



# **SAFE-D GUIDELINES FOR NEWLY CREATED ESDs**

*for more information, contact [safe-d.org](http://safe-d.org)*

## **A. Set the district's monthly meetings.**

1. Monthly meetings open to the public.
2. Determine where the meeting will be held.
3. The meeting's agenda must be posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.
4. The commissioners should adopt rules of order and procedure.
5. A quorum is a majority of the number of commissioners.

## **B. ESD commissioners**

1. Staggered two-year terms for most ESDs.
2. Required to complete Open Meetings/Public Information Act training within 90 days of appointment.
3. Operate under Chapter 775 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.
4. Required to get 6 hours of ESD Commissioner Training Credit, certified by institution of higher learning, every two years. Three hours above the required six can be carried over to the next two-year period.

## **C. Elect officers.**

1. President, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and assistant treasurer
2. Secretary and treasurer may be the same person.
3. Annual term for officers.

## **D. Select a permanent mailing address.**

1. The address may be a post office box.
2. The address may be different from where the meetings are held.
3. Report officers, consultants, address to Texas Division of Emergency Management by Jan. 1 each year.

## **E. Obtain necessary supplies.**

1. Minute book (binder).
2. Resolution book (binder).
3. District seal.
4. Receipt book.
5. Appropriate ledgers / accounting software (Quicken, QuickBooks).
6. Stationery / letterhead.
7. Tape recorder to record meetings, with guidance from ESD attorney.
8. Computer, printer, software.

## **F. Designate an official district newspaper for publication of notices.**

1. It should cover the district.
2. Tax rate notices.
3. Annual notice in January.
4. Bid notices.

## **G. Select an official district depository (bank).**

1. Checking account.
2. \$250,000 limit. Above that level, funds must be collateralized.
3. TexPool — option to avoid Public Funds Investment Act training.

## **H. Establish the district's fiscal year.**

1. Usually October through September because of the ad valorem tax year.
2. Can be different from the ad valorem tax year.

## **I. Establish an official map of the district.**

1. Map may be developed during creation process.
2. Convert metes and bounds to a map.
3. May be used in developing mutual aid agreements.
4. Should be part of the service provider contract.

**J. Select the district's attorney.**

1. Attorney should have experience with districts.
2. Review contracts, leases and bank loans.

**K. Conduct a needs assessment for the district by identifying:**

1. Major property and structures.
2. Existing fire hazards.
3. Existing firefighting and EMS organizations.
4. Sources of manpower and membership.
5. Physical barriers such as rivers.
6. Lack of road access.
7. Financial resources.

**L. Develop long-term goals and short-term objectives.**

1. Goals should satisfy the needs determined in the needs assessment.
2. The goals do not have to be elaborate.
3. Goals should be in writing.
4. Objectives are steps toward accomplishment of the goals.
5. Review goals and objectives at least annually.
6. Goals and objectives should be included in detailed contract with service provider.

**M. Adopt a budget.**

1. Revenue and expenses on a cash basis.
2. Obtain estimated ad valorem taxable values from the central appraisal district.
3. Estimate billings for ambulance services and MVA services.
4. Obtain a budget request from the service providers.
5. Determine insurance expense.
6. Determine the capital expenditures (apparatus, equipment, buildings).
7. Pay for capital expenditures with cash, leases, or bank loans.

**N. Set the district's tax rate.**

1. Rate needs to be set by the end of September (mid-August if proposed tax rate exceeds Voter Approval Rate under 2019's Senate Bill 2)
2. Tax revenue may be limited by the tax cap (10 cents for ESDs).
3. Cents per \$100 of ad valorem taxable values.
4. Estimated ad valorem taxable values from the central appraisal district.
5. Truth in Taxation law requires notices to taxpayers. Small taxing unit exceptions may apply.
6. County tax assessor/collector is a source of help.

**O. Obtain appropriate insurance.**

1. Liability insurance.
2. Workers compensation insurance.
3. Treasurer's fiduciary bond.
4. Property insurance may be required by lenders.

**P. Enter into written contracts with service providers.**

1. Fire and rescue services.
2. EMS services.
3. SAFE-D dues after provisional year of free membership.

**Q. Enter into mutual aid contracts as may be applicable.**

1. Agreements with the districts or departments on all sides of the district.
2. Contracts should be in writing.
3. Should be part of the contract with the service provider.