


CORA Request Policy	
	Hartsel Fire Protection District
	Policies
Title: Cora Request Policy	Section/Topic:
Number:	Issue Date: 1/22/2026
	Revised Date:
Prepared by:	Approved by:
Chief Brian Cook	Chief Brian Cook

PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

The Hartsel Fire Protection District (“District”) recognizes that public records maintained by the District are presumed to be open for public inspection pursuant to the Colorado Open Records Act (“CORA”), §§ 24-72-201 through 24-72-206, C.R.S. As a political subdivision and special district organized under Title 32, C.R.S., the District is committed to conducting public business in a transparent and accountable manner while protecting records and information made confidential by state or federal law.

This policy establishes the procedures by which members of the public may request access to District records and identifies categories of records that may be withheld, redacted, or protected from disclosure under applicable law. The District shall comply with all provisions of CORA, the Colorado Special District Act, HIPAA, the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), and all other applicable privacy and confidentiality statutes and regulations.

The Board of Directors hereby designates the District Administrator, Board Secretary, or other appointed designee as the official Custodian of Records for purposes of administering this policy and responding to CORA requests.

PUBLIC RECORDS

Pursuant to § 24-72-202(6), C.R.S., public records include all writings made, maintained, or kept by the District for use in the exercise of functions required or authorized by law or involving the receipt or expenditure of public funds. The term “writings” includes books, papers, maps, photographs, recordings, emails, text messages, digital communications, databases, and all other documentary materials regardless of physical form or storage medium as defined under § 24-72-202(7), C.R.S.

Records commonly maintained by the District that may be subject to public inspection include Board meeting agendas and minutes, resolutions, budgets, audits, contracts,

procurement records, operational reports, training records, mutual aid agreements, expenditure reports, policies and procedures, election records, public notices, and electronic communications concerning District business.

The District recognizes that emails, text messages, social media communications, and other electronic records discussing official District business may constitute public records subject to disclosure under CORA regardless of whether such communications are transmitted on District-owned or personal devices.

The District is not required to create new records, compile information into a new format, generate reports that do not already exist, or provide proprietary software in response to a records request.

PERSONNEL FILES AND CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE RECORDS

The District recognizes that personnel files and certain employee-related records are protected from disclosure under § 24-72-204(3)(a)(II), C.R.S., and other applicable privacy laws. While Colorado law favors transparency, it also protects employees, volunteers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and applicants from unwarranted invasions of personal privacy.

Protected personnel records include, but are not limited to, medical records, psychological evaluations, workers' compensation records, injury reports containing medical information, drug and alcohol testing records, Family and Medical Leave Act documentation, ADA accommodation records, vaccination records, and all protected health information governed by HIPAA and related federal regulations.

The District shall also protect personally identifying information pursuant to § 24-72-204(3.5), C.R.S., including Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, dates of birth, home addresses, personal telephone numbers, personal email addresses, bank account information, tax withholding forms, payroll deduction records, emergency contact information, and similar confidential identifying data.

Background investigations and hiring records may also be withheld from disclosure, including criminal history reports, reference checks, interview notes, employment applications containing confidential information, psychological screening results, credit reports, and other pre-employment investigative materials.

Confidential evaluative materials, including supervisor evaluations, internal assessments, promotion recommendations, peer review comments, ranking sheets, and related performance materials, may be protected from disclosure where release would violate privacy protections or interfere with candid evaluation processes.

The District shall additionally protect retirement and benefits records, including pension information, insurance enrollment forms, beneficiary designations, deferred compensation records, and related financial or benefits documentation.

Volunteer firefighter and emergency medical services personnel records containing background checks, medical certifications, personal contact information, or confidential identifying information shall likewise be protected to the fullest extent permitted by law.

DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

The District acknowledges that Colorado law does not automatically exempt all disciplinary records from public disclosure. Requests involving disciplinary materials shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis consistent with CORA, privacy protections, applicable court decisions, and the public interest.

The District may deny inspection of records related to ongoing or active investigations pursuant to §§ 24-72-204(2)(a)(I) and 24-72-204(3)(a)(II), C.R.S. Such protected materials may include pending misconduct investigations, draft investigative reports, preliminary complaint reviews, internal affairs files, investigation notes, and related investigative materials.

Unsubstantiated complaints, anonymous allegations lacking factual findings, and preliminary inquiries that do not result in formal findings may also be withheld where disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy or compromise investigative integrity.

Confidential witness statements, employee interviews, complainant identities, and internal witness memoranda may similarly be protected where disclosure could discourage cooperation, expose witnesses to retaliation, or undermine future investigations.

Disciplinary records involving medical conditions, mental health, substance abuse treatment, disability accommodations, or related protected medical information shall remain confidential pursuant to HIPAA, ADA protections, and related state and federal laws.

The District shall also protect attorney-client privileged communications, legal memoranda, counsel investigative materials, litigation preparation documents, and attorney work product from disclosure.

INFORMATION GENERALLY SUBJECT TO DISCLOSURE

Notwithstanding the protections described above, Colorado law generally requires disclosure of certain employment-related information pursuant to § 24-72-202(4.5), C.R.S. Such information may include employee names, job titles, dates of employment, length of service, employment contracts, and final agency actions.

“Final agency action” generally includes final decisions involving employee discipline, termination, suspension, written reprimands, settlement agreements involving expenditure of public funds, and other finalized official actions by the District. Prior to

release, the District shall redact any confidential or protected information required to remain private under applicable law.

EMERGENCY SERVICES, SECURITY, AND MEDICAL RECORDS

Because the District provides emergency response and emergency medical services, certain operational and patient-related records may be protected from disclosure. Protected records may include patient care reports, EMS reports, protected health information, medical incident details, tactical response plans, infrastructure vulnerability assessments, hazardous materials response procedures, cybersecurity information, access control information, and security-related operational procedures.

The District may deny inspection of records where disclosure could compromise public safety, emergency preparedness, cybersecurity, infrastructure protection, or the operational security of emergency response systems.

SUBMISSION OF CORA REQUESTS

All requests for inspection or copies of public records shall be submitted in writing to the District's Custodian of Records by email, mail, or hand delivery. Requests should reasonably identify the records sought and provide sufficient detail to permit the District to locate responsive records.

Requests may be submitted to:

Custodian of Records

Hartsel Fire Protection District
PO Box 10
Hartsel, CO 80449
Email: admin@hartselfire.org

The District may request clarification of overly broad or vague requests and may coordinate with requestors to narrow requests where necessary to reduce administrative burden and improve responsiveness.

RESPONSE TIMES

Pursuant to § 24-72-203(3)(b), C.R.S., the District shall respond to CORA requests within three (3) working days following receipt of the request. Where extenuating circumstances exist, the District may extend the response period by up to seven (7) additional working days.

Extenuating circumstances may include, but are not limited to, voluminous records requests, archived records retrieval, required legal review, necessary redactions,

technological limitations, staff availability, or operational emergencies affecting District personnel or resources.

FEES AND COSTS

The District may charge fees authorized under § 24-72-205, C.R.S., including actual costs for copies and reasonable research and retrieval fees.

Generally, the first hour of staff time spent researching and retrieving records shall be provided without charge. After the first hour, the District may charge the maximum hourly rate permitted under Colorado law for staff time associated with searching, retrieving, reviewing, redacting, supervising inspection, or copying records. This rate is forty one dollars and thirty seven cents (\$41.37) an hour.

The District requires advance deposits for requests estimated to exceed one hour of work. The deposit is thirty dollars (\$30.00).

INSPECTION OF RECORDS

Public records shall be available for inspection during normal business hours at a reasonable location designated by the District. Inspection may occur under staff supervision when necessary to protect original records or preserve records integrity.

Original records shall remain in District custody at all times and shall not be removed, altered, or destroyed by requestors.

Records may be provided electronically, by paper copy, or through in-person inspection depending on the nature of the request and the format in which the records are maintained.

RECORD RETENTION

The District shall maintain records in accordance with Colorado State Archives retention schedules, Special District retention requirements, applicable federal laws, and District policies governing records management, cybersecurity, and disaster recovery.

Records approved for destruction shall be disposed of in compliance with authorized retention schedules and applicable law.

DENIAL OF REQUESTS

Where a request is denied in whole or in part, the District shall provide the requestor with the legal basis for denial, including citation to the applicable statutory authority supporting the denial or redaction.

The District reserves the right to redact protected information prior to disclosure and may withhold records where disclosure is prohibited by law, would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy, would compromise public safety or security, or would interfere with ongoing investigations or legal proceedings.

ABUSIVE OR UNDULY BURDENSOME REQUESTS

The District reserves the right to reasonably manage requests that are duplicative, abusive, excessively broad, or unduly burdensome. The District may require clarification, narrow the scope of requests in consultation with the requestor, process large requests in phases, or suspend processing pending receipt of required deposits or clarifications.

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to require the District to disrupt essential emergency operations or public safety functions in order to respond to records requests.

APPEALS AND JUDICIAL REVIEW

Any person denied access to records may seek judicial review pursuant to § 24-72-204(5), C.R.S.

SEVERABILITY

If any portion of this policy is determined to be invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.