



SERVING BEYOND THE SIRENS

EL PASO COUNTY ESD NO.1

Fire Chief Kris Menendez, MPA, CFE, FSCEO

Administrator Katherine Ames, M. Ed.

Public Relations Specialist Vanessa Guerra, BA

Why This Matters

🔥 The Fire Service
Is more than Emergency Response
Emergency response is our foundation — not our full mission

🚒 Community Trust Fuels

Public support
Sustainable funding
Long-term resilience

💛 Engagement Strengthens:
Public safety & prevention
Recruitment & retention
Understanding of our mission

Informed communities don't just watch — they advocate



Community Engagement: The Missing Link



- ▶ Many ESDs focus heavily on operations
- ▶ Community engagement is often under-resourced or overlooked
- ▶ Lack of engagement leads to:
 - ▶ Misunderstanding of services
 - ▶ Reduced public support
 - ▶ Challenges during tax or sales tax elections
- ▶ Engagement is not optional – it's operationally critical

Who We're Trying to Reach

- ▶ Different audiences require different approaches
- ▶ Residents & taxpayers
- ▶ Parents & students
- ▶ Local businesses
- ▶ Potential recruits & volunteers
- ▶ One message does not fit all



Outreach Tools That Work

When first beginning it's important to focus on
LOW-COST, HIGH-IMPACT METHODS



Social Media & Website (education, transparency, storytelling)



Public Events



Fire Prevention Education



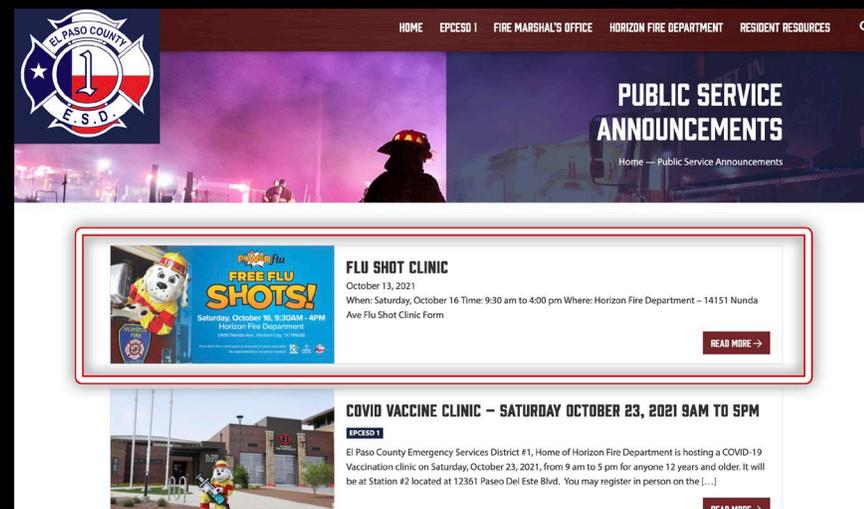
School Programs



Community Partnerships



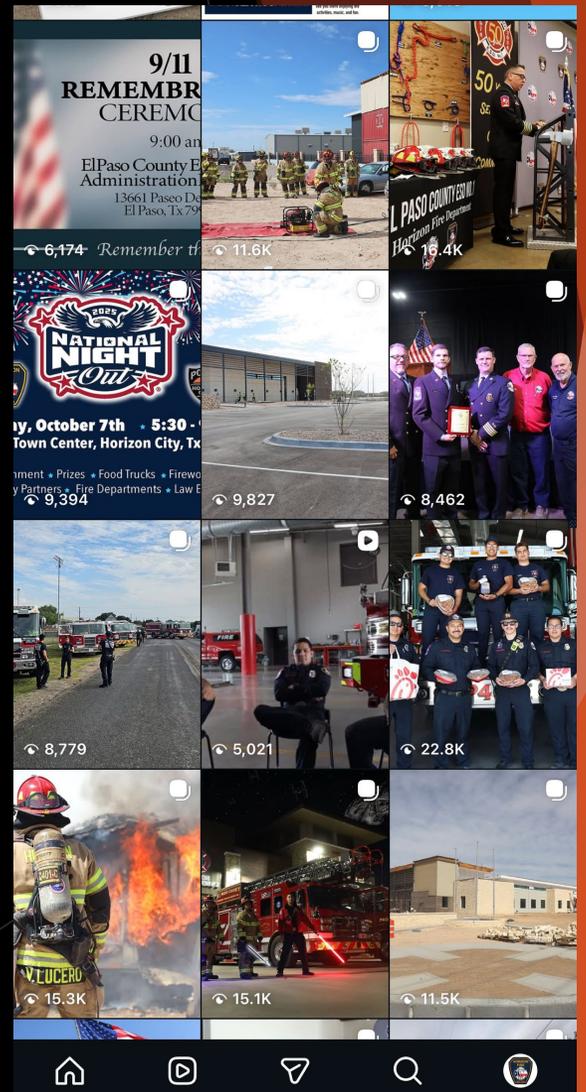
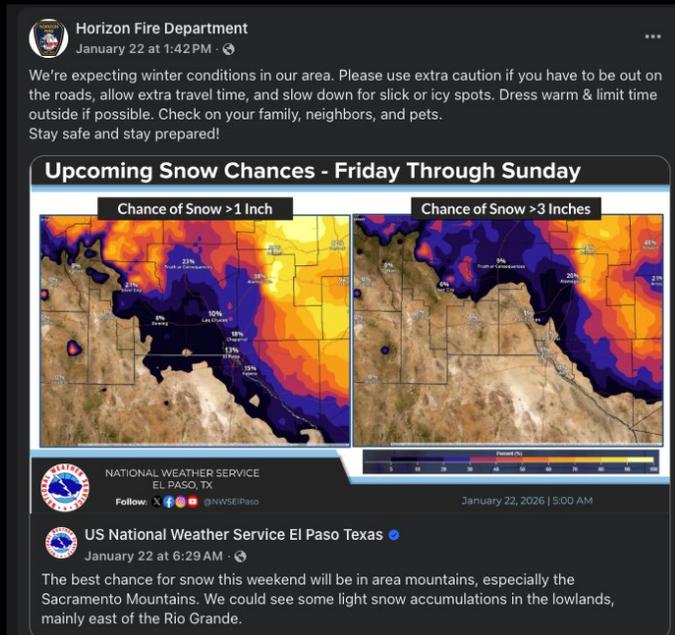
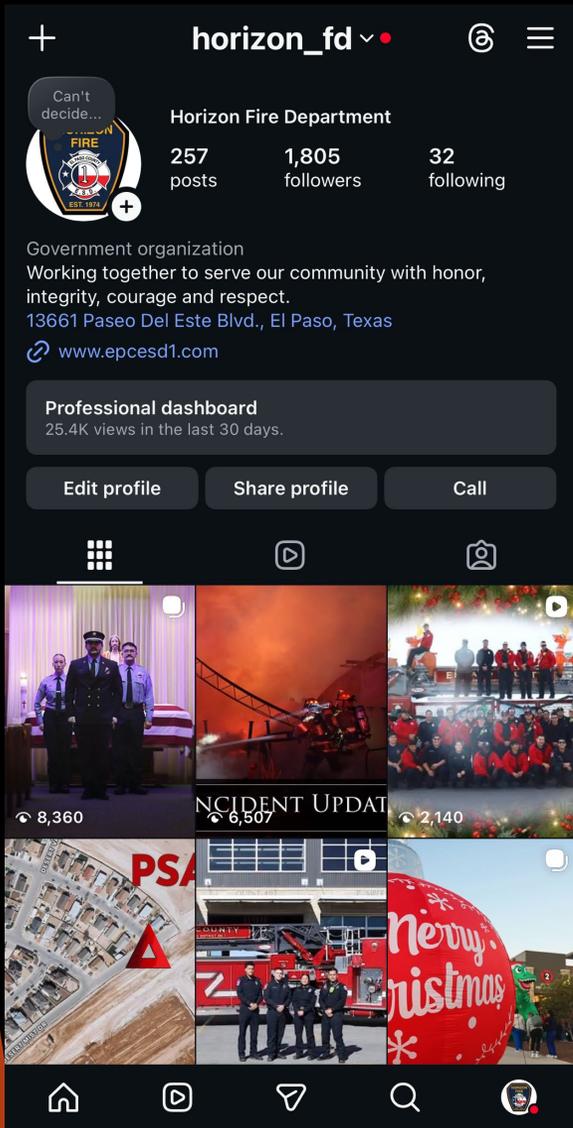
Station Tours



Using Social Media Effectively

SHOW YOUR PEOPLE, NOT JUST YOUR TRUCKS

- ▶ Highlight:
 - Calls & Training
 - Community events
 - Life safety messages
- ▶ Build trust
- ▶ Transparency builds credibility



FROM IDEA TO IMPACT

Planning Successful Community Events

Planning/ Timeline

- ▶ Start with your event date and work backwards
 - Set deadlines for location, permits, vendors, marketing, staffing, supplies, and final walkthrough.
- ▶ Build phases into the schedule
 - Pre-planning stage (brainstorming + approvals)
 - Planning stage (logistics + partnerships)
 - Promotion stage (social media + outreach)
 - Execution stage (day-of roles + operations)
 - Wrap-up stage (photos, thank you, debrief, and improvements)
- ▶ Include buffer time
 - Expect last-minute issues: weather, partner cancellations, delivery delays, staffing conflicts.

Timelines keeps small tasks from becoming big emergencies.



FROM IDEA TO IMPACT Cont.

Planning Successful Community Events

Research

- ▶ Know your audience
- ▶ Learn from past
 - ▶ What time worked best?
 - ▶ What did people request the most?
 - ▶ Was it the right location?
- ▶ Budget research
 - ▶ What can be donated? What needs funding?
 - ▶ Look for sponsorship opportunities (food, giveaways, printing, bounce houses, etc.)

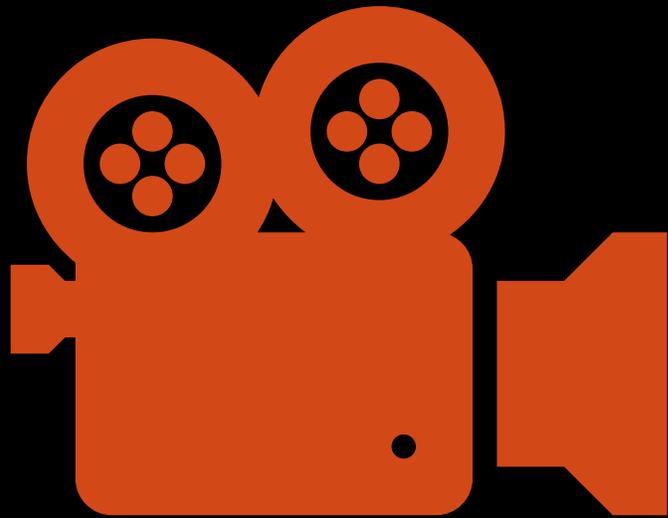


Building Momentum

How It Started, To How Its Going

- ▶ We started with small events, limited budget, and learning as we went.
- ▶ Improved Over Time Through:
 - Stronger partnerships
 - More organized planning
 - Better promotion and outreach
 - Increased community participation





Community Event Video

Engagement Today Builds the Workforce of Tomorrow

- Community visibility creates career awareness
- Youth programs spark early interest in the fire service
- School outreach introduces service as a viable career path
- Positive public perception attracts quality recruits
- Engaged communities encourage volunteering and retention
- Today's outreach becomes tomorrow's firefighters, EMTs, and leaders



Building a Recruitment Pipeline

- ▶ Promote:
 - ▶ Volunteer opportunities
 - ▶ Career pathways
- ▶ Tell authentic stories from your firefighters
- ▶ Partnering with Educational Programs
 - ▶ High Schools
 - ▶ Community Colleges

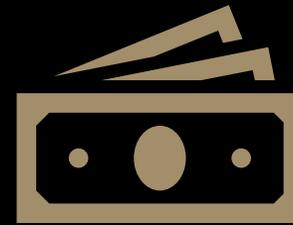


Engagement & Funding Go Hand-in-Hand



Taxpayers want to know:

- What services are provided
- How tax dollars are used
- Why funding is necessary



Informed voters support:

- Budgets
- Tax rates
- Sales tax elections

Budget Versus Revenue

Budget	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Community Budget	\$56,500.00	\$50,500.00	\$40,750.00	\$23,450.00	\$15,700.00	\$11,000.00
Meals	\$5,600.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Revenues	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Property Taxes	\$7,726,826	\$6,859,973	\$6,206,185	\$5,096,050	\$4,011,965	\$3,232,999
Sales Taxes	9,055,212	8,432,914	7,013,865	5,447,017	3,221,524	-

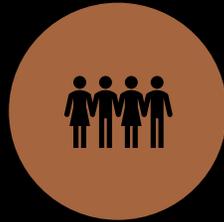
Community Events on a Budget



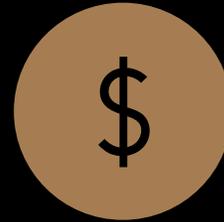
**YOU DON'T
NEED A LARGE
BUDGET TO
MAKE AN
IMPACT**



**PARTNER WITH
SCHOOLS,
HOAS, AND
CIVIC GROUPS**



**COMBINE
EVENTS WITH
EXISTING
COMMUNITY
GATHERINGS**



**SEEK
SPONSORSHIPS
OR IN-KIND
DONATIONS**



**FOCUS ON
EDUCATION,
NOT
ENTERTAINMENT
COSTS**

ESD Leadership Perspective



Engagement supports long-term financial stability



Transparency builds public confidence



Proactive communication prevents crisis messaging



Community trust is earned before elections begin



Discussion & Questions



Thank You

- ▶ Contact Information

- ▶ Kristian Menendez, Fire Chief - email: kmenendez@epcesd1.com
- ▶ Vanessa Guerra, Public Relations - email: publicrelations@epcesd.1com
- ▶ Katherine Ames, Administrator - email: kames@epcesd1.com

- ▶ Social Media Handles

- ▶ Facebook: Horizon Fire Department
- ▶ Instagram: Horizon_FD

- ▶ Website: epcesd1.com