

5.13.1 FIRE PROTECTION & EMERGENCY SERVICES

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) evaluates the potential for the proposed Section 31 Specific Plan Project (“Section 31 Specific Plan” or “Project”) to impact fire protection and emergency services provided through a cooperative agreement between the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD). Please see **Section 9.0** for a glossary of terms, definitions, and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

1. Existing Conditions

The Project Site is located within the City of Rancho Mirage. RCFD provides fire protection and emergency services in cooperation with Cal Fire¹ to the unincorporated areas of Riverside County and a number of partner cities under contract, including the City of Rancho Mirage (City), City of Palm Desert, and Thousand Palms Community Services District, and has cooperative, joint power agreements with other communities for fire services. The City entered into a cooperative agreement for fire-related services with the County of Riverside, through its Cooperative Fire Programs Fire Protection Reimbursement Agreement, running from July 1, 2018 until June 30, 2021. This agreement ensures that the City will be provided with fire protection, disaster preparedness and response, fire prevention, rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, technical rescue response, medical emergency services, and public service assistance for the life of the agreement.

As shown in **Figure 5.13-1: Public Services Within Proximity to Project Site**, there are currently six RCFD stations that are within proximity to the Project Site that are able to provide fire protection and emergency services. These stations are RCFD Stations No. 69 and No. 50 (located in the City of Rancho Mirage), No. 33 and 71 (located in the City of Palm Desert), and No. 35 and No. 81 (located in unincorporated Thousand Palms). **Table 5.13.1-1: Fire Stations Within Proximity to Project Site**, identifies the location and the distance of these fire stations in relation to the Project Site. As shown on **Table 5.13.1-1**, Station No. 69 and No. 71 are closest to the Project Site and would be the first to provide incident response; Station No. 69 is located within one mile of the Project Site.

According to the City’s 2017 General Plan, a typical response time from RCFD to an incident will place eight personnel, including a battalion chief, to the scene within 5 minutes.² The closest fire station to the

1 Riverside County Fire Department, “Riverside County Fire Department Service Area,” accessed April 2019, available to <http://www.rvcfire.org/ourDepartment/ServiceArea/Pages/default.aspx>.

2 City of Rancho Mirage General Plan, Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities, 104, adopted November 16, 2017.

Project Site, RCFD Station No. 69, is equipped with one medic engine (type 1 fire truck) and one medic unit, and currently has three firefighters and two firefighters/paramedics.³ In the event that Station No. 69 is responding to a fire and/or emergency call, Station No. 71 would respond to calls from the Project Site. Station No. 71 is similarly equipped with is equipped with one medic engine (type 1 fire truck) and one medic unit, and currently has three firefighters and two firefighters/paramedics.⁴

**Table 5.13.1-1
Fire Stations Within Proximity to Project Site**

Station	Location	Distance from Project Site (approximately)
Rancho Mirage		
RCFD Station No. 69	71-751 Gerald Ford Drive	0.3 miles
RCFD Station No. 50	70-801 Highway 111	3.0 miles
Palm Desert		
RCFD Station No. 33	44400 Town Center Way	3.6 miles
RCFD Station No. 71	73995 Country Club Drive	2.2 miles
Thousand Palms		
RCFD Station No. 35	31920 Robert Road	2.9 miles
RCFD Station No. 81	37-955 Washington Street	5.1 miles

Sources: Riverside County Fire Department, 2019. Google Maps, 2019.

2. Regulatory Setting

State

California Building Code

The California Building Code (CBC) includes relevant fire safety standards and the California Fire Code, which is from Title 24, Part 9 of the California Code of Regulations. In compliance with the California Building Standards Commission based on the 2015 International Fire Code, the CBC sets building requirements that will ensure all structures are designed to ensure proper emergency access. Additionally, it indicates other design features, such as fire sprinklers, fire flow standards, emergency access roads standards, and storage of flammable materials, which comply with fire department minimum requirements.

3 Adria Reinertson, Deputy Fire Marshal, Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department, email correspondence, April 4, 2019.

4 Adria Reinertson, Deputy Fire Marshal, Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department, email correspondence, April 4, 2019.

California Fire Code

The California Fire Code (CFC) applies to all occupancies throughout the State of California as annotated. The CFC is the minimum State standard for fire code implementation in California, and is based on the content of the Uniform Fire Code.⁵ The CFC establishes minimum fire-flow requirements.

Regional and Local

Rancho Mirage General Plan

Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities of the City's General Plan includes policies related to the fire protection and emergency services that are needed to support the City.⁶ It identifies the source of funding, the formulation of the City's fire protection services, stations that currently service the City, and the plans to expand existing fire services based on the City's continued growth and development. Further, Chapter 9 of the City's General Plan outlines the following relevant goals and policies related to fire protection:

Goal Public Safety & Fire (PS&F) 6:	A high level of police and fire protection and paramedic service.
Policy PS&F 6.1:	Review all new and improved developments for their impact on safety and the provision of police and fire protection services.
Policy PS&F 6.2:	Enforce fire standards and regulations in the course of reviewing building plans and conducting building inspections.
Policy PS&F 6.3:	Regulate potentially hazardous material use and storage.
Policy PS&F 6.4:	Due to the fire hazard potential of hilly areas with slopes of ten percent or greater, access problems, lack of water or sufficient pressure, and excessively dry brush, specify special on-site fire protection measures during project review.
Policy PS&F 6.5:	Provide emergency police, fire, and paramedic vehicle access with all new development to the satisfaction of the City.

5 National Fire Protection Association, Uniform Fire Code, 2016.

6 City of Rancho Mirage General Plan, Chapter 9: Public Services and Facilities Element, 2017.

Rancho Mirage Municipal Code

Building and construction within the City are subject to Title 15 of the *Rancho Mirage Municipal Code*, which governs grading, fill, and excavation activities. The City's Building and Safety Division prescribes building codes pertaining to fire prevention hazards. The *Rancho Mirage Fire Code* (Title 15.12) is based on the 2016 *California Building Code*, with amendments, and sets minimum design and construction standards to enforce all ordinances and laws relating to the prevention or spread of fires, fire control, and fire hazards within the City.

At the local level, the City's Municipal Code contains the Fire Code, which prescribes regulations to enforce all ordinances and laws relating to the prevention or spread of fires, fire control, and fire hazards within the City.⁷

Lastly, Title 3, Chapter 28 and Chapter 29 of the *Rancho Mirage Municipal Code* sets forth the City's policy for the requirement of payment of license tax and development impact fees upon new construction as a measure to fund local fire protection services. Specifically, Section 120 of Title 3, Chapter 28, identifies that development impact fees shall be paid to a separate fund to be used only for funding fire facilities and equipment within the City.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Thresholds of Significance

In order to assist in determining whether a project would have a significant effect on the environment, the City finds a project may be deemed to have a significant impact on public services, including fire and emergency services, if it would:

Threshold 5.13.1-1 Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities, need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection services.

2. Methodology

Analysis of fire protection services is concerned with response time and water fire-flow service to the area that is in question. Response times to an area have large influences on the ability for a fire department to

⁷ City of Rancho Mirage, Municipal Code, Chapter 15.12, "Fire Code," 2016.

serve a development, county, city, or other populated area in a timely and efficient manner. The further a fire station is away from a populated area, it would be expected that response times would be longer and delayed.

An analysis of response times for fire departments serving a development should be completed in order to determine if the fire department has sufficient resources to arrive to a fire or other medical emergency in a timely fashion. Additionally, the ability to provide adequate service to an area was determined by the ability to provide fire-flow service to the area. Fire-flow is the amount of water required for firefighting purposes, usually delivered by a system of underground piping and fire hydrants.

3. Project Design Features

The Project does not include any features specifically related to fire and emergency services.

4. Project Impacts

Threshold 5.13.1-1: Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities or the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for fire protection services?

Construction activities associated with the Project may result in temporary and partial closures of public roads surrounding the Project Site. Construction-related traffic on adjacent streets could potentially affect emergency access to and near the Project Site on a temporary basis. Construction activities would generate traffic associated with the movement of construction equipment, hauling of demolition and graded materials, and construction worker trips. Additionally, construction activities may involve temporary lane closures for utility and access gate improvements. Other implications of construction-related traffic include increased travel time due to flagging or stopping of traffic to accommodate trucks entering and exiting the Project Site during construction. As such, construction activities could potentially increase response times for emergency vehicles traveling to the Project Site and nearby uses along surrounding streets. However, as discussed in **Section 5.15: Traffic and Transportation** of this Draft EIR, implementation of Mitigation Measure **MM 5.15-1** would require the preparation of construction traffic management plans to ensure the Project would not interfere with RCFD's accessibility to the surrounding roadways or their use. Emergency access to the Project Site would remain clear and unhindered during construction of the Project pursuant to requirements established by the City's Public Works and

Engineering Department and/or the RCFD. Thus, emergency access impacts from construction activities associated with the Project would be less than significant with mitigation.

In regard to operation, the Project is expected to increase the number of calls for service in the area, such as calls for structure fires, car fires, electrical fires, as well as emergency medical service calls from the increase in residents and visitors. This increase may result in the increased demand for additional apparatus, equipment, and personnel to service the Project Site. Additionally, the development of the Project may increase demand on the RCFD's costs to maintain adequate service levels and response times.

The two closest stations to the Project Site that would provide primary response are RCFD Stations No. 69 and No. 71. Station No. 69 is located approximately 0.3 miles to the west of the Project Site at 71-751 Gerald Ford Drive and contains one type 1 fire engine with three personnel and medic squad with two personnel.⁸ Station No. 71 is approximately 2.2 miles to the southeast at 73995 Country Club Drive and contains one type 1 fire engine with three personnel and medic squad with two personnel.⁹ Station No. 69 would be the primary station to serve the Project Site as it is the closest and would provide the quickest response times. In the event that Station No. 69 is responding to a fire and/or emergency call, Station No. 71 would respond to calls from the Project Site. Both fire stations would be well within the City's response time objective of five minutes or less for the Project Site perimeter.

As the City and region grows and continues to develop, there would be an increase in demand for services provided by the RCFD. All development projects within the City are required to comply with the most current adopted fire, building codes, and nationally recognized fire and life safety standards. The Project would be required to comply with the City Fire Code, which includes the 2016 CBC and the California Fire Code (Title 24, Part 9 of the California Code of Regulations), with amendments.

While the increased development and the introduction of new uses and residents such as those associated with the Project would result in additional demand for services provided by the RCFD, compliance with existing regulatory requirements during implementation of the Project would ensure that the City's infrastructure, including access, traffic circulation, water, and hydrant systems are adequate for both current RCFD needs as well as the needs of the Project. Thus, The Project would be required to install fire hydrants and provide adequate emergency access, including ingress and egress points, for emergency services in accordance with the City Fire Code and as identified by Mitigation Measures **MM 5.13.1-1** and **MM 5.13.1-2**.

8 Adria Reinertson, Deputy Fire Marshal, Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department, email correspondence, April 4, 2019.

9 Adria Reinertson, Deputy Fire Marshal, Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire Department, email correspondence, April 4, 2019.

Further, in order to ensure that the Project would not degrade existing facilities and response times provided by the RCFD to serve the needs of the Project, payment of applicable fees would be required as identified in Mitigation Measure **MM 5.13.1-3**.

Lastly, as discussed in **Section 5.8: Hazards and Hazardous Materials**, the Project Site is located within an area with minimal fire hazard risk according to Cal Fire. Thus, the need for wildfire protection services to the Project Site is not likely required from RCFD.

Compliance with existing regulatory requirements during implementation of the Project would ensure that the City's infrastructure, including access, traffic circulation, water, and hydrant systems are adequate for both current RCFD needs as well as the needs of the Project. Thus, the Project would not increase response times or interfere with the RCFD's ability to provide adequate service levels. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

5. Cumulative Impacts

Related projects within the City's Sphere of Influence, unincorporated Riverside County, or Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians tribal jurisdiction (Reservation) could contribute to a potentially significant adverse cumulative impact on RCFD's fire protection and emergency services and their ability to provide acceptable response times. These impacts would include increased numbers of emergency and public service calls due to the increased presence of structures, traffic volume, and people within the area. Development projects within the City would be reviewed by the City and RCFD, and payment of development impact fees and the license tax would be required in accordance with Title 3, Chapter 28 and Chapter 29 of the City's Municipal Code to minimize impacts to local fire services. Development within unincorporated Riverside County would be required to pay development impact fees as required by Riverside County Ordinance No. 659 to effectively meet the public service needs demanded by new development. Development within the Reservation would be subject to an equivalent fee, or alternative funding, that would be paid to the City or County to mitigate potential cumulative impacts on fire protection and emergency services by funding facilities needed in the future. Therefore, the combination of the Project and the other related projects would not adversely impact future demand on fire protection and emergency services provided by RCFD. Accordingly, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

C. MITIGATION MEASURES

The following Mitigation Measures would reduce impacts on fire protection and emergency services:

- MM 5.13.1-1:** Each individual project shall be required to provide approved final fire-flow plans to the Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) which include fire-flow requirements within commercial projects to be based on square footage and residential projects based on intensity of use. Additionally, the fire flow requirements factor the type of construction associated with development of the structures. These requirements shall also comply with the City Fire Code as adopted.
- MM 5.13.1-2:** Prior to final building inspection for each individual project, applicants shall provide final fire-flow plans to the RCFD ensuring that all water mains and fire hydrants providing required fire-flows would be constructed in accordance with the appropriate development schedule sections of the City Fire Code. Each fire-flow plan that is submitted would be reviewed and approved by the City and/or RCFD prior to final building inspection.
- MM 5.13.1-3:** Prior to the issuance of building permits, individual project proponents shall pay development impact fees for fire protection facilities to the City. The Project Site shall be annexed into the City's Community Facility District (CFD) to help fund emergency services.

D. LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Implementation of Mitigation Measures **MM 5.15-1** and **MM 5.13.1-1** through **MM 5.13-3** and compliance with existing regulations would reduce potential impacts associated with fire protection and emergency services to a less than significant level. Cumulative impacts would also result in less than significant impacts on fire protection and emergency services.