville/Tolland area. This has put an undue burden on both entities as the county has heavy road equipment that sits outside due to our usage. Our next closest station to this area is a large metal building that is becoming unfit and unsafe to provide adequate space for our staffing and apparatus. The current metal building is over 40 years old, and after multiple repairs, is still leaking from the roof and many seams. Having both of these stations active ensures a quick response and keeps the ISO (insurance ratings) low for the property owners within this area of the district.

In recent years, Timberline has had to adapt to increased calls and decreased local volunteers by recruiting volunteers that do not live within our district. These firefighters come to our district to volunteer their time and stay in our firehouse, and many shifts are for several consecutive days. Currently, we have only one station that can accommodate overnight firefighters. If we are able to obtain this facility, we plan to remodel the 3rd floor into 7-9 bedrooms. This will allow us to increase our overnight accommodations significantly. In turn, this will lead to a faster and stronger response to emergencies within our district.

Justification for Request:

The Observatory is perfectly located between the two stations noted in our challenges. Responding from the Observatory will allow us to maintain the low ISO rating for the homeowners in this area. We will also have the opportunity to expand our shift-worker force, giving them an appropriate place to stay overnight. The Observatory has a large common room on the 2nd floor that will work perfectly for our district as we anticipate that we can train the entire staff of our agency in this space at one time. We also expect this space will give us the ability to accommodate our large volunteer appreciation events and allow room for the public to access to our Board of Directors meetings and other public meetings/events. Currently we do not have a room large enough to house these events, which means we have to rent facilities that are outside of our district. This, in turn, can result in delayed response time to emergencies.

Once this facility is remodeled and garage bays have been added, we plan to close the station 1.5 miles to the south and no longer house equipment in the county building 1.5 miles to the north. Eliminating these stations will be a cost savings as we will only heat, insure, maintain and plow one station versus the two currently occupied. Not only will there be a cost savings, the District will be more efficient by consolidating the equipment into one facility.

The ability to house an increased number of volunteer firefighters will have a significant positive impact on our response times in the area. It will also provide a safer working environment for our responders. Currently it is not uncommon for many of our fire trucks to be dispatched to calls with one or two responders. Once this transition is complete, by combining two stations and providing additional rooms for firefighters, our trucks will likely respond with 4-5 fire fighters on board. Many studies have shown that arriving on scene of emergencies with 4 or more firefighters is more effective and much safer for the responders.

Another significant issue we face is the outgrowing of our headquarters. We currently have 7 employees working in a building that has only 3 offices. If we are able to obtain the Observatory, we plan to renovate the first floor of the building and move our headquarters there. This will also allow us to move our other staffed station slightly farther south in our district, which will provide much faster response to the busiest area of our district.

As you can see from the short list of plans for the Observatory, if we are able to obtain this facility it will have a ripple effect across our district and will improve the services we provide to our residents and visitors across not only our entire district but to our mutual-and auto-aid partners surrounding our district.

Historical Preservation:

While the Fritz Peak Observatory has not been designated as a historic building, we are very excited for the opportunity to preserve the unique history of this facility. We will be adding bays to the south side of the building but intend to preserve and enhance the appearance of the existing building. This building has been a landmark on the historic Peak to Peak Highway in the middle of our district for nearly a century.

In Conclusion:

We will continue to work with GSA as part of its regular property disposal process; however, we want to let you know directly of Timberline's sincere interest in acquiring this property to enhance and expand our ability to respond to all emergencies and fulfill our mission. We look forward to hearing a positive response granting ownership of this unique property to TFPD for the public's benefit.

If you have any questions regarding Timberline's interest in acquiring this property, please contact Paul Ondr, Fire Chief by electronic mail at pvondr@timberlinefire.com, or by telephone at 303-582-5768 x5.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Paul Ondr, Fire Chief
Timberline Fire Protection District



Richard M. Wenzel, III
Board of Directors, President