

# Chicago Tribune



## Battle of the sky lounges



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## Survey results say expectations miss reality

BY THE ST. CHARLES COUNTRYSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The telephone survey results of residents in the St. Charles Countryside Fire Protection District indicate many underestimate the time it takes for emergency crews to respond to a call for help.

More than 80 percent of the survey's respondents were unaware it takes the district's personnel 11 minutes, on average, to respond to a home fire or medical emergency.

More than 82 percent of the survey participants thought five to seven minutes was an acceptable response time for a home emergency, according to the survey results.

"The expectations for emergency response are nowhere near the

reality," said Ed Malek, president of the fire protection district.

### Wide impact

"This impacts virtually every homeowner, family and business in the district," Malek said. "Like many communities that have exploded with new families moving into the area, our response times have increased. A big gap exists."

The district takes in 34-square miles in unincorporated areas of Campton Hills, Elburn, St. Charles, West Chicago and other communities in Kane and DuPage counties.

The district provides fire and emergency medical care to more than 20,000 residents, and district personnel responded to 3,196 fire and emergency calls between 2005 and 2007.

**"The expectations for emergency response are nowhere near the reality."**

—Ed Malek, SCCFPD president

An independent telephone research firm surveyed 600 homeowners within the district's boundaries in June.

Survey results indicate 55.5 percent of respondents were unaware the survival rate for a cardiac arrest after six minutes is 20 percent, with brain damage occurring after five minutes of respiratory arrest.

Also, 61.2 percent were unaware that a small home fire could

escalate to flashpoint, or an uncontrollable blaze, within six to 10 minutes.

Additionally, one out of four resident surveyed had no smoke alarms in their home to alert their family in the first critical minutes of a fire.

The survey also indicated 65.7 percent of respondents have lived in the area for more than 10 years, but 40 percent did not know which emergency services responder is mandated to rescue them during their time of need.

### Critical minutes

The survey results indicated many residents might not understand that emergency responders will not be on hand during the critical early minutes of a crisis, said Jim Gaffney, chairman of the

district's Citizens Advisory Committee.

"Elementary schools within our district, for example, now have children with fragile, life-threatening medical issues, and parents may not realize that emergency responders may not be there within those first critical minutes," Gaffney said.

"Taking 11 minutes from the time you call 911 to the time you get help to a home, a restaurant, a soccer field or a school is unacceptable," he said. "The response time to address a medical crisis needs to be within six minutes for any resident within the district," he said.

For more information about the district, call 630-762-3900 or visit [www.sccfpd.org](http://www.sccfpd.org), where more survey results are available.