

# City of Whitefish Fire Department

*also serving the Whitefish Fire Service Area*

275 Flathead Avenue – PO Box 158 - Whitefish, Montana 59937  
406-863-2483 Fax: 406-863-2499

---



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 6, 2020

Contact: Joe Page  
(406) 253-3473  
jpage@cityofwhitefish.org

## **Carnegie Mellon University Graduate Students Helping Whitefish Fire Department**

**Whitefish, Montana** - The Whitefish Fire Department currently serves the City of Whitefish (City) and the Whitefish Fire Service Area (WFSA). In an effort to improve emergency services to the City, the WFSA, and the portions of the Flathead County Fire Service Area currently covered, the City and the Whitefish Fire Department (WFD) have embarked on an effort to identify potential locations for satellite fire stations with [Kearney's](#) Student Lab program at Carnegie Mellon University.

Being located near a fire station not only offers better response time but can also provide a more favorable property insurance rate. During an emergency, the timely arrival of properly trained and equipped first responders improves the chances of a more favorable outcome.

The insurance industry typically uses five road miles from a fire station as the effective distance when determining adequate fire protection. Many homeowners have seen huge reductions in the yearly insurance premiums when they are within five road miles. Some homeowners beyond five road miles have had problems finding a company willing to write them a policy or only have one company interested, thus eliminating any rate competition. Sometimes insurance carriers have elected not to renew their coverages for customers that live beyond five road miles as well.

A quick look at fire stations throughout Flathead County shows vast areas north and west of Whitefish lacking coverage. Placing fire stations purely to cover area is not the answer. Looking at the number of structures that could be protected, the potential property insurance savings a station could offer homeowners, and future development trends is the challenge facing the WFD. We were lucky to be selected to take advantage of the Student Lab program to leverage the world class analytical talents of their graduate students to take a data driven design perspective on where best to locate potential new fire stations.

The Whitefish Team consists of Joe Raudabaugh (Lazy Bay), Dave Mangold (Whitefish Hills), Ed Lieser (Lion Mountain), Matt Trebesch (Star Meadows), Greg Knuffke (Tamarack Insurance), and Fire Chief Joe Page (Twin Lakes). The Carnegie Mellon Team consists of Erin Gibson (Kearney Coach) and our 5 students: Jaece Stokes (Team Lead), Richard Ibsen, Julia Penkal, Rakshanda Rakput and Jay Park.

While the students have been provided GIS data that included our road network, structure locations, and property values, there is more information they would like to utilize in the study. They have developed a survey that we would like as many homeowners in the City, the WFSA, and those in the Flathead County Fire Service Area protected by the Whitefish FD to complete. The survey will be open until October 21, 2020.

The link to the survey is: <https://forms.gle/wdj2j5v9pd59YUhu7>

We appreciate your help in providing this vital information thus allowing the students to use actual data when determining optimal potential fire station locations.

Thank you for your time