

Special districts, as units of local government, fill a vital role in providing fire and rescue services; water and wastewater treatment and delivery; park and recreation amenities; hospitals; libraries; and cemeteries in many of the communities within Colorado. There are currently 4,986 such districts in the state, of which 2,853 are members of the Special District Association of Colorado (SDA).

Special districts in Colorado were formally recognized in 1949 by an act of the state legislature as a type of local government designed to provide infrastructure services in rural or unincorporated areas. These districts could be created to deliver necessary services within defined boundaries. In 1981, laws governing these districts were consolidated into the Special District Act, now part of Title 32 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.

Source: 2024 SDA Guide to Special Districts

UNIQUE FACT

Special districts in CO are created and governed largely by the residents within their boundaries, rather than by existing city or county governments. This means developers or local communities can form a district to finance and manage infrastructure — especially in new or rural areas.



4,986+

Special District
Governments



20%

Of Local Government
Revenue



50%

Of Local
Governments are
Special Districts

MOST COMMON SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Metropolitan		2,562
Fire Protection		247
Water and Sanitation		121
Water		74
Conservationn		74
Library		57