

Summary of Fire Assessment Update

On May 7, 2024, Stantec, Alachua County's Fire Assessment consultant, presented the findings from the updated Fire Assessment study.

Legal Requirements- Two-Pronged Test:

To remain legally valid, the fire assessment must meet the following criteria:

1. The property assessed must derive a **special benefit** from the service provided.
2. The assessment must be **fairly and reasonably apportioned** among the properties that receive the special benefit.

Availability Methodology – Two-Tiered Availability Structure:

The fire assessment utilizes a two-tiered availability methodology:

- **Tier 1 – Response Readiness Availability:** A flat fee assessed per parcel to all properties, representing the cost of maintaining readiness to respond.
- **Tier 2 – Protection from Loss of Structures:** Applied only to improved properties, this tier is based on the value of improvements on each parcel. The rate is calculated per \$5,000 of improved value.

When the methodology was originally implemented, the cost allocation between Tier 1 and Tier 2 was based on both land and improved values. This resulted in a cost split of **29.8% for Tier 1** and **70.2% for Tier 2**. Unlike many jurisdictions that place a greater emphasis on Tier 1, Alachua County's structure results in a progressive and equitable distribution of costs.

Periodic updates are required to ensure the methodology remains consistent with current data and legal standards. Prior to the update, the County was relying on data from the 2018 study. Since then, the value of improvements has increased at a significantly faster rate than land values. As a result, the revised cost allocation reflects **32.3% for Tier 1** and **67.7% for Tier 2**.

It is recommended that the Fire Assessment rates be updated to reflect current property data and preserve a fair, reasonable, and legally defensible apportionment structure.

History of fire assessment rates:

	FY18- FY20	FY21-FY25	FY26 Proposed
Tier 1	\$83.34	\$90.69	\$132.47
Tier 2	\$7.63	\$8.31	\$7.28