

FACT SHEET

SARASOTA COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES Fire Assessments

CURRENT AND PROPOSED FIRE ASSESSMENT FEE RATES SUBJECT TO BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL.

PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION	CURRENT RATES PER EBU OR SPACE	UPDATED RATES PER EBU OR SPACE
Residential	\$6.72/EBU	\$6.99/EBU
Multi-family	\$13.29/EBU	\$12.24/EBU
Non-residential	\$13.29/EBU	\$18.53/EBU
Mobile Home Space	\$67.20/Space	\$69.90/Space
Travel Trailer Space	\$43.86/Space	\$61.15/Space

HOW THE NEW CLASSIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS WOULD AFFECT TYPICAL COUNTY PROPERTIES.

- A 2,500 square-foot single-family home with no outbuildings would increase from \$168 to \$174.75.
- A 1,000 square-foot multi-family condo could see a decrease from \$132.90 to \$122.40.
- A 2,000 square-foot non-residential small business would increase from \$265.80 to \$370.60.



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WHAT IS A FIRE ASSESSMENT?

- Fire assessments are charges imposed against real property to fund the fire services provided to property.
- The assessment is based upon the benefit received by the property.
- Sarasota County has used assessments to fund fire protection services for more than 20 years.
- The assessment is based upon the square footage of a structure on a property, and demand for service to that structure based upon the property classification such as single-family homes.

WHY USE ASSESSMENTS?

- Because fire assessment rates are based upon square footage and demand instead of home value, they are cost-effective and financially stable means of funding fire services.
- They are a benefit-based method that requires annual approval and provides a dedicated funding source for fire protection.

HOW DOES THE COUNTY DEVELOP ITS FIRE ASSESSMENT?

- Sarasota County uses historical demand methodology, which is based on the fundamental components of the initial response by the department, so there is equality in the methodology.
- The methodology is based upon:
 - Fire protection service delivery.
 - Fire department budget.
 - Call/incident data for fire responses only. EMS protection is a benefit to citizens not property and is therefore funded through property tax millage.
 - Property Appraiser information.
- The demand methodology has been tested in court within the State and upheld.
- The current Historical demand methodology and study has been in place since 1996, and needed to be updated to reflect current services.

WHAT IS CHANGING IN THE UPDATED METHODOLOGY?

- The chart below shows the current and proposed new demand percentages for property classifications subject to Board of County Commissioners approval.

PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION	CURRENT DEMAND PERCENTAGE	NEW DEMAND PERCENTAGE	DIFFERENCE
Single-family	56.84%	43.56%	-13%
Multi-family	43.05%	16.67%	+13%
Non-residential		39.77%	

- The chart reflects tremendous growth over the past several years and highlights a greater demand for fire service by non-residential properties.
- The new methodology uses three classifications including:
 - Single-family residential, which includes single-family homes and attached homes/townhomes/duplexes up to two units.
 - Multi-family residential, which is attached homes/condominiums of three units or more.
 - Non-residential, which includes all other property types (commercial, industrial and institutional).
- This shift changes cost allocations and assessment rates from residential to multi-family and non-residential properties consistent with demand study.
- Because of the additions of fire stations and 24-hour on-duty crews in agricultural areas around the county, this methodology does not include an agricultural service area.
- The updated methodology does not include the calculation of square footage of outbuildings such as sheds, barns, etc. It only includes the gross square footage of the primary structure or structures as identified by the Property Appraiser. This may lower the square footage assessed compared to previous years for property owners with outbuildings.
- The methodology continues to use many of the components of the previous methodology including Equivalent Billing Units or EBUs (an EBU = 100 square feet).
- This is a much more streamlined process, because the methodology uses data direct from the Property Appraiser to prepare the assessment billing.