



Travis County ESD No. 9

Westlake Fire Department

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<http://www.westlakefd.org/>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: DISANNEXATION

- **I'm getting ready to build/renovate my house. What do I do about permits I've already secured through the City of Austin?** Your current permit is valid through September 9, 2024; this is the date the disannexation will go into effect. Our Emergency Prevention Division is available to help you and/or your contractor secure a new permit for work after that date and/or navigate any other permit issues. Please reach out to them via <https://www.wfdpermits.com>.
- **I called for an ambulance, why did I get a fire truck?** The Westlake Fire Department and Austin-Travis County EMS (ATCEMS) work as partners to deliver emergency medical service. The teamwork between Westlake Fire and ATCEMS provides rapid response, quality pre-hospital care, and transport to the appropriate medical facility, making our system effective and cost efficient. Firefighters provide the initial first response and care (Basic Life Support or BLS) with a crew of three to four Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs); at least one of those is an Advanced EMT. ATCEMS follows, providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) via one Paramedic and one EMT, along with the capability to transport individual(s) to the hospital. EMS Dispatch prioritizes these calls for service using the numbers 1 through 5; Priority 1 is the most serious. With the disannexation of Lost Creek, Westlake Fire units will now be dispatched to all medical calls, not just Priority 1 and 2 incidents. For our community members, this is important because:
 - **Faster response times:** Fire crews often arrive several minutes ahead of EMS. Crews provide initial care and life-saving treatment {e.g., CPR, application of Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs), airway management, and bleeding control} as well as removing patients who may be trapped.

- **More fire units available:** Generally speaking, there are more fire apparatus across the region than there are EMS units. Fire station location is based on geographical response, while EMS considers both geographical response and call volume when placing units.
- **Fire crews provide needed staffing on critical calls that are personnel intensive, as well as the ability to lift and move patients:** Firefighters often ride in ambulances with EMS personnel, providing assistance during transport.
- **Fire trucks from other area departments came to my emergency {Austin, Oak Hill (ESD 3), etc.}. I thought Westlake FD was our fire department?** We are! But as the saying goes, “there is efficiency in redundancy”. That means if the Westlake FD engine(s) that would normally arrive first to your emergency are already out on another call—or your emergency requires additional/specialized resources—we have what’s known as an “automatic aid agreement” with other area departments who can step in and assist without waiting for us to ask. That means you will get the help you need, when you need it, no matter what...and you don’t pay any more for this overlap in coverage!
- **What does “medical first response” mean?** All of our firefighters are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and there is at least one Advanced EMT on every unit. Since our crews typically arrive first on the emergency scene, this means they can begin life-saving medical treatment, so there’s little to no delay in getting the patient into the ambulance and on their way to the hospital once ATCEMS arrives.
- **I keep hearing about our community’s wildfire risk. I’m interested in learning more about preparing for that kind of event. How can you help?** As you have probably also heard before, it’s not “if” the next wildfire in our area occurs, but “when”. Preparing you, your family, and your home now is the best defense for when that happens. We can help in several ways:
 - **Home Ignition Zone inspections:** Members from Westlake Fire can conduct a free exterior assessment of your property, and provide you with recommendations without obligation as to how to reduce your risk. We primarily focus on the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ), the buffer up to 200 feet around your house; think of it as a “safety bubble”. Developed by retired USDA Forest Service fire scientist Jack Cohen in the late 1990s, maintaining the HIZ can slow or stop the spread of

wildfire. Embers can travel up to a mile from the source of the blaze, so the HIZ is one of the most important ways to defend your home and protect firefighters who are working to save structures across the area. The [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) divides the HIZ into three sections: the Immediate Zone (Zone 1), the Intermediate Zone (Zone 2), and the Extended Zone (Zone 3). To learn more about how we can help, visit <https://www.westlakefd.org/wildfire-preparedness-and-information/>. You can schedule your HIZ inspection by calling (512) 539-3400, x3, or by visiting <https://www.wfdpermits.com> and clicking, "Request an Inspection".

- **Social media/website:** If you're not doing so already, follow us on social media and bookmark our website. Should an evacuation or "shelter in place" order be issued, these channels will be a primary source for communicating that information to the public. They provide the opportunity for rapid, real-time updates to be pushed out without having to wait for traditional media sources. Our handles/addresses are linked below:
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)
 - [NextDoor](#)
 - [Web](#)

We also strongly recommend signing up for [WarnCentralTexas.org](#), a free emergency notification system provided by the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) to residents of Central Texas. Registering allows local officials to contact communities by phone, e-mail, and text during times of disasters or public safety events, and you can customize how and what alerts you want to receive.

To learn more about your wildfire risk, burn bans that may be in place, etc., visit the [Austin/Travis County Wildfire Hub](#).

- **How do you support our Firewise USA® community designation (wildfire preparedness)?** As one of 23 communities in the Austin area to have this designation—and in Lost Creek's case, having it for more than a decade!—you know that receiving it is not the only goal. It is just the first, as the work of a Firewise USA® community is never done. The program, managed by the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#), requires communities to

continue their work throughout the year in order to maintain their “active” status. This includes documenting all activities, including your Firewise Day, the hours involved, and the participating volunteers. Part of being a recognized Firewise USA® site is reporting the ongoing work residents complete each year to reduce their wildfire risks, while addressing the areas identified in their community’s wildfire assessment. Participating sites must submit an annual renewal to maintain their “in good standing” status. We can help by assisting your risk reduction efforts (e.g., recommendations regarding vegetation removal and HIZ assessments), and will support volunteer efforts as often as we can (e.g., bringing a fire truck to the event).

- **My smoke alarm keeps beeping and/or is mounted too high for me to reach. What should I do?** We can help! Give us a call at (512) 539-3400 or [e-mail us](#), and we’ll take care of the rest.
- **Can I host my child’s birthday party at a Westlake fire station?** Unfortunately, for liability and safety reasons, we cannot host birthday parties at our fire stations. However, if you live within our response area, we can come to you. Just contact us at (512) 539-3400 and we’ll work through the details. You can also refer to the [page on our website](#) about birthday parties.
- **How do I request a fire truck for my event?** If you live within our response area, contact our Public Education section at (512) 539-3400, x4, or [e-mail us](#).
- **I’d love to bring my child/family for a station tour. How do I set that up?** Contact our Public Education section at (512) 539-3400, x4, or [e-mail us](#).
- **I have a residential Knox box or my residential gate has a Knox box. How can I ensure Westlake FD will be able to open it?** Westlake FD maintains a set of master keys that should open any Knox box in our response area. However, we would be happy to double check any residential location in the district to ensure that’s the case and offer peace of mind. If you’d like to schedule one of our crews to do so, please contact us at (512) 539-3400 and ask to speak to our Emergency Prevention Division.
- **I had an emergency response to my property and need a copy of the incident report for my insurance.** Our Public Information Office can assist you. Please [send an e-mail](#) with the relevant information (date, time, etc.), as well as your contact information. If you have an incident number, please include that as well.

- **I'm having a special event and am wondering what fire code permits I might need from Westlake FD?** Our Emergency Prevention Division handles all permit requests. Please visit <https://www.wfdpermits.com> for more information.
- **I've heard Westlake FD is also known as Travis County ESD 9. What does this mean?** ESD stands for Emergency Services District, a local government agency created by a public vote that provides fire protection or emergency medical response (or a combination of the two) to residents in a particular area, like Lost Creek. ESDs collect taxes to provide emergency services to those within their boundaries, and free up county governments from the chore of running emergency services and paying for them with county tax dollars. There are more than 300 ESDs across Texas! So, if you see or hear "ESD 9" somewhere, that is the same thing as the Westlake Fire Department. You can learn more about the ESDs in Travis County via [this short video](#).
- **Do I need to update the security/fire alarm contact info for my alarm system from City of Austin to Westlake FD?** No, an update is not necessary. Since the Dispatch Center handles dispatching for the entire county, they will automatically know which unit(s) from which department(s) to send to a security/fire alarm activation.
- **When will I start paying taxes to ESD 9?** Taxes will be assessed starting in 2025, so they will be due no later than January 31, 2026. You will receive more information from the [Travis Central Appraisal District \(TCAD\)](#), who handles tax collection for the county.
- **I've got other questions I need answers to that aren't listed here. Who do I contact for assistance?** You can visit [our website](#), call us at (512) 539-3400, or [e-mail us](#).

***Please don't hesitate to reach out for any reason;
we're here to serve you!***