

Monarch NEXT

Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT Monarch NEXT

What is Monarch NEXT?

Monarch NEXT is a community engagement process to bring the community and Monarch Fire Protection District together to discover challenges and opportunities facing the fire district now and in the future.

By listening to everyone's ideas and best thinking, we can ensure our fire protection district provides the level of emergency services our community expects.

Why is this process happening now?

The fire district is working on their short and long-term strategic plans for the future of the district. The volume of emergency medical service (EMS) calls has increased significantly over the last two decades and today the district responds to over 6,300 EMS calls from over 80,000 residents covering 62.7 square miles every year. This is causing a strain on the four ambulances the district operates. Additionally, the projected increase in population in the next two to five years will further strain these ambulances, further increasing response time across the district. Today, it can take an ambulance up to ten minutes or more to arrive at an emergency scene.

If the community thinks the district should add ambulances and staff to reduce the strain, the wait time to receive a new ambulance can take up to three years. So, now is the time to plan for the district's future.

The district also wants to hear from the community about other challenges and opportunities facing the district and the level of services expected. This includes understanding what the community thinks about increasing the operational budget to provide up-to-date and well-maintained personal protective equipment (PPE) for firefighters, to manage a regular replacement schedule for that gear, and to keep up with the rising costs for equipment repair and medical supplies.

How have response times been affected by the increase in EMS calls?

Response times for ambulances have increased between 7-8% just since 2018, which equates to having about an additional 30 seconds before an ambulance arrives at your home in an emergency when a Monarch ambulance is dispatched. If we have no Monarch ambulances available, the wait will be even longer as Mutual Aid ambulances will be responding from outside communities. Our average response time is already greater than the nationally recommended standard of 6 minutes. And currently 10% of our calls have response times of greater than 10 minutes.

What happens if we decide to leave things as they are?

As our area continues to grow, our EMS call volumes continue to rise. If we do not add new ambulances and staff, response times will continue to increase and we will continue to rely on neighboring districts to respond to emergency medical situations in our district.

In addition, our gear will remain out of date and will pose continued health safety issues to our firefighters. Delaying necessary these additions and updates will only result in higher expenses in the future.

Who can participate?

Everyone in our fire district community is encouraged to attend our Monarch NEXT community workshops and participate in our online survey.

Do I need to attend every Monarch NEXT community workshop?

No. The information presented and feedback gathered will be the same at each session.

Why should I get involved?

Participants in Monarch NEXT are developing a final report for the Board of Trustees about the community's priorities for emergency services. This report will reflect the thoughts and opinions of our entire community, and we need to hear what you think!

Who is leading Monarch NEXT?

Monarch NEXT is a community-led effort. Two community co-chairs lead a ten-member facilitating team of community members, volunteers, firefighter/paramedics and district leadership. This facilitating team is responsible for developing the community workshop and other ways to gather community feedback. The facilitating team also leads the preparation of the final report of goals and priorities for the Board of Trustees.

What can I expect at a Monarch NEXT community workshop?

Participants are invited to attend a workshop to hear from fire district leadership about the current and future challenges, to learn about potential solutions and to provide feedback on these options.

Fire district leadership and Monarch NEXT Facilitating Team Members will be available to answer questions and provide additional information.

The feedback gathered at these community workshops are the foundation for the recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

When and where are the Monarch NEXT community workshops?

April 29

Riverbend Elementary
224 River Valley Dr, Chesterfield, MO 63017
7 - 9 p.m.

April 30
Chesterfield Community Center at the Chesterfield Mall
237 Chesterfield Mall
(inside the mall using the Cheesecake Factory entrance, 2nd floor, next to Macy's)
7 - 9 p.m.

May 4
Wings of Hope
18370 Wings of Hope Blvd, Chesterfield, MO 63005
9 - 11 a.m.

I can't attend a community workshop. Can I still participate in Monarch NEXT?

Yes! Visit the Monarch NEXT section of the Monarch Fire Protection District website to learn more and provide your feedback.

I have a question. How can I find out more?

If you have a question, please ask here. To learn more, email webcontact@monarchfpd.org or call (314) 514-0900.

ABOUT THE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Who does the Monarch Fire Protection District serve?

We serve over 80,000 residents across 62.7 square miles in all or part of the cities of Ballwin, Chesterfield, Clarkson Valley, Creve Coeur, Maryland Heights, Wildwood, Unincorporated St. Louis County. This includes 18,896 single family homes, 766 commercial buildings, 30 schools (including preschools), 36 senior citizen housing/health care centers, railroads, an interstate highway, an airport, part of the Missouri River, and large industrial properties.

What services does MFPD provide?

Our services include, fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), rescue, including high angle, confined space, swift water, boat, structural collapse, and auto extrication, hazardous materials incidents and a tactical response team. We also offer public emergency training like CPR classes as well as fire extinguisher training and a fire escape trailer. From a fire prevention perspective, we do building code inspections, plan reviews and evacuation drills.

AMBULANCE FLEET AND LOCATIONS

How many ambulances does the district have?

The Monarch Fire Protection District has four ambulances. They are located at:

- Fire Station #1 at 15700 Baxter Rd., Chesterfield
- Fire Station #3 at 1201 Fernview Dr., St. Louis
- Fire Station #4 at 14898 Olive Blvd., Chesterfield
- Fire Station #5 at 155 Long Rd., Chesterfield

Why do we need to add ambulances to the current fleet?

Adding an ambulance and staff to Fire Station #2 will help provide service to the western part of the district. This means that all of the other ambulances will be able to stay closer to their “home” stations and serve the residents closest to them, allowing for quicker response times throughout the district.

The addition of one more ambulance and staff at Fire Station #1 would further improve coverage across the district and increase our ability to handle high call volumes expected in the central core of the district between Hwy 141 and Kehrsmill Rd.

Both of these allow for quicker response times which allows us to serve you and your family.

What happens if the ambulance from the fire station closest to my house is on another call when I call 911?

When an MFPD crew is dispatched to a call, emergency coverage for their designated area is transferred to the crew from the next nearest fire station. This ensures there is always a team ready to respond, but it may result in longer response times because the station is farther away. Due to current gaps in coverage, residents are also reliant on mutual aid from neighboring districts in areas such as St. Charles, Ballwin and Maryland Heights for their EMS care.

What is mutual aid?

In emergency services, mutual aid is an agreement among emergency responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries. This occurs due to an emergency response that exceeds local resources.

How often do Monarch Fire Protection District residents rely on Mutual aid?

In 2023, over 450 calls had to be turned over to mutual aid. This means paramedics from communities such as St. Charles, Pattonville, Creve Coeur, Ballwin and Maryland Heights needed to travel into Monarch to provide aid because a Monarch ambulance was not available. In addition to longer response times this also means Monarch does not receive revenue for those calls.

Additionally, Monarch was only able to respond to approximately 220 calls for help from our neighboring communities. We received more than double what we provide.

How long will it take to receive a new ambulance for our district?

Right now, the wait period is approximately three years from the time the order is placed.

FIREFIGHTER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE (PPE) EQUIPMENT

Why is the current PPE considered out of date?

While the district maintains a regular equipment replacement schedule, increased costs have made it nearly impossible to keep that schedule.

Our firefighters' Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)s are at the end of their lifespans and need to be replaced. These are the masks and air tank systems that enable firefighters to breathe and communicate when working a fire.

Our firefighters' turnout gear (the coat and pants firefighters wear) is also aging and out of date. Exposure to harsh chemicals on fire scenes coupled with gear that has been found to be laden with PFAS (Polyflourinated Substances) are causing high levels of cancer, other illnesses and death at a rate of 15% higher than the rest of the population.

Due to advances in technology in the textiles used to make turnout gear, gear without PFAS is now available and would be the goal for all future purchases.

Does MFPD charge for ambulance transport?

Yes, MFPD charges up to the amount allowed by private medical insurance and medicare. However, the cost of the ambulance transport far exceeds the amount of money we are reimbursed by the insurance company or medicare. As a district resident, you will not receive a bill at this point. We will only bill your insurance. For non-residents, we will bill them directly if their insurance does not cover our cost.

How are rising equipment and supply costs impacting the district?

Like many things the cost of fire, emergency medical and rescue supplies and equipment continue to rise. Additional revenue is needed to cover the costs of things like:

- Ambulance equipment improvements for items such as: monitors, CPAP/BiPap ventilators, autopulse, IV pumps, powerloaders, stretchers and stair chairs.
- Ambulance repair and maintenance
- Supplies like medications, IV kits, fluids, bandages and oxygen supplies.

FUNDING & FINANCE

How is the fire district funded?

The fire district is primarily funded through local property taxes and supplemented by ambulance fees and building permits.

When was the last time the residents voted to increase the district's residential tax rate?

We haven't had an operating tax-increase in 35 years.

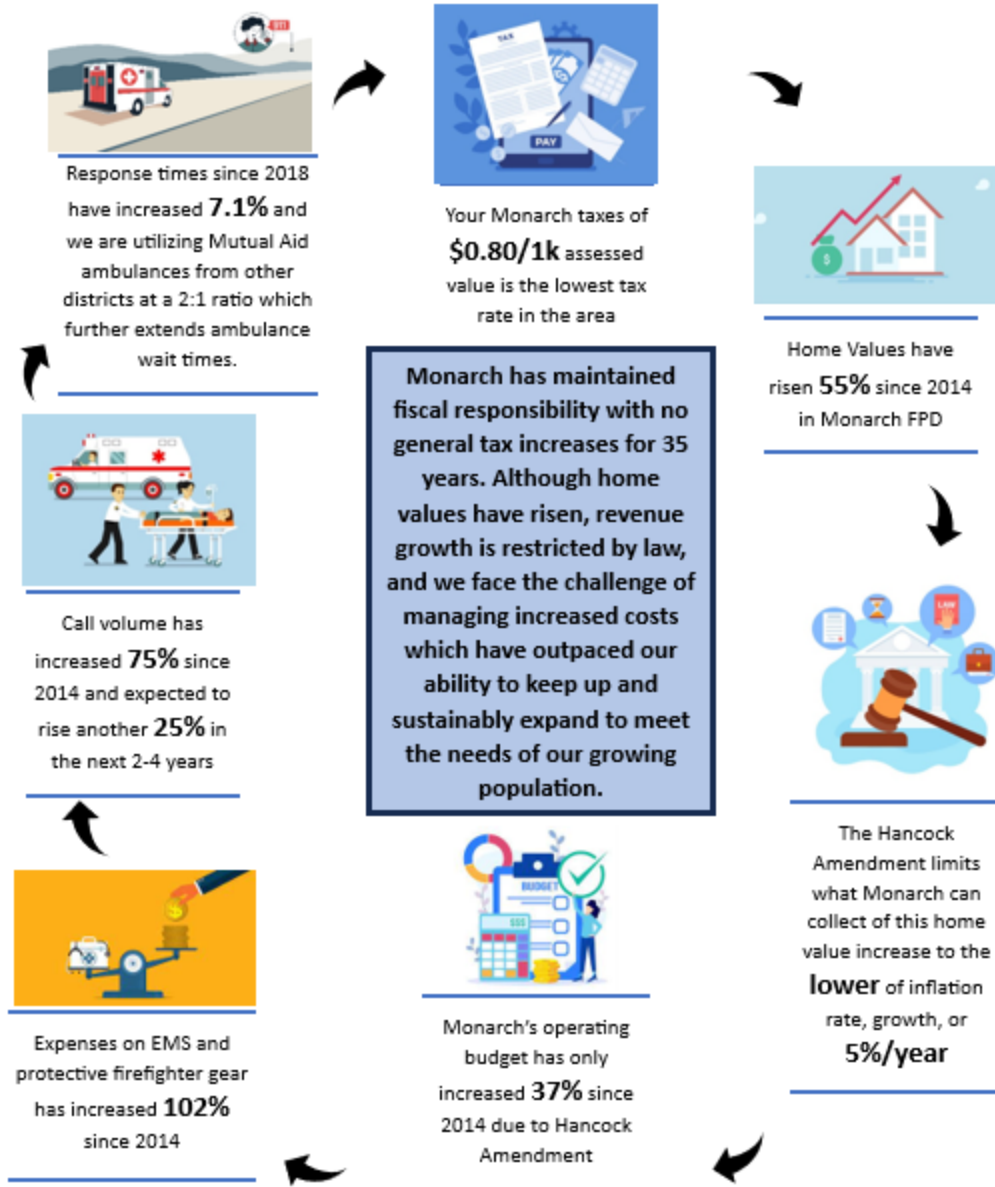
The district's current residential tax rate is \$0.8040, which is the lowest in the area. We have worked tirelessly to be good stewards of our resident's tax dollars and have made them stretch as far as we can, based on future projections.

The amount I pay in taxes to the fire district has gone up over the last 35 years, how has the tax rate not changed?

The Hancock Amendment, passed in Missouri in 1980, plays a significant role in this. Under the Hancock Amendment fire districts and other taxing entities are restricted in how much they can increase property tax revenue without voter approval. This means that even if property values increase, the tax rates themselves are not automatically raised. Instead, tax rates are often rolled back to ensure that the revenue growth does not exceed the limits set by the amendment, specifically the lower of the inflation rate or the actual growth in personal income of the state.

Therefore, if your property value has increased over the past 35 years your taxes would increase even though the tax rate itself has not changed. This occurs because your property taxes are calculated based on the assessed value of your property. As the value of your property rises, so does your tax bill, even if the tax rate remains constant.

Through the years, Monarch has been able to manage with the revenue generated by the existing tax rate, however this is becoming increasingly more difficult. Facing rising equipment and supply costs, the continually increasing number of EMS calls and the need to add at least one ambulance and firefighter/paramedics all lead to budgetary needs that exceed the amount that is being collected.



What is the Hancock Amendment?

The Hancock amendment is a law in Missouri that limits the amount of revenue that local governments, including fire districts, can collect from property taxes. It was designed to protect taxpayers from excessive tax increases.

Under the Hancock amendment, if property values increase, the tax rate must be lowered to ensure that the total amount of revenue collected does not exceed a certain limit. This means that even if your home's value goes up, your property taxes may not necessarily increase.

However, if the fire district you live in has not had a budget increase to account for the increased property values, they may not be able to provide the same level of services without a tax rate

increase. This could result in a situation where your property taxes go up even though the fire district's budget has not increased proportionally.

In summary, the Hancock amendment can impact property taxes in situations where property values increase but the local government's budget does not increase accordingly. This can lead to higher taxes for homeowners in order to maintain essential services provided by the fire district.

What will the 19-cent tax rate increase do to help improve emergency medical services for the community?

- Enhancing emergency response times and capabilities by:
 - Adding an ambulance and staff to Fire Station 2 (18424 Wild Horse Creek Rd, Wildwood, MO 63005)
 - Adding an ambulance and staff to Fire Station 1 (15700 Baxter Rd, Chesterfield, MO 63017)
- Expanding firefighting and medical response by hiring 21 personnel
- Strengthening firefighter safety with protective gear that does not contain Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) and regular equipment replacement
- Ensuring funds for essential medical supplies and equipment