

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blaine County Fire Agencies Advance Consolidation Efforts to Enhance Efficiency and Public Safety Services

BLAINE COUNTY, Idaho – After more than 35 years of discussions, four of Blaine County's seven fire departments are actively advancing consolidation to create a more efficient, equitable, and high-performing emergency services system. The BC South Fire Protection District, Ketchum Fire District, City of Hailey Fire Department, and Smiley Creek Fire Protection District are taking significant steps toward integration under the proposed Blaine County Fire & Rescue District.

In October 2025, BC South and Ketchum developed and implemented a comprehensive consolidation plan. This month, the City of Hailey and Smiley Creek Fire Protection District are joining this plan, bringing four key agencies into the process and representing a substantial portion of the county's population and service area.

This progress builds on prior collaborations, including a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) established over five years ago to explore efficiencies between the City of Hailey and the former Wood River Fire Protection District (now part of BC South). A new JPA board is being formed to reactivate and expand this agreement. Fire administrations will conduct the planning work and provide recommendations to the JPA's elected governing body, which will offer guidance and oversight.

Key upcoming public engagement opportunities include:

- Hailey City Council Meeting: January 12 at 5:30 p.m.
- Ketchum Fire District Board of Commissioners Meeting: January 15 at 3:00 p.m.
- BC South Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners Meeting: January 21 at 3:00 p.m.
- Smiley Creek Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners Meeting: [Date and time to be announced]

The consolidation process prioritizes transparency. A dedicated website for the Blaine County Fire & Rescue District (www.blainecountyfirerescue.com) will be updated regularly with information on participating departments, public meeting schedules, maps, and progress updates. Public comment is strongly encouraged at all open council and board meetings.

To date, BC South and Ketchum have approved their consolidation framework following extensive legal planning by attorneys to ensure compliance with Idaho law. Recent meetings with Hailey and Smiley Creek addressed governance questions and feasibility, laying a strong foundation for broader public discussion.

BC South and Ketchum currently contract with the Blaine County Ambulance District (BCAD) to provide ambulance transportation countywide, while Hailey serves as a partner providing non-transport emergency medical response. Consolidation will streamline these services, enabling ambulance transport through a single unified agency.

The primary goals are efficiency and improved services. By eliminating redundant staff, technology, and equipment, the consolidated district will operate more cost-effectively. A balanced tax levy will ensure fair and consistent funding across participating communities. Enhanced services will include better-staffed response teams, optimized resource deployment (such as backcountry rescue, auto extrication, and ambulance services), and expanded training opportunities. These improvements will move Blaine County Fire & Rescue closer to national standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE), while promoting greater firefighter safety through unified command, standardized procedures, improved staffing, and stronger team cohesion.

Call volumes across Blaine County have surged nearly 60% over the past five years and continue to rise in 2026, driven by population growth, new construction, and increasing visitation in our tourism-based economy. Multiple independent consultants over the last decade have unanimously recommended consolidating fire and EMS resources into a single agency to meet these demands. The recent mergers forming BC South and the creation of the Ketchum Fire District, now expanded to include Hailey and Smiley Creek, represent critical next steps toward this vision.

While full countywide consolidation offers the greatest benefits—including a uniform tax levy and consistent service for all residents—no agency is required to participate. Leaders invite all remaining departments to engage and collaborate in shaping this new district.

"This process is about delivering top-tier public safety that our residents and millions of annual visitors expect and deserve," said Pete Schwartz, chairman of the Ketchum Fire District Board of Commissioners. "Consolidation will benefit the community, governance, and our dedicated first responders by providing better value for taxpayer dollars."

Residents are urged to attend meetings, visit the Blaine County Fire & Rescue website, or contact their local fire leaders with questions or input.

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